



**Project Title: Implementing the Strategic Plan for Ecuador's Mainland
Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network**

GEF Project ID: 9369

**GEF Agency: Conservation International (CI)
Executing Agencies: Undersecretary of Marine and Coastal
Management (MAE) and CI Ecuador**

TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGM	Accountability and Grievance Mechanism
ANRPV	Playas de Villamil National Recreation Area
BD	Biodiversity
CI	Conservation International
CODA	Environmental Organic Code
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
ESMENA	Escuela de la Marina Mercante Nacional
FIAS	Environmental and Sustainable Investment Fund
FY	Financial Year
GADs	Decentralized Autonomous Governments
GEF	Global Environment Facility
INPC	National Institute of Cultural Heritage
LD	Land Degradation
MAE	Marine and Coastal Management
MAATE	Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MINTUR	Ministry of Tourism
MOE	Ministry of Environment
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OFP	Operational Focal Point
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
REDD+	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
REMACOPSE	Puntilla Santa Elena Marine Coastal Wildlife Breeding Reserve
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SGMC	Undersecretary of Marine and Coastal Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SNAP	National System of Protected Areas
TE	Terminal Evaluation
US\$	United States dollar
WFF	Walton Family Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CI-GEF project summary information

Project Name	Implementing the Strategic Plan for Ecuador’s Mainland Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network
Project Type	Full-sized project
Funding Source	GEF Trust Fund
GEF Project ID	9369
Country	Ecuador
Region	South America
GEF Focal Area	Biodiversity (BD) and Land Degradation (LD)
Approval date	November 2017
Implementing Agency	Conservation International (CI-GEF)
Executing Agencies	Undersecretary of Natural Heritage (MAATE)and Conservation International Ecuador
GEF total grant	US\$ 5,813,303
GEF grant utilized	US\$ 5,498,602 (as of December 31, 2022)
Expected Co-financing	US\$ 33,739,690
Co-financing total realized	US\$ 35,997,463 (as of December 31, 2022)
Implementation timeframe	05/12/2018 - 3/31/2023
Project website	https://www.conservation.org/gef/projects-list/implementation-of-the-strategic-plan-of-ecuador-mainland-marine-and-coastal-protected-areas-network
Project objective	To substantially improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity through an effective coastal and marine protected areas network in mainland Ecuador
Terminal Evaluation timeframe	10/26/2022 – 02/15/2023
Evaluation team	Kalame Fobissie, Team Leader Kevin Enongene, Deputy Team Leader Aurelian Mbzibain, International Consultant Gaby Ponce, National Consultant Estefany San Andres, National Consultant

Purpose of the Terminal Evaluation (TE)

The purpose of this terminal evaluation is outlined below:

1. To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishment.
2. To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design, and implementation of future CI-GEF projects.
3. To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the CI and GEF portfolio and need attention; and
4. To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis, and reporting on the effectiveness of GEF operations.

The objectives of the evaluation include:

- Providing a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the project; and
- Assessing the project’s design, implementation, and achievement of objectives.

Terminal Evaluation approach and methodology

Implementing the strategic plan for Ecuador’s Mainland Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network

This evaluation was based on the analysis of both primary and secondary data. For secondary data, a review of different project documents was conducted while primary data was collected through virtual and face-to-face interviews conducted with different project actors. A questionnaire was also sent out electronically to the project actors (staff of CI-Ecuador and CI-GEF Agency, project executing entity, a consultant, and other project partners and beneficiaries in Ecuador) to generate quantitative data. The analyzed primary and secondary data, were used to elaborate the draft evaluation report which was submitted to CI-GEF Agency for review and feedback. Comments received from the project team were addressed and a final document was submitted to CI-GEF Agency.

The Project's Theory of Change (ToC)

The project did not have a theory of change at CEO Approval. As part of the evaluation process, a theory of change was developed by the evaluation team based on the review of the project document. **Figure 2** Provides a summary of the ToC.

Assessment of Project Results

The overall rating of achievement of the project results is **Highly Satisfactory**. The summary is provided below:

Outcomes: Achievement of outcomes is rated **Highly Satisfactory**. This rating considers the outcome achievements at terminal evaluation against its expected targets. The project performed well against its outcomes, and the targets for the various components. To reach this Satisfactory rating, the project outcomes were assessed and rated on three dimensions: Relevance, Efficiency, and Effectiveness, and the ratings are provided below:

- *Effectiveness* is rated as **Highly Satisfactory** due to the overall achievement of the project outcomes by the end of the project.
- *Efficiency* is rated **Satisfactory**. This rating was determined after assessing how funds were managed and tracked, and the project's ability to deliver on its expected outcomes despite the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- *Relevance* is rated **Highly Satisfactory** because the project design and the outcomes align with Ecuador's national priorities, global and national biodiversity strategy and, GEF-6 objective on the Biodiversity Focal Area.

Sustainability

The overall Sustainability rating is **Moderately Likely**. Most of the respondents believed financial, socio-political, and institutional risks were Moderately Likely. Environmental risks were equally rated as Moderately Likely. The key risks that may affect the continuation of benefits after the project ends are summarized below:

- a. *Financial risks:* Component 3 has associated financial risks. The agroforestry plans developed by the project in Esmeraldas were not implemented due to lack of funding.
- b. *Socio-political risk:* The project faces a socio-political risk to the sustainability of its outcomes due to changes of authorities, and non-adoption by MAATE of some of the proposals made by the project.
- c. *Institutional risks:* There are institutional risks related to bureaucracy between the different institutions concerned, new authorities, restrictions to major purchases, untimely responses and

engagement from some government counterparts and the high technical staff turnover, causing delays in project implementation.

- d. *Environmental risks*: Climate change was perceived and remained unchanged throughout the implementation of the project as the main environmental risk. Mainstreaming climate considerations into SNAP's strategic plan became a challenging and important aspect for consideration.

Progress to Impact

Progress to Impact is rated **Satisfactory**.

Overall, the project is on track to achieve long-term impacts in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity in target areas in Ecuador, through a more effective and enhanced operation of the coastal and marine protected areas network in the country. This is evident through increased revenues for the management of protected areas, as well as improved management effectiveness in the target areas. Through the strengthening of the Ecuador Azul sub-account, 7 MPAs have seen their funding gap narrowed by up to 98%. This has been achieved through the capitalization of the sub-account with over US\$ 6M of this project from the GEF and Walton Family Foundation, reinvestment shares and, from the Emergency Fund.

In addition, assessments based on the OSPAR MPA Network Self-Assessment Checklist revealed a score of 56.67% up from a baseline of 23.33% (2017) at end of the project while the Ecological Coherence Weighted Score witnessed an increase, reached a rate of 68.82% up from a baseline of 25.81% in 2017 in the course of project implementation: 29.03% (June 2019); 36.55% (June 2020); 52.68% (June 2021) and 68.82% (June 2022)¹. The overall average rating for the MPA Network Biodiversity Tracking Tool METT GEF 6 has increased by 4.60 % compared to 2017. From the 20 MPAs, 70% showed improvements compared to the baseline.

The improvements have been achieved through strong project intervention that has enhanced annual planning, regular monitoring of performance, and funding availability through the Ecuador Azul Fund.

Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Systems

The overall M&E system is rated **Highly Satisfactory**. This overall M&E rating was arrived at after evaluating any gaps and weaknesses of the M&E plan at CEO approval and assessing its implementation. The summary is provided below:

M&E design. The rating for M&E design is **Highly Satisfactory**. From the design stage, the project had a clearly written M&E plan, explained in the CEO approval with clearly delineated M&E roles and responsibilities assigned to the various stakeholders involved in the project, as well as timelines for M&E activities. The allocated budget of USD \$54,500 set aside for M&E activities seemed realistic and the project clearly showed its expected outcomes as well as expected outputs. The indicators were SMART and enabled the tracking of results and project baselines for the different project components. M&E was done through an inception workshop and report, debriefing, quarterly Project Steering Committee meetings and progress reports, financial and technical quarterly reports, Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), documentation of learning and a final evaluation of the project.

M&E implementation. The M&E implementation for the project is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**. The M&E plan was followed, and funding was provided on time for the different activities. Data was collected that permitted to measure the progress of the various indicators, and this progress was reported during the quarterly and annual meetings and reports as well as the PIRs. The Covid-19 pandemic

¹ FY22 PIR

coupled with the government slowdown caused some delays that warranted adjustments, such as a revision of the annual work plan and budget to adapt to this situation. The planned activities that delayed, included the adoption of the management tools and legal instruments developed, updating process of the SNAP Strategic Plan, the hiring processes, and the execution of committees' meetings. This delay caused a non-execution of USD 410.000 from the total project budget.

Assessment of Implementation and Execution

The quality of implementation and execution is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.

Quality of Implementation. The quality of implementation rating is **Highly Satisfactory**. The delays and setbacks caused by the coronavirus pandemic on the project were severe, but the project sought ways of adapting to the situation by identifying activities that could continue through virtual platforms, and requesting a six month no-cost extension. CI-GEF managed the project implementation process closely, following up on the progress made in achieving expected outcomes. At the inception phase of the project, CI-GEF provided financial and technical guidance to the executing agency geared towards ensuring that project implementation happens in a manner that is compliant with GEF guidelines, safeguard requirements, and to all financial and technical commitments made at CEO approval. Using the Conservation Grants portal, CI-GEF ensured that project reporting by the executing agency was timely. This was achieved by CI-GEF sending a reminder email to CI-Ecuador a month in advance of the submission due date of a report. Following the submission of the technical and financial progress reports by CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF provides quality control checks and feedback as needed to enhance clarity and the quality of the project reports.

Quality of Execution. The quality of execution rating is **Highly Satisfactory**. A Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established at the project's inception phase and was charged with providing oversight to project delivery through the making of management decisions by consensus when guidance is needed by the project manager. The PSC was also responsible for approving annual work plans of the project and met at least once a year either virtually or in-person. A Project Management Committee was also established for the project and this organ was responsible for facilitating the implementation and coordination of the project and met on a quarterly basis. The project Management Unit (PMU) executed the project activities approved in the annual workplans, ensuring that project delivery happened promptly. In FY 22 for instance, the PMU persistently insisted through emails, virtual meetings and during the PSC the need for the adoption of the tools elaborated by the project. Pertaining to reporting, the PMU supported the timely completion and onward submission of project progress reports to CI-GEF. The Ministry of Environment and CI-Ecuador were the co-executing partners of the project. While the Ministry of Environment took charge for project implementation and management at the highest level, including the monitoring and evaluation of project activities, achievement of project results and effective utilization of GEF resources, CI-Ecuador was tasked with executing the technical, administrative and financial actions of the project.

Assessment of Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)

Overall Environmental and Social Safeguard rating is **Highly Satisfactory**.

Safeguards screening was conducted during the design phase of the project using CI-GEF appropriate screening forms. The ESS safeguards that were triggered, implemented, monitored and indicators tracked and reported are described below:

Gender. Gender is rated **Highly Satisfactory**. Significant attention was paid to gender-related issues in the MPA project design and implementation. A Gender Integration Plan was prepared, keen attention was paid to the participation of women, and strategies were employed accordingly to encourage the participation of women. Gender issues were well integrated into the implementation of the project through awareness-raising during trainings and workshops to mainstream gender into project activities. From interviews with relevant stakeholders, gender interventions are beginning to produce results as women are more active and comfortable to participate in meetings of associations especially for Component 2 of the project.

Stakeholder Engagement. Stakeholder Engagement is rated **Highly Satisfactory**. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was elaborated during the project design phase. Five categories of stakeholders' groups were identified from the project preparation phase and effectively involved during the project implementation. By the end of FY22, stakeholder engagement was rated as completed or achieved as it had exceeded the targets. Around 608 stakeholders had taken part in socialization events, workshops, meetings, and trainings. There had been about 40 of such events organized as part of the project activities, which had seen the participation of these stakeholders or actors. Covid restrictions affected stakeholder engagement, though remote meetings were organized to make up for the in-person meetings previously organized.

Accountability and Grievance Mechanism of the project (AGM) is rated **Highly Satisfactory**. At the start of the project, an AGM was developed by CI-Ecuador and approved by CI-GEF for the MPA project, to ensure that complaints from stakeholders during the execution of the project are dealt with in a timely manner. At the time the FY23 PIR was elaborated, the project had recorded no verbal nor written grievances, and this met the set target which was zero. However, the AGM was still being publicised during meetings, workshops and presentations to stakeholders and through CI Ecuador webpage and the project website.

Other assessments

Materialization of co-financing

The government of Ecuador in collaboration with GEF provided co-financing. GEF grant amount was estimated at USD 5,814,303. Some of the co-financers were to provide financial support in the form of subsidy or grant, while others were to provide it in kind. GEF resources were to cover costs related to the PMU and its staff, and partially cover staff costs for CI-Ecuador staff. The expected project co-financing was \$USD 33,739,690. By January 2023, co-financing realized was USD 35,997,463, 107% of the amount committed.

Knowledge management

Knowledge management products were saved in a folder on Google Drive including beach management plans; mangroves and terrestrial habitats connectivity priority site inventory; design of a control and surveillance system; monitor, control, and surveillance plans; ordinance proposal to declare Municipal Conservation Area; and the proposal for obtaining the AUSCEM for Lucha y Progreso. Knowledge products were disseminated using websites, electronic channels, social media platforms and emails. In addition, a communication strategy was established for the project, to guide communication within the project, coupled with a portfolio of pre-made materials including PowerPoint, matrix, and summaries for use during restructuring processes and when there is a change of authority or the name of the Ministry. was changed. These materials helped to update all actors on the progress of the project as well. In the course of primary data collection, it became clear that project activities, photos, and videos

were posted on social media platforms including Twitter and Facebook, while quarterly newsletters were disseminated by email.

Lessons Learnt

- 1. Project design.** This project was a highly innovative but complex project with ambitious targets related to the revision of the country's institutional framework for the sustainable management of the coastal and marine ecosystems of target pilot areas. The formulation of indicators was built on the assumption of expeditious and timely approval of proposed guidelines emanating from the project by national officials. The project evaluation demonstrates that framing output indicators that are beyond the control of the project, can lead to frustrations when the external assumptions do not hold true. This was demonstrated under output 1 where national government officials failed to adopt and validate proposals. Future projects while acknowledging the role of national governments, should ensure that formulation of outputs and related indicators can be effectively delivered with the project resources.
- 2. Availability of sustained financial resources for marine and coastal protected areas.** Creating the Ecuador Azul subaccount under this project has been essential in guaranteeing the sustainability of the protected areas. This subaccount represents a best practice which addresses the systemic problem of financial resources facing marine and protected areas in the face of government cuts and inability to fund protection activities. While the fund has experienced positive annual yields in the past years, transparent and equitable management of these resources are likely to further enhance the impact of the activities on the ground. This includes streamlining processes for procurement and utilisation of the funds at the level of the directorates, to ensure the timely implementation of activities. So far, resources have focused on protected area activities and community livelihood support remains out of the purview of the fund.
- 3. Local level ownership and buy-in is crucial for integrated governance and management of MPAs.** The project evaluation found significant interest and motivation of community leaders, beach operators and local authorities to engage in the management of MPAs. Local communities valued their recognition in the project as critical actors in the management of the MPAs. While the role of national authorities was sub-optimal in part because of lack of budgets, high staff turnovers and administrative changes, local officials and staff are more stable. They were keen to be involved and to integrate project findings into their community management plans. Future projects could draw on these experiences through allocating a stronger role for local community leaders and staff and providing the resources they need to play their role effectively. As MPA activities get integrated into local management plans, the sustainability of project gains is more likely to be secured.
- 4. Focus on gender in MPA management.** The focus on gender is also a key to the success of the project goals recognising not only the role of women but also youth in sustainable management processes. Through the gender actions implemented within the framework of the project, stakeholders were offered an opportunity to reflect on their own stereotypes and to explore new ways of addressing the manifestations of inequality in their communities. Focus group discussions during the project lesson learning events highlighted the importance of continuous sensitisation and awareness raising, but also economic empowerment of women, as a way of reducing inequalities and discrimination against them. Stronger gender engagement in the management of MPAs could significantly enhance achievement of the MPA outcomes in terms of protection and conservation in target landscapes.

- 5. Monitoring, surveillance contributes to transparency but is insufficient to contribute to stronger law enforcement.** The project has made progress through the acquisition and provision of equipment for monitoring, surveillance and reporting of alleged infractions observed at sea. This is contributing to increase transparency and information on the application of national legislation. However, the evidence demonstrates that scant action is being taken by law enforcement and the judiciary regarding the reports emerging from improvement surveillance. Additionally, only Wild Aid and CI seem to be working on this action, while wider civil society organisations (CSOs) that could lead advocacy for better law enforcement taking advantage of the information being generated missing. Consequently, strengthening wider civil society and law enforcement could further enhance the performance of the network of protected areas. Drawing on lessons from independent forest monitoring by civil society in Asia and Africa, leveraging international advocacy NGOs could also highlight and bring the matters of law enforcement to the international stage and consequently draw international attention to the perpetuation of illegalities in the country’s protected areas and inertia from authorities to sanction illegalities.
- 6. Capacity building at all levels drawing on local expertise.** This project demonstrates the need for continuous capacity building for stakeholders at all levels in the management of the country’s protected areas. From communities to beach operators, rangers, and local authorities, increasing awareness and creating a favourable environment for capacity building can enhance the sustainable management and protection of target seascapes. The provision of monitoring equipment led to a significant increase in patrols and reporting of cases of illegality. The review and development of new guidelines for MPA management, provided guidance to local authorities to work collaboratively with communities and local officials in improving their oversight role. While some trainings were offered online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, beneficiaries revealed the need to complement these trainings with more face-to-face events which provide more opportunities for trainees to practice and apply their learning. Furthermore, respondents stated that they would benefit better from consultants recruited from the local area who have a better understanding of the context and the lived experiences of the trainees as opposed to dependence on external consultants.

Recommendations

	FINDING/CHALLENGE	RECOMMENDATIONS
	Project design	
1.	Preparation of documents at the technical level might be faster than the process of validation at the political and decision-making level. The project committed to some tasks/deliverables beyond its control. Under outcome 1.1, a lot of the deliverables have to be approved by the government. While the project has submitted drafts to the government and followed-up on these, government approval is yet to be secured and this negatively impacts on the project’s results.	National political and decision-making processes, priorities and timelines are often different from that of projects and must be taken into consideration when defining project expected results as well as assumptions in the logical framework. Partnerships with other state and non-state actors should ensure that unattained project goals can be reached through the combined or complementary activities, initiatives, and programmes of others beyond the project lifetime. Also, in the course of the design phase of a project, the project design team should avoid to the extent possible, committing to tasks and/or deliverables whose achievements are beyond the control of the project. Responsibility: Government of Ecuador, CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF Timeline: Future projects
	Sustainability	

	FINDING/CHALLENGE	RECOMMENDATIONS
2.	The priorities of the government seem to have evolved or changed in the course of project implementation. This change in priorities could be a reason why the approval of the draft deliverables submitted to the government was delayed.	For subsequent projects of this nature where the government is the ultimate beneficiary, the project should engage closely and continuously with the government, reaffirming the state's priorities. In the event a shift in priority is identified, the project could take measures to adjust accordingly well in advance Responsibility: CI-GEF, CI-Ecuador and the Government of Ecuador Timeline: Future projects
3.	The project has generated some results which could be capitalized upon by subsequent projects focused on marine protected areas.	Subsequent MPA-related projects in Ecuador should build on the results of this project. The project team should consult with the implementers of the KFW-funded project on marine protected areas and seek to establish areas of alignment between both projects so that the KFW project could capitalise on the rich experience and results of this GEF project Responsibility: CI-Ecuador Timeline: Before the end of the project
4.	Changing governments and consequently, limited political and ministerial support to project activities	For future interventions of this nature, long-term partnerships need to be established at the political level as such could enhance the sustainability of the project beyond the project's life and beyond any political party. Responsibility: Government of Ecuador, CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF Timeline: Future projects
5.	Delays caused by internal and external forces (new government authorities, bureaucratic hiring process, coronavirus pandemic etc.)	For future similar situations, adaptive management and capacity remains a vital skill to navigate uncertainties and delays in project implementation and management. Responsibility: CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF Timeline: Future projects

Terminal Evaluation summary Rating

The table below summarizes the project ratings. The rating scale is provided in Annex D.

Area	Terminal Evaluation Rating
Assessment of project results: the extent to which project objectives were achieved	Overall rating of project results: Highly Satisfactory Outputs: <i>Highly Satisfactory</i> Outcomes: Highly Satisfactory. The breakdown is provided below: <i>Effectiveness: Highly Satisfactory</i> <i>Relevance: Highly Satisfactory</i> <i>Efficiency: Satisfactory</i>
Sustainability	Moderately Likely
Progress to Impact	Satisfactory

Area	Terminal Evaluation Rating
Quality of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system	Overall rating of the quality of M&E systems: Highly Satisfactory <i>M&E design: Highly Satisfactory</i> <i>M&E implementation: Highly Satisfactory</i>
Assessment of Implementation and Execution	Overall rating of Implementation and Execution: Highly Satisfactory <i>Quality of Implementation: Highly Satisfactory</i> <i>Quality of Execution: Highly Satisfactory</i>
Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)	Overall rating of (ESS): Highly Satisfactory <i>Gender: Highly Satisfactory</i> <i>Stakeholder Engagement: Highly Satisfactory</i> <i>Accountability and Grievance Mechanism: Highly Satisfactory</i>

1. INTRODUCTION: PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project start and duration

The project “Implementing the strategic plan for Ecuador’s Mainland Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network” received GEF approval in November 2017 but its actual implementation started on December 5th 2018, and is expected to continue for four years until March 31st 2023.

Project objective and components

The objective of the project was to substantially improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, through an effective network of marine and coastal protected areas in mainland Ecuador. The project comprises of three components i) Establishing the basis for the efficient operation of the MPA network; ii) Active learning in the field; and iii) Strengthening the connectivity of mangroves with inland ecosystems within the MPA network. Each of the project components has outcomes and indicators to help measure results.

2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The CI-GEF commissioned an independent Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project “Implementing the strategic plan for Ecuador’s Mainland Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network” in October 2022. The evaluation was conducted by FOKABS Inc., and data collection was conducted between November to December 2022. The evaluation team comprised of Kalame Fobissie, Team Leader; Kevin Enongene, Deputy Team Leader; Aurelian Mbzibain, International Consultant; and two national consultants – Gaby Ponce and Estefany San Andres. The terms of reference of the evaluation is provided in Annex B and the credentials of the team members are provided in Annex C.

2.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

This terminal evaluation had the following purpose:

- 1 To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishment;
- 2 To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design, and implementation of future CI-GEF projects.
- 3 To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the CI and GEF portfolio and need attention; and
- 4 To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis, and reporting on the effectiveness of GEF operations

The objectives of the evaluation include:

- a. To provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the project; and
- b. Assess the project’s design, implementation, and achievement of objectives

2.2. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation was guided by the following criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, Impact; Results, Monitoring, and Evaluation; Implementation & Execution; Other assessments and sustainability as presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria considered for Ecuador project Terminal Evaluation

Evaluation criteria	Scope	Evaluation questions	Rating scale
Relevance	Relevance assesses the extent to which the project’s	Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies,	<i>Six-point rating scale</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• highly satisfactory

	outcomes were consistent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, country priorities, and mandates of the Agencies.	country priorities, and mandates of the Agencies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? 	(HS) to highly unsatisfactory
Efficiency	It assesses the extent to which the project implementation was cost-effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects? 	<i>Six-point rating scale</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly satisfactory (HS) to highly unsatisfactory
Effectiveness	Effectiveness measures the extent to which the expected outcomes and objectives of the project have been achieved	Were the project's actual outcomes commensurate with the expected outcomes?	<i>Six-point rating scale</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly satisfactory (HS) to highly unsatisfactory
Sustainability	Assesses the likelihood of sustainability of project outcomes at the end of the project.	<p>Financial risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes? What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once GEF assistance ends? <p>Socio-political risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the project's long-term objectives? <p>Institutional framework and governance risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the legal frameworks, policies, and governance structures, and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project benefits? Are requisite systems for accountability and transparency, and required technical know-how, in place? <p>Environmental risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes? 	<i>four-point rating scale</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely (L) to Unlikely (U)
Progress to Impact	This assesses the evidence on progress towards long-term impacts, and the extent to which the key assumptions of the project's theory of change hold.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent can the progress towards long-term impact may be attributed to the project? What quantity of GHG emission reduction has been recorded? How much reduction in waste discharge has been achieved or expected to be achieved? 	<i>Six-point rating scale</i> Highly Satisfactory (HS) to Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much change has been recorded or being to the: • population of endangered species, • forest stock, • water retention in degraded lands? • How well did the project contribute to changes in policy/ legal/regulatory frameworks? • How well did it contribute to change in socioeconomic status (income, health, well-being, etc.?) • Are there arrangements in the project design to facilitate follow-up actions? • Which are the GEF promoted approaches, technologies, financing instruments, legal frameworks, information systems adopted/implemented without direct support from, or involvement of the project? • What are the contributions of other actors and factors adopted/implemented without direct support from, or involvement of the project? • What barriers and other risks may prevent further progress towards long-term impacts? • What unintended impacts did the project record (both positive and negative impacts)? • What was the overall scope and implications of these impacts in the project? 	
Project M&E	Assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the project M&E plan and its implementation	<p><i>For M&E design:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the M&E plan at the point of CEO Endorsement practical and sufficient? • Did it include baseline data? • Did it specify clear targets and appropriate (SMART) indicators to track environmental, gender, and socio-economic results; a proper methodological approach; specify practical organization and logistics of the M&E activities including schedule and responsibilities for data collection; and, budget adequate funds for M&E activities? <p><i>For M&E Implementation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the M&E system operated as per the M&E plan? • Was the M&E plan revised? If so, did this happen in a timely manner? • Was information on specified indicators and relevant GEF focal area tracking tools gathered in a systematic manner? • Were appropriate methodological approaches have been used to analyse data? • Were resources for M&E sufficient? How was the information from the M&E system used during the project implementation? 	<p><i>Six-point rating scale</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Satisfactory (HS) to Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
Implementation and Execution	This assesses GEF projects take into account the	<i>Quality of Implementation</i>	<i>Six-point rating scale</i>

	performance of the GEF Implementing Agencies and project Executing Agency(ies) (EAs) in discharging their expected roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the agency deliver effectively on these counts, with focus on elements that were controllable from the given GEF Agency's perspective? How well were risks identified and managed by the GEF Agency to GEF resources? <p><i>Quality of Execution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the EAs effectively discharge their role and responsibilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly Satisfactory (HS) to Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
Environmental and Social Safeguards	This assess whether appropriate environmental and social safeguards were addressed in the project's design and implementation	<p><i>Gender sensitive measure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effective was the project in reaching women and integrating gender mainstreaming throughout its activities? were all activities planned in the GMP implemented? Yes/No Why? Did the project face any challenges in implementing the GMP as initially proposed? Which challenges? How were the challenges overcome? Compared to the original GMP, did the project had to implement any adaptations to promote meaningful participation of women and advance towards other gender sensitive targets? Did the project team/stakeholders/beneficiaries observe any qualitative outcomes (either positive or negative) related to gender equality, that are difficult to capture in a quantitative project target? Considering all the above, what are the recommendations for future similar projects to effectively advance towards gender sensitive targets or seize opportunities to promote gender transformational change? Were there any key lessons learned and/or good practices identified in the project's efforts to implement gender sensitive measures? <p><i>Local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the project enhance women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making spaces and processes? To what extent did the project facilitated and enhanced the capacity of women and men to change negative gender norms, that could potentially prevent women from fully benefiting from the project's Outputs and Outcomes? Are there any indications of the project influencing or enabling women's agency, access and control over assets, access to new economic opportunities, or productive or conservation opportunities or roles? 	<p><i>Seven-point rating scale</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly Satisfactory (HS) to Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) And Unable to Assess (UA)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative) related to gender equality at the community level? <p><i>Stakeholder Engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent were your views and concerns taken into account by the project? • How well did efforts made by the project to enhance their meaningful participation in project implementation? • How well were there any additional efforts implemented to promote the participation of vulnerable or marginalized groups present in the prioritized communities? 	
Accountability and Grievance Mechanism		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you aware of the grievance mechanism? • Was the mechanism effective in addressing grievances? • Were established channels and procedures, accessible and responded to the local communities and/or indigenous people and their needs • what worked well in the implementation of the ESMF? • What needs to be improved in the implementation of the ESMF? 	Surveys

2.3. Evaluation approach and data collection methods

Overall, a three-phase approach was employed during the TE as presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Phases of the MPA project TE

Inception phase

The objective of this phase was to enable the project stakeholders and the consultant to have a common understanding of the objectives and scope of the assignment.

A virtual kick-off meeting:

A virtual kick-off meeting was held on October 6, 2022, with representatives from Conservation International and FOKABS Inc. in attendance. The objective of the meeting was to introduce the evaluators to the evaluation commissioning team, and to discuss and review the evaluation timelines. Both parties reached an agreement on the timelines for the different deliverables and the next steps - elaboration of the inception report and data collection tools.

A virtual terminal evaluation inception workshop:

A virtual terminal evaluation inception workshop was held on 18th October 2022 involving representatives from Conservation International (CI-GEF and CI-Ecuador), national project actors, and evaluators from FOKABS Inc. The evaluators presented the approach and methodology for realizing the assignment. Following the workshop, an inception workshop report was prepared and submitted to Conservation International.

Data collection and analysis phase

a. Secondary data collection

Desk review and research:

The evaluation team will review secondary documentation thoroughly to assess the level of achievement of the project.

Sources of the secondary data

Sources of the secondary data will include Project documentation such as Project Document, quarterly progress reports, MTR, and financial reports, annual Project Implementation Reports (PIR), Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting proceedings, workshop reports, and other activity reports.

b. Primary data collection and Tools:

The evaluation team (national consultant) collected qualitative and quantitative data using various research tools that were administered through face-to-face meetings and/or virtual platforms (where necessary - Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp).

Primary data collection tools and rationale

The data collection tools used for the TE included: an interview guide and a questionnaire. The rationale for using both tools was borne out of the need to generate both qualitative and quantitative data. The interview guide is composed of open-ended questions geared at capturing the interviewee's views around the different criteria against which the project is evaluated. The questionnaire was designed to capture quantitative data and comprised of checkbox questions.

c. Target respondents (stakeholder groups)

The list of stakeholders consulted is presented in Annex I. This list of target respondents was provided by the CI-Ecuador to the evaluators. This was a national project hence all the target respondents are in institutions located in Ecuador.

Interviews took place in Spanish and English and detailed notes were taken, transcribed, and analysed after the interviews. In addition to the interviews, questionnaires were provided to the respondents for their completion. The completed questionnaires were returned to the evaluators and the data was analysed using Microsoft Excel.

d. Reporting phase

Following the analysis of data, the draft TE report was elaborated and submitted to Conservation International and stakeholders for review and feedback. In addition, a virtual validation workshop was organized on January 27, 2023 to present the evaluation findings. Feedback and comments received from workshop participants and the review of the draft report were addressed by the consultants and a revised and final version of the evaluation report was submitted to Conservation International.

2.4. Limitations to the evaluation

Like other project evaluations, this terminal evaluation was not without challenges. Firstly, in the course of this terminal evaluation, some respondents were not available to participate in the interviews.

Moreover, the data collection period coincided with several public holidays in Ecuador, affecting the availability of stakeholders for interviews, and this retarded the data collection process.

3. THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change was not developed for the SBT project at the design phase but rather a results framework. A theory of change has been developed by the evaluators and the diagram is provided in Figure 2.

The project's goal is to substantially improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity through an effective coastal and marine protected areas network in mainland Ecuador. The enhanced conservation and sustainable use of marine resources will advance Ecuador's compliance with Aichi biodiversity targets, and to progress towards the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, in particular goal 14 -- to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

Ecuador is a highly biodiverse nation. The country has a marine area that is about four times the total area of the country, with very valuable marine and coastal biodiversity. The coastal and marine biodiversity resources represent a valuable asset underpinning and sustaining several activities such as fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and agriculture. However, the nation's mainland coastal and marine biodiversity is threatened mainly by increasing habitat loss and fragmentation, and over-exploitation of fishery resources. In an attempt to resolve this problem, this project was designed to address the following barriers: (i) Limited experience of the Ministry of Environment on protected areas network management; (ii) Frail current administrative and legal arrangements; (iii) Limited capacity to administer the new network; (iv) Insufficient legal tools for managing MPAs; Inadequate systems for surveillance and enforcement; (v) Non-integration of MPAs into local governments' plans and actions; (vi) Inadequate funding for MPAs; and (vii) Lack of knowledge of coastal communities on the value of and need for ecological connectivity.

The MPA project introduced transformative actions under three main components:

- ❖ Establish the foundations for the efficient operation of the MPA network;
- ❖ On-the-ground active learning
- ❖ Strengthening connectivity of mangroves with inland ecosystems within the MPA network

The expected project outputs include;

- ❖ Institutional and administrative arrangements for MPA network management completed and adopted by the Ministry of Environment;
- ❖ Curricula for specialized training of MPA officers, prosecutors and judges designed and executed;
- ❖ Regulatory framework for tourism in marine protected areas updated;
- ❖ Guidelines to efficiently incorporate MPAs into coastal zone management designed and disseminated.;
- ❖ Guidelines for moving from conflict to collaboration with key stakeholders in MPAs designed and disseminated;
- ❖ Regulatory framework and procedures for detecting and sanctioning infractions updated.;
- ❖ -Equipment and facilities for efficient law enforcement installed and operational;
- ❖ Specific monitoring, control and surveillance plans for critical MPAs designed and under implementation;
- ❖ Dedicated account and financing within the Protected Areas Fund (FAP) to sustain the network of MPAs established and in operation
- ❖ Two pilots to test new guidelines and regulations on the integration of MPAs within integrated coastal management plans designed and implemented.
- ❖ Lessons from pilot projects and the analysis of their applicability to the Ecuadorian coast documented and disseminated to the key stakeholders

- ❖ Inventory of priority areas for habitat connectivity completed;
- ❖ Pilot interventions in two areas to improve habitat connectivity implemented.;
- ❖ Lessons learned documented and adopted by the -Ministry of Environment; and
- ❖ Guidelines to enhance or re-establish habitat connectivity between mangroves and inland habitats designed and disseminated.

These outputs will support the sustainable management of marine protected areas in Ecuador. In the long-term, these results will enable Ecuador to comply with Aichi targets on biodiversity and pursue sustainable development goals.

Project Theory of Change

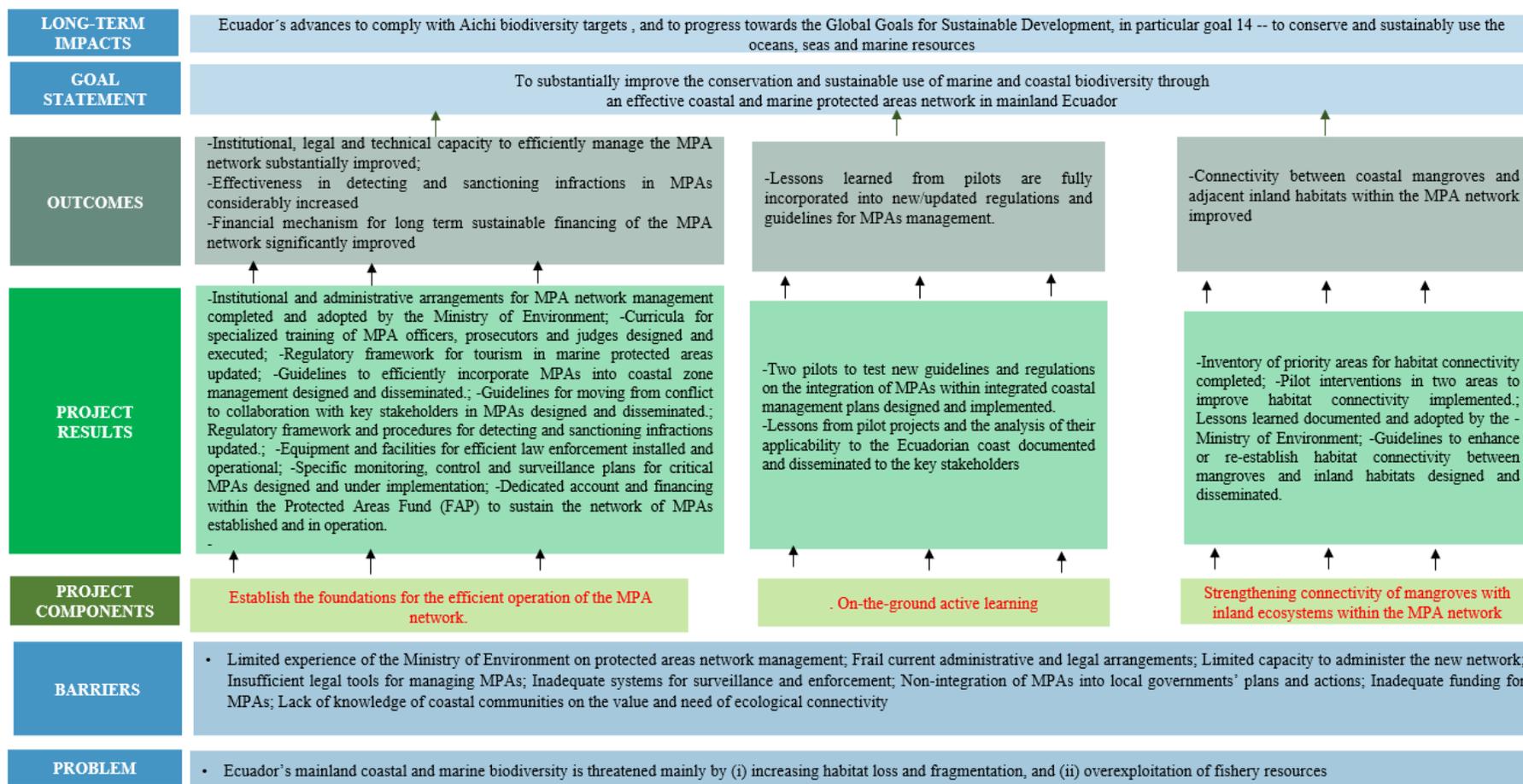


Figure 2: Theory of change of the Ecuador MPA project

4. PROGRESS TO IMPACT

The project is on track to achieve long term impacts in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity in target areas in Ecuador, through a more effective and enhanced operation of the coastal and marine protected areas network in the country. This is evidenced through increased revenues for the management of protected areas as well as improved management effectiveness in the target areas. Through the strengthening of the Ecuador Azul sub account within FIAS-FAP, 5 MPAs have seen their funding gap narrowed by up to 98% in 2021 and 78% in 2022². This has been achieved through the capitalization of the sub-account with over US\$ 6M: US\$ 2M from the project (GEF); US\$ 4M from the Walton Family Foundation; US\$44,625 from reinvestment shares and US\$94,500 from the Emergency Fund. These countries have led to a sustained increase in the investment returns from US\$ 138K (2019), US\$ 624K (2020), US\$ 631K (2021), US\$ 701K (2022), US\$ 605K (2023) distributed among the 5 MPAs (PGOA). This is helping to address a crucial financial gap for basic operations, enhancing diversification while reducing dependence on limited government coffers which have been affected by reduced oil revenues and global financial economic slowdown. Furthermore, due to returns generated, two additional MPAs (El Pelado and ANRPV) were included as beneficiaries of Ecuador Azul.

The improved effectiveness of management of the protected areas is also seen in the upward trends observed through the effectiveness scores and GEF Monitoring tracking tools. Regarding the MPA network self-assessment, PIR 2023 reports a score of 56.67% up from a baseline of 31.67% (2017) and therefore just shy of the target 50% at end of project. Regarding the Ecological Coherence Weighted Score, CI reports an achievement rate of 68.82% up from a baseline of 25.81% in 2017³ and therefore above the end of project target of 50.0%. Information from METT-GEF Biodiversity Monitoring Tools of the MPA network shows an effectiveness rate of 60.5% up from a baseline of 59% compared to an end of project target of 65%. The overall average rating for the MPA Network has increased in percentage by 4.86 % compared to 2017⁴. In fact, 5 MPAs are very satisfactory while 12 others are considered to demonstrate satisfactory management. From the 20 MPAs, 70% showed improvements compared to the baseline. A very satisfactory assessment shows that the areas have all the means for efficient management according to current demands. The overall improvements have been achieved through strong project intervention, that has enhanced annual planning, regular monitoring of performance, funding availability through the Ecuador Azul Fund.

The evaluation also notes significant progress towards impact through bringing over 5,302 ha under sustainable management and / restoration practices that conserve or restore connectivity between mangroves and inland vegetation. In the long term, improved governance and management will enhance the marine environments and habitats and consequently reduce human pressures on the ecosystems. The availability of funding and management effectiveness means that an enabling environment has been created to strengthen the governance of the network of protected areas. In the long term, this could lead to efficiencies and stronger coordination between agencies. The provision of training, mobility equipment, and radio have strengthened the availability of information on marine and protected areas management. Though there appears to be reticence from the central government to embed the policy proposals developed by this project, the stronger integration of MPA actions with those from local authorities has promoted a greater commitment and involvement from stakeholders, especially at the local level. This is a great stride towards addressing gaps in marine governance whereby, MPAs

² FY23 PIR

³ MAATE and CI-Ecuador 2022. Results of the Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas. Ministry of Environment and Water of Ecuador and Conservation International Ecuador. Project Implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas of continental Ecuador. Guayaquil, Ecuador.

⁴ MAATE and CI-Ecuador 2022. Results of the Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas. Ministry of Environment and Water of Ecuador and Conservation International Ecuador. Project Implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas of continental Ecuador. Guayaquil, Ecuador.

historically did not share a mutual understanding of municipal aspirations and consequently were not articulated with local government plans.

The project has enhanced the surveillance and enforcement apparatus in the project's intervention area, and this is crucial to reinforcing deterrence, identification of illegality, and law enforcement. There is a substantial change from before and after the project. Before, the personnel had no expertise and there was not enough equipment to face the threats. Now the areas' primary need for equipment and technology testing has been met. Control and surveillance activities have been made more efficient, irregularities in the marine areas have been mitigated, and the performance and capacity of park ranger personnel has been improved. The capacities of park rangers have been strengthened. In 2019 there were 1197 patrols. Due to the pandemic in 2020, they dropped to 1080. In 2021 and 2022 respectively they went up to 1200 and 1552 patrols. Stronger capacity building of judges and the judiciary will also enhance the degree to which those identified as being involved in illegality can be prosecuted. While the rates of prosecution and sanctions remain low, the architecture for strengthening the law enforcement mechanisms has been established. As law enforcement and community engagement are enhanced and the legal and institutional framework is bolstered, it is expected that this will slow down the overexploitation and depletion of fish stocks, reduce habitat loss, ecosystem fragmentation as well as reduced land cover transformation and environmental and social safeguards become applied.

Obviously, the country faces other governance issues, which makes law enforcement a challenge. Transparency on cases reported or prosecuted and their outcomes remain limited. These are key assumptions which have held true. Advocacy work must continue to strengthen deterrence through a stronger sanction regime, including mechanisms for naming and shaming of those engaged in actions that increase pressure and loss of precious marine and protected area biodiversity.

Unintended impacts

The evaluation further notes that the failure of MAATE particularly to act on proposed institutional reforms has been a major dent on the potential impact of this project. There appears to be low political will for consolidated management of the marine and protected areas. The governance aspect of the Project is replaced by the elimination of the Secretariat for Coastal and Marine Resources and the creation of the new Directorate of Protected Areas and Other Forms of Conservation within the Undersecretary of Natural Heritage which created an institutional void during implementation. Ultimately, national buy in and ownership are critical for the long-term impact and sustainability of the gains achieved through the project. Engagement with local authorities, seems to show more potential for uptake of project gains. Again, the key challenge is that MPA personal across the network respond to zone directors that do not necessarily follow the concept of the network.

In a way, the project has further helped to showcase and expose the problems of weak governance that impact the management of the projected areas. Environmental Network governance and political economy theory⁵ clearly identifies that competition and rivalrous relationships between actors can lead to stalling of policy processes. At the same time, these relationships provide an opportunity for inspiring change as different actors act to influence each other as was the case of this project. It has also highlighted the need for wider civil society engagement⁶ and empowerment beyond CI which can also lead advocacy actions and push for change at the level of government to promote transparency and accountability in the management of coastal and marine protected areas.

⁵ Mbzibain, A and Nkuintchua T (2021) NGO-state relations in the monitoring of illegal forest logging and wildlife trafficking in Central Africa, *World Development*, Volume 148, December 2021, 105670

⁶ Mbzibain A, Nyirenda, R., Wete, L (2022) *Political Economy of Independent Forest Monitoring in the Congo Basin*. Routledge (Routledge)

5. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RESULTS

5.1. Achievement of project outputs

Overall output rating: Highly Satisfactory

This project had three components and five outcomes (three under component 1, and one each under component 2 and 3). The project has made remarkable progress since the midterm review to advance towards a satisfactory achievement of the project outputs. The delivery of the outputs has however been mixed but strong steering effort by the project management team resulted in overall satisfactory assessment at terminal evaluation stage.

Actions under **Component 1** were geared towards strengthening the institutional, legal, and technical capacities for more effective management of MPAs, enhancing the detection and sanctioning of infractions, and delivering on a financial mechanism for long term sustainable financing of MPAs. Pertaining to the institutional interventions, the MPA network was officialised under Ministerial Agreement No 030 in 2017, and the project worked to develop the network strategic plan which was subsequently renamed as the action plan for the MPA network by MAATE. The project team worked tirelessly to develop various regulations on tourism, special conservation areas (connectivity corridors) which were officialised under Ministerial Agreement 2019 of 2020. The technical plans CEPA for REMACOPSE and ANRPV were developed. The Strategic Plan of the SNAP was updated on December 31st, 2022. MAATE will formalize the Action Plan of the Network to articulate it with Strategic Plan of the SNAP as a mechanism to strengthen the SNAP.

The project has developed and provided a training package to officials on legal issues, MPA management, gender, training of trainers amongst others to enhance the national capacities. For instance, the training on gender reached 50 participants (26M/24F) and brought together staff and officials from the MPA network. The training plan for ESMENA (Escuela de la Marina Mercante Nacional) with certification of MPA officers as Marine Sailors was also delivered amongst others. Five virtual sessions on legal regulations for MPAs were held for officials from the protected areas, personnel from the legal departments of the central and regional directorates, judicial officials, environmental police officers, prosecutors, and the Ecuadorian Navy with 44 participants. The trainings took place via the MAATE online platform MAATEduca as well as face-to-face. The project supported the certification of 63 park-rangers as “bay sailors” so they could improve their navigations and surveillance skills and operate boats. Overall, training, coaching, strengthening and support of the project has led to an increase from 34 to 168 marine park ranger accreditations enabling them to legally exercise control in waters.

Additionally, the project facilitated inter-institutional collaboration agreements in support of coordinated control, monitoring and prosecution actions. **Actions included:**

- Commitment to Coordination and Cooperation, between the SGMC (MAATE) and DIRNEA (5 December 2018)
- Memorandum of Understanding to Operationalise Control and Surveillance in the Santa Clara Island Marine Reserve between the Loja Zonal Coordination of MAATE and the Subcommand of the Southern Coast Guard (25 January 2021).
- Operational Addendum between the Santa Clara Island Marine Reserve and the Coast Guard Subcommand South (3 February 2021)
- Operational Addendum between REMACOPSE and the Capitanía de Salinas (1 June 2021)
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Pacoche Marine and Coastal Wildlife Refuge and the Port Captaincy of Manta (2 September 2021)
- Operational Addendum between CHURUTE and IPIAP (15 March 2022)

Regarding activities geared towards improving the effectiveness of detecting and sanctioning infractions in the MPAs, in addition to the legal courses already mentioned, the project provided

equipment and technical support which enhanced the presence of officials on the beat. The project provided the following equipment:

- ✓ A DMR II repeater installed at Cerro Bola de Oro and a DMR II trunked system at Cerro Salinas.
- ✓ Donation of **6 new boats, 2 refurbished boats, 19 engines and 8 marine safety equipment kits** for the boats (GPS, radios, life jackets, torch, megaphones).
- ✓ Donated **3 safe navigation and night radars** for REMACOPSE, REMAPE and Pacoche MPAs with 2 installed as of the TE.
- ✓ Installed a **signal repeater** to cover the Pacoche area and connect to Bola de Oro (WildAid counterpart).
- ✓ Installation of **2 radars for safe navigation** for PNM and Santa Clara vessels (WildAid partner).
- ✓ Delivered to REMACOPSE a **Mobile Marine Monitoring System (M3)** equipment integrating radar, AIS and long-range camera (WildAid counterpart).

Implementation has been mixed and demonstration of limited ownership and sustainability challenges observed in some cases:

- One boat (Kalidris) has not operated due to lack of staff. After the delivery of the boat, WildAid trained the rangers to operate it. But they were subsequently dismissed from the institution, so there are no staff to operate it.
- Four vessels started operating a few months after delivery. This was mainly due to their legalisation and lack of fuel. WildAid helped resolve these issues and get them up and running.
- To date, the number of operating days has varied from 7% to 26% relative to the month, based on the particularities of each site.

Overall, 6 AMPC have maintained the Radio Availability Index (RAI) at 100% since the beginning of the Project: PACOCHE, PNM, EL PELADO, REMACOPSE, EL MORRO, SANTA CLARA. The RAI values were increased in the 5 MPAs that received vessels from the MPA Network Project, as all of them had built-in marine radio, and this is an element that increases the availability of the radio service. The exception is the PLAYAS vessel which is not functioning. ARENILLAS, SANTA CLARA and CHURUTE contract a radio communication service provider, for which they pay a monthly fee with FIAS funds. PACOCHE, PNM, REMACOPSE and EL PELADO, with investment from the MPA Network Project, replaced their equipment and technologies and switched to a robust digital system with better performance than the previous analogue ones.

The MPA Network Project started with 4 Monitoring and Surveillance Plans. To date, 12 plans have been designed. The **number of infractions leading to prosecution and penalties measured in two mosaics is improving**. Mosaic Manabí's indicator decreased from 11.11% in 2020 to 0% in 2022. In contrast, the CPE of Mosaico Santa Elena increased from 75% to 100%, due to the contribution of REMACOPSE. It should be noted, however, that despite these efforts, transparency in the utilisation of reports by MAATE and the judiciary remains limited. A high number of reports are being submitted from the AMPC network but only a small percentage of actions or sanctions are being meted out to those alleged to be committing offences.

Finally, in terms of financial sustainability, the Ecuador Azul subaccount has been capitalised above \$USD 6 M of which \$USD 2 M was financed by the GEF project; \$USD 4 M. was obtained from the Walton Family Fund (WFF) as co-financing. This is above the USD 4 million target. The average return of FIAS has been at 9.8%. The PIR for FY2023 indicates that the Ecuador Azul Subaccount generated USD 605,269.27 up from USD 628,028,48 (FY21)⁷. The achievement of this output is helping to address the problem of funding and enhanced the operations of the MPA network teams on the field.

⁷ PIR FY23

The success of the initiative has led MAATE to propose 2 additional MPAs (El Pelado and ANRPV) to be included in the scheme.



Component 1 outputs have been successfully achieved or are on track to be delivered by end of the project. The rating for Component 1 outputs is highly satisfactory. Consequently, the TE concludes that this level of achievement is sufficient to lead to the expected changes at outcome level.

Component 2 was to be achieved through the delivery of one output. Project activities were geared towards generating lessons from activities and using these experiences to inform the management of MPAs. Two pilot areas were selected – Playas de Villamil National Recreation Area (ANRPV) and Puntilla Santa Elena Marine Coastal Wildlife Breeding Reserve (REMACOPSE). The project developed and delivered an awareness and education programme for tourism related actors in both areas with collaboration from MAATE and the municipalities of Playas, Salinas and Santa Elena. Furthermore, to lay the governance foundation for the pilot areas, working groups were established and the project supported the consolidation of governance arrangements between local governments, MPAs and other stakeholders. Formal and informal governance processes were explored by the project to harmonize management actions between local and central authorities. This led to the elaboration of governance schemes for the two pilot sites and these were integrated into the management plans of the beach strip and adjacent zone from Punta Carnero and Playas Villamil, serving as a management example between the local and central government. Two Management Plans of Beach Strip and Adjacent zone were developed for Punta Carnero and Playas Villamil beaches. The Management Plans for Sea Beach and Adjacent Strip of General Villamil Playas and Punta Carnero were formally adopted by the Protected Area Directorate.

These tools are essential for the management of the beach area, especially, for mainstreaming them into the local management tools that seek to articulate the actions of the Protected Areas with those from the municipalities, as established in the Environmental Organic Code (CODA). The Management Plans for the Sea Beach and Adjacent Strip of General Villamil Playas, Engabao, and Punta Carnero have been incorporated into the Territorial Arrangement Management Plans of each pilot. In the case of Punta Carnero, it is also incorporated in the Cantonal Land Use and Management Plan. The project also strengthened the local capacities of 12 officers from the municipality of Salinas to develop tools that help to solve conflicts around the use of the land (PUGS), and so become a complementary instrument for the Development and land regulation plans of the city.

The service providers working on the Punta Carnero beach have been regularized through a registry list and identification cards delivered. In addition, commitment agreements between the REMACOPSE Administration and the service providers' associations have been developed. As one of the beach association respondents reported: *... the project allowed us to change perceptions about the forest and instilled respect for our resources, it is important for us that this type of projects continue in our area ...to give continuity to what we have learned today and that they improve our quality of life.* Another beach operator respondent emphasised that the trainings received has enabled them to consider alternative livelihoods and diversify their incomes into more sustainable options.

The project also ensured that the concerns and voices of women were taken into consideration. A gender analysis was undertaken to assess women's perception of their impact on decision-making in governance processes in REMACOPSE and the ANRPV and action were taken to integrate the gender perspective in the MPA Network and pilot areas. As part of the educative and outreach efforts, protective and informative signalling for Punta Carnero and Playas Villamil have been installed to facilitate planning and regularization of these spaces. Additionally, signposts were strategically

installed in high density tourist areas. Additionally, three videos about responsible tourism for Punta Carnero were developed and transmitted through a social network campaign during a holiday in the country (Carnaval).

It is important to mention however, that this component was to be delivered in collaboration with ESPOL to provide collaboration by lecturers and students. However, during the first year, it was decided by mutual agreement between CI Ecuador and the Directorate for Coastal and Marine Coordination, national coordinator and government counterpart at that time, that the PMU could carry out this outcome and economize and redirect resources to support more direct actions in the participating MPAs and on-the-ground-studies were optimized. Graduates from these schools go on to work in NGOs, private sector and government and involving them in some form could have prepared the future workforce and facilitated institutional change. The lateness of MAATE to adopt proposals for improvement could highlight the need for systemic changes in the future and a trained crop of young workers has the potential to usher positive influence in the management of MAATE affaires.

Based on this assessment, the project outputs under Component 2 have been highly satisfactory. Despite various delays imposed in part by the Covid pandemic, and administrative procedures for validation and approval, engagement with officials at the local level and beneficiaries led to the development of value guidelines which have been validated and adopted with others pending.

Component 3 was to be achieved through the delivery of two outputs. The key objective was to enhance connectivity between coastal mangroves and adjacent inland habitats within the MPA Network in the two pilot sites with a target of increasing the land area under sustainable management by 1,121,8ha. The two pilots selected to explore ways to conserve connectivity were (i) La Loma within REMACAM (Esmeraldas province), and (ii) El Conchal in the proximity of the Arenillas Ecological Reserve (El Oro province). For output 3.1.1, the project developed an inventory of priority sites to intervene in conservation and restoration of connectivity between mangroves and terrestrial habitats. In this case, 10 prioritized sites adjacent to the mangrove ecosystem were identified and validated in territory: 2 in Esmeraldas, 2 in Manabí, 5 in Guayas and 1 in El Oro. Additionally, 25 ecological corridors were defined allowing to prioritize the potential zones to be restored. The inventory has been disseminated to local municipalities, related communities, and is published on the project's website on May 25, 2022 and has been downloaded 60 times as of June 2022. <https://proyectorMpa.com/publicaciones/>. The inventory was disseminated during the V Shorebird Festival – EXPOMANGLAR, which took place in Naranjal on May 28, 2022.

For output 3.1.2, the following products have been delivered in pilot sites of intervention:

REMACAM Pilot – Equatorial Choco evergreen lowland forest – 1,566.94 ha:

- Dendrological report of the Inventory of native seed parent trees and other key species for reforestation, with annexes in Darwin Core format.
- Practical guide to native seed parent tree species (seed collection, propagation by farmers, technical data sheets by species).
- Report on the training process in seed collection, management, and propagation techniques.
- Report on the current situation of the agricultural areas of the Lucha y Progreso commune, including a map with the boundaries of the land indicating the forest cover and agricultural frontier of each piece of land, at a scale of 1:5000 base cartography containing the GeoDataBase, MXD, MPK and maps in PDF and JPG.
- Production of 12 agroforestry plans (4 in FY22 and 8 in FY23)
- Meeting with the Commune to Promote the Use of Agroforestry Plans for Farms.
- Construction of management plans for their farms demonstrating its importance as a tool for the good management of their plots.
- Participatory workshops for the construction of management plans, with the participation of 7 members of the commune.

Equatorial Choco Mangrove

The process to put 425.88 ha under an Agreement for Sustainable Use and Custody of the Mangrove Ecosystem (AUSCEM) for Lucha y Progreso commune was worked with the technical support of the PMU. On December 28, 2022 the AUSCEM was granted to the commune for 392.72 ha.

El Conchal pilot

The project collaborated on the Ordinance Proposal to provide the necessary protection to the dry forest “Conchal Isla Seca” for 10.81 ha. The ordinance was approved on June 28, 2021. Furthermore, the PMU developed the Management Plan for the Municipal Conservation Area Bosque y Conchal Isla Seca.

Jama Zapotillo mangrove (Hualtaco Huaquillas)

The project provided technical support to the five associations with the Agreement for the Sustainable Use of the Mangrove Ecosystem (AUSCEM) in Hualtaco-Huaquillas, 3,326.53ha, to promote the implementation of their management plans and develop the semi-annual reports, which are required for those who have been granted an AUSCEM. The project also worked with beneficiaries of the Hualtaco-Huaquillas concession in the control and surveillance plan for the area.

As part of lesson learning process, the project organised a workshop to strengthen tourism capacities for fishermen and local service providers took place from November 23 until December 3 2021, with a duration of 51 hours of face-to-face training. 59 participants benefited from the workshops: 19 local service providers, and 40 fishermen, shell fishermen and crabbers. Ten topics related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage and its sustainable use were taught. 7 institutions supported the facilitation of the 17 modules taught. A practical field trip was organized to get to know the 8 natural and cultural attractions and for the beneficiary participants to apply what they had learned during these two weeks. Certificates and credentials were awarded to all participants. Additionally, on October 28 2021, the specialist participated as a speaker at the event “Conservation Initiatives and Environmental Management” of the Ecuadorian Network of Women Scientists of the UPSE. For the dissemination of the ordinance of the Bosque y Conchal Isla Seca. From November 10 to 12, 2021, the specialist participated in the MAATE REDD+ event, to articulate the involvement of the actions of component 3 within the REDD+ working group⁸.

Overall, the project has delivered on the expected outputs under **component 3**. Through the interventions in the pilot areas, 5,302 ha is now under sustainable management which is far beyond the target of 1,121 ha. Achievement of outputs under component 3 is rated highly satisfactory

Overall rating

The outputs under component 1 have been highly satisfactorily delivered. The MPA Network was integrated into the SNAP through the formalization of the Strategic Plan of the SNAP on December 31, 2022. Pertaining to component 2 outputs, the achievement of the project was highly satisfactory as it exceeded its targets and commendably developed guidelines which have been adopted by local officials based on lessons learned in two pilot areas. Concerning the output of component 3, the project successfully attained and exceeded its targets to increase the area under sustainable management, enhancing the connectivity between coastal mangroves and inland habitats within target zones. The overall rating for outputs is hence considered satisfactory.

⁸ Q2 FY21

5.2. Achievement of project outcomes

Overall outcome rating: Highly Satisfactory

5.2.1. Effectiveness

Component 1: Establishing the foundations for the efficient operation of the MPA network

Outcome 1.1. Institutional, legal, and technical capacity substantially improved to efficiently manage the MPA network.

Outcome 1.1 seeks to provide an improved administrative-legal capacity building for the MPA system. Specifically, Institutional, legal, and technical capacity substantially improved to efficiently manage the MPA network.

The project has succeeded in developing a suite of documents, recommendations, and proposals for improving the management of the MPA network. This includes the strategic plan as well as the operational action plans with the relevant administrative procedures. However, the adoption and recognition by MAATE was an issue despite significant effort by the project to expedite the action. The SNAP management model development stalled but it was however formalized in December 2022.

To enhance the legal and institutional framework, the project developed / revised regulations on tourism, fishing standards, regulation on special conservation areas, regulation on protected areas categories, as well as regulations for tourist activities on sea turtles nesting beaches⁹. In FY22, MAATE submitted two proposals to CI-Ecuador on the standards for management and administration of voluntary and obligatory ecological assessments and standards on the establishment and management of environmental buffer zones of projected areas, these proposals to date have not been approved by the authority. More progress has however been achieved on the tourism regulations where two tourism regulations were officialized by MINTUR. These are under Ministerial Agreement No. 2019-058: “Requirements for Certifications for Adventure Tourism” and Ministerial Agreement No. 2020-05: “Regulations for Adventure Tourism”.

The project delivered advanced specialized training for MPA rangers, prosecutors, and judges in an attempt to increase the success of prosecution of infractions through increased interdiction and successful prosecution. The legal course for enforcement and prosecution officers addresses the procedures for cross-jurisdictional operations, tourism, fisheries, biodiversity, and municipal regulations. The management of marine and coastal areas course focuses on the monitoring of vessels’ operational status, surveillance, and enforcement operational guidelines and specific MPA regulations. Specialised trainings are being implemented using the MAATEDUCA platform. Other trainings delivered by the project partner WildAid focused on certification courses in technical themes such as Marine Operator certification, Control and interdiction, and legal processing of evidence. Additionally, the project strengthened the CEPA programme through development of technical education programmes for REMACOPSE and ANRPV.

To strengthen stakeholder engagement and MPA governance, the project developed a communications strategy. This is being delivered through development of a project website and regular publication of news items on the project activities. Project visibility materials including T-shirts and banners have been distributed. A grievance mechanism has also been operationalised and disseminated to stakeholders in the form of banners and posters. However, guidelines to efficiently incorporate MPAs into coastal zones and actions to reduce conflict between stakeholders have been delayed. Only recently, has a consultant Biogennia been engaged to work on the guidelines and their dissemination.

In sum, **outcome 1.1** is considered as highly satisfactory from the project’s interventions.

⁹ This activity was discontinued for lack of engagement from MAATE

Outcome 1.2: Effectiveness in detecting and sanctioning infringements in MPAs considerably increased

Outcome 1.2 seeks to enhance the effectiveness in detecting and sanctioning infractions in MPAs drawing on the institutional frameworks developed in 1.1 and the capacity building support provided to national actors. The project in partnership with WildAid delivered a diagnostic report that identified and assessed the level of compliance of the existing collaboration agreements between MAATE and other public institutions. The report indicates the need to sign specific collaboration agreements with the state security institutions to improve surveillance and control operations. An Operational Agreement was reached between the Coast Guard Command, MAATE and WildAid to support the operation of control and surveillance of Santa Clara. With framework agreements defining the roles between security agencies and MAATE, the project executed a procurement plan that installed the systems and equipment for effective control and surveillance operations. Specifically, the project equipped the MPAs with boats, motors and vehicles, for the control and surveillance operations.

The project developed and installed a Radio Communication System that will service Pacoche, Machalilla, Cantagallo, Bajo Cope, El Pelado and Puntilla de Santa Elena. Equipment in the form of portable radios, mobile radio bases and radio base stations with a repeater installed on Cerro Bola de Oro and a DMRIII trunked system on Cerro Salinas. A cooperative Community Surveillance System for the pilot projects supporting Component 2 (described below) was developed and 12 Control and Surveillance Plans were developed including for REMACOPSE, PACOCHE, REVISMEM, PNM, RMISC, REMACAM and Galera. Additionally, as a counterpart, the Coastal Marine Project carried out the REMAPE Control and Surveillance Plan. A system for registering violations and sanctions has been developed in-part with inputs pending from the Provincial Directorate of Guayas. In addition, several trainings have been conducted for the MPA lawyers and MAATE offices to socialize them with the system.

The effectiveness of network prosecution is a key target of the project and seeks to explore the extent to which project efforts translate to better law enforcement outcomes. According to the project's monitoring update, 124 reports¹⁰ have been generated between 2019 and 2022. During the period from September 2021 until June 2022, according to information provided by the MPAs, there are 14 open processes and 15 sanctions. The additional sanction is presumed to come from processes opened in previous periods. With this information it is determined that the PE indicator in 2022 is 107.14%. This indicator captures the effectiveness of the MPA network in processing infractions (FY23 PIR). As the underlying information is emerging from MPAs, there is currently no mechanism to control the data from the Zonal Directorates of MAATE. Since 2019, a total of 497 probable initiations of proceedings were reported to Zonal Directorates of MAATE, of which the project was only aware of 28 open (5.6% of the total) cases. MAATE dependencies are not providing information on the state of sanctions and enforcement actions implemented based on the reports submitted.

However, when information is further disaggregated at the level of each network, SANTA CLARA stands out with a value of 133%, probably because proceedings from previous periods were resolved. The cases registered were settled through judicial channels, where this MPA has developed highly successful experiences. REMACOPSE shows a result of 100%, as the processes were concluded in a very effective and timely manner. The cases registered to refer to administrative proceedings, with the Zonal Directorate 5. The rest of the MPAs and their respective MAATE Zonal Directorates have not been able to register any open cases or enforced sentences. This seems to align with the apathy observed from officials reported in outcome 1.1. Thus far, issues related to legal sanctions seem not to be supported, with exceptions of the Zonal Directorate 5¹¹.

¹⁰ FY23 PIR

¹¹ CI-E 2022; Report on the monitoring of the control and surveillance indicators established in the Prodoc; pp 68

In addition to actions delivered to strengthen monitoring and law enforcement, the project partner WildAid has delivered a radio communications system at Manabi and Santa Elena. 28 radios have been installed within 6 MPA (PNM, PACOCHE, PELADO, BAJO, COPE, REMACOPSE and CANTAGALLO-MACHALILLA) and within the facilities of the national navy. WildAid also made further investments for the installation of a signal repeater to cover PACOCHE. To further support the performance of their surveillance and law enforcement actions, 12 monitoring and surveillance plans were developed as well as actions to strengthen community engagement in the detection and reporting of alleged infractions. Capacity building and technical support has also been delivered to officials including through monitoring the performance of the radio communications.

The project also enhanced the mobility capabilities of MPAs through the provision of boats and navigation kits and other state-of-the-art equipment. Prior to project intervention, most of the vessels in the MPAs had VAI values below 15%. This is because from the beginning of the MPA Network Project there were no adequate vessels, there was little availability of resources for marine operations (e.g. no fuel, lubricants, maintenance), and there was a lack of trained and accredited personnel. In this last period, with funds from WildAid and the ECUADOR AZUL sub-account, it has been possible to maintain marine operations (fuel, lubricants and other expenses) and the values have an increasing trend. The additional value of these contributions is evident in the vessel availability index. In fact, in 2019 cumulatively across the entire MPA Network, 1197 days were navigated for control and surveillance purposes. This has increased to 1552 cumulative days representing an increase of 355 patrol days (30% over 2019) of vessel availability across the MPA Network for marine patrols. This has been made possible through availability of fuel, personnel and the ability to cover other operational costs. To sustain and increase improvements in VAI, it is necessary to secure financial resources for MPAs, including fuel, maintenance, spare parts and repairs, and continuous upgrading of equipment and personnel and issue which outcome 1.3 seeks to address.

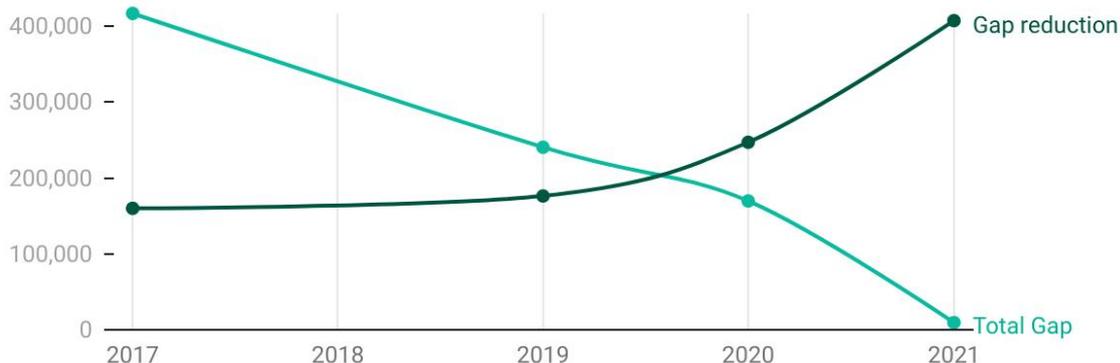
In sum, **outcome 1.2** is highly satisfactory considering the work done to strengthen surveillance and law enforcement, capacity building of actors and provision of mobility capability which is crucial to identify and report on potential anthropic actions exerting pressure on the coastal and marine protected area ecosystems. The key challenge here remains one of transparency and the willingness of MAATE officials to act on the reports of alleged cases and to report and disseminate information on the proceedings and sanctions. This is where a stronger engagement with wider civil society on these matters could help strengthen advocacy towards more transparency and accountability of government officials.

Outcome 1.3: Significantly improved financial mechanism for long-term sustainable financing of the MPA network.

Outcome 1.3. is designed to close the financial gaps that plague MPA management. This outcome seeks to strengthen a financial mechanism to support long-term sustainable financing of the MPA network in Ecuador. The outcome has three targeted outputs. The first is a dedicated sub-account and financing established and in operation within the Fund for Sustainable Environmental Investments (FIAS) to sustain the network of MPAs. Second, a strategy for the management of expenditures is under implementation. Finally, the project sought a strategy to diversify and increase funding for the MPA network under implementation.

In terms of sustainable financing, there was significant progress in the implementation of the Ecuador Azul strategy. The agreement was signed between CI and FIAS in FY19. This has reduced the overall financial gap of these protected areas to just 78% compared to the 38% target by 2021 (**Figure 3**). Ecuador Azul Subaccount generated USD 503.302 in revenues for year 2022. This distribution includes the 5 main areas of Ecuador Azul and 2 additional areas (El Pelado and ANRPV) that were added to the mechanism in year 2022.

Reduction of financial gap over time (USD)



Source: PIR FY22 • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3: Reduction of protected areas financial gap

In sum, **outcome 1.3** is considered highly satisfactory due to the positive gains achieved in the capitalisation and returns obtained from the blue fund.

Collectively, the TE concludes that the delivery of component 1 is highly satisfactory. This results from satisfactory rating of outcome 1.1 to a highly satisfactory assessment for outcomes 1.2 and 1.3. This shows that overall, the project has been able to deliver on its planned outcomes despite the significant institutional challenges faced, delays and the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Component 2: On the ground learning

Outcome 2.1. Lessons learned from pilots are fully incorporated into new/updated regulations and guidelines for MPA management.

Outcome 2.1 has as focus to integrate lessons learned from the two pilots into new/updated regulations and guidelines for MPA Management and the outcome comprises of a single output.

The project has commendably generated guidelines through the implementation of activities in two pilot MPAs which have been adopted or are on track to be approved by the end of the project. The two pilot areas were: (i) the Puntilla Santa Elena Marine Coastal Fauna Production Reserve (REMACOPSE - Santa Elena province), and (ii) the Playas de Villamil National Recreation Area (ANRPV - Guayas province). These MPAs were selected as pilot areas because they have (i) beach areas that are in direct contact with urbanized areas with no boundaries between them and under intense tourist use, and (ii) on-going collaborative processes with municipalities and strong interest in solving tourism-related issues. None of the MPAs selected had governance processes or structures to involve local stakeholders (e.g., beach merchants, residents, fishermen, etc.) making them very well positioned as pilots. The objective was to support development of mandatory plans that are required by the legislation where beaches are located within protected areas.

The project successfully developed three guidelines that are incorporated gender considerations. The guidelines for the validation of the management plans for Sea Beach and Adjacent Strip of Playas de Villamil and Punta Camero has been adopted by the Protected Area Directorates. Another guideline for the construction of the Sea Beach and Adjacent Strip Management Plan which considers the governance of beaches has been submitted and is under approval.

In sum, the outcome under **component 2** is rated as Highly Satisfactory by the evaluators. However, the many delays experienced by the project in the delivery of this component means that even though

the guidelines have been developed and adopted, there is not enough time to observe their implementation by the relevant Directorates. This should form part of the project's exit strategy.

Component 3: Strengthening connectivity of mangroves with inland ecosystems within the MPA network

Outcome 3.1. Improved connectivity between coastal mangroves and adjacent inland habitats within the MPA network.

This outcome seeks to address the problem of fragmentation of coastal and marine ecosystems in target areas which is impacting the country's biodiversity. The actions started with a prioritisation exercise whereby an inventory of priority sites to intervene in conservation and restoration of connectivity between mangroves and terrestrial habitats is available through the project's website - <https://proyectedamcp.com/publicaciones/> since May 25, 2022. The inventory was disseminated during the V Shorebird Festival – EXPOMANGLAR, which took place in Naranjal on May 28, 2022. 41 attendees were explained of the work carried out in the Ecuadorian continental strip. Among the institutions that participated were GAD Naranjal, Guayas Zonal Directorate of Environment, Ecuadorian Navy, Espiritu Santo University, and protected areas staff¹².

The project commendably implemented activities which raised stakeholders' awareness of the importance of ecological connectivity between coastal and marine and inland habitat conservation. For instance, a workshop to strengthen tourism capacities for fishermen and local service providers took place from November 23 until December 3 2021 reaching 59 participants (19 service providers, and 40 fishermen, shell fishermen and crabbers). The session focused on ten topics related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage and its sustainable use. Seven (7) institutions supported the facilitation of the 17 modules taught. A practical field trip was organized to get to know the 8 natural and cultural attractions and for the beneficiary participants to apply what they had learned during these two weeks. Certificates and credentials were awarded to all participants¹³.

The project also delivered actions geared towards strengthening the institutional framework required to enhance connectivity and sustainable management. In the Equatorial Choco evergreen low land forest area, the project delivered reports and training on native seed production and propagation techniques as well as forest cover and agricultural lands in the Lucha y Progreso commune to enhance evidence-based decision making. In El Conchal, the project worked on the management plan for the Municipal Conservation Area Bosque y Conchal Isla Seca while in Jama Zapotillo Mangrove area, the focus was on the control and surveillance plans for the area working with local fishermen custodians of the Mangrove.

Despite significant delays due to late starting consultancies, due to COVID-19 and to bottlenecks in procurement and document approval processes, a remarkable 5,302 ha have been effectively brought under the management of restoration practices compared to 1,121.8ha planned. The distribution of

¹² Q4 FY22 report

¹³ Q2 FY22 report

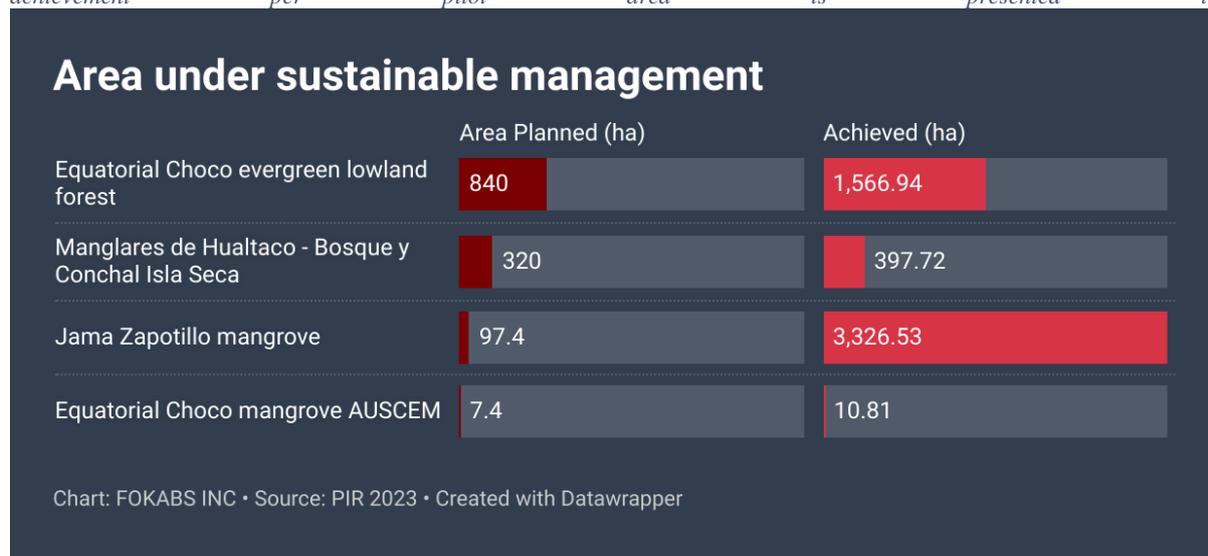


Figure 4.

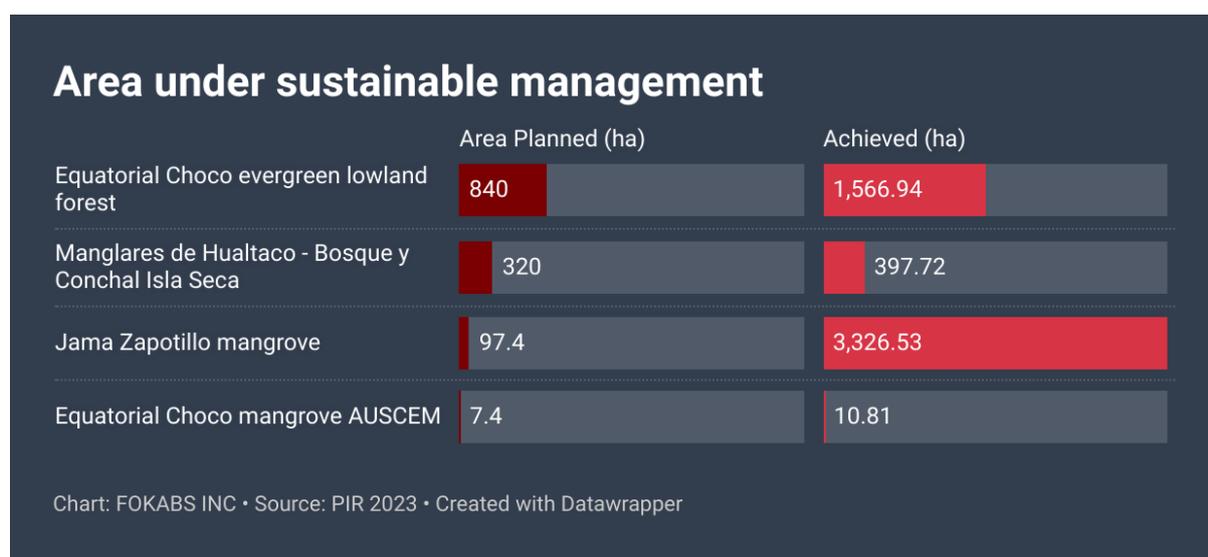


Figure 4: Area brought under sustainable management

In summary, the achievements of **outcome 3** are commensurate with planned objectives and targets. The outcome is therefore rated as **highly satisfactory** as all targets have been largely surpassed. Combined with the achievements of outcomes 1 and 2, the TE concludes that the overall achievement of project outcomes is highly satisfactory. A summary of the ratings is presented in **Table 2**.

Overall rating of outcome achievements

Based on the progress achieved, respondents were asked to assess their level of satisfaction with the project outputs/outcomes. **Figure 5** shows that respondents were overall satisfied with answers ranging from moderately satisfactory to highly satisfaction.

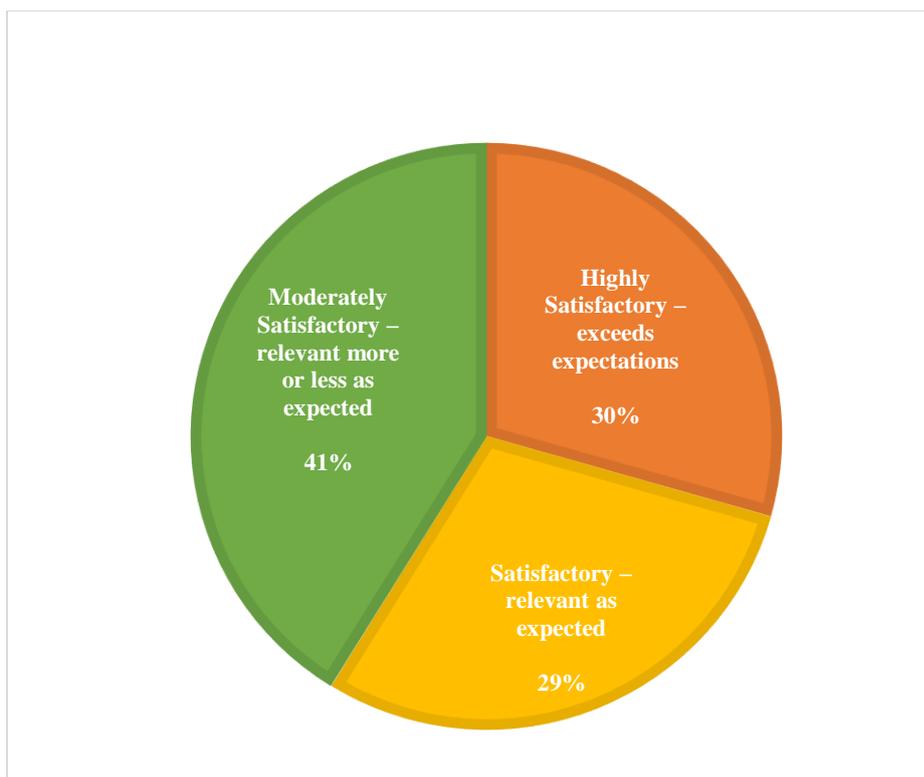


Figure 5: Perception of TE respondents on the level of achievement of project outcomes (sample size: 17)

The terminal evaluation team assesses the overall outcomes based on the quantitative and qualitative information available, that project outcomes are overall highly satisfactory. The summary ranking is presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Overall assessment ranking of project outcomes

Outcome	Rating
Outcome 1.1: Institutional, legal, and technical capacity substantially improved to efficiently manage the MPA network	HS ¹⁴
Outcome 1.2: Effectiveness in detecting and sanctioning infractions in MPAs considerably increased	HS
Outcome 1.3: Financial mechanism significantly improved for long-term sustainable financing of the MPA network	HS
Outcome 2.1: Lessons learned from pilots are fully incorporated into new/updated regulations and guidelines for MPA Management	HS
Outcome 3.1: Connectivity between coastal mangroves and adjacent inland habitats within the MPA network improved	HS
Overall rating	HS

¹⁴ The rating of satisfactory is only related to the efforts of the project and not the official recognition and adoption by MAATE of the policy proposals and instruments developed by the project. when the role of the ministry is considered, the TE rates this outcome as satisfactory considering that actions taken at the local level have been more successful

Success factors

Experienced implementing partners and adaptiveness

CI-GEF the implementing agency, CI-E, the executing agency, and their main partner, WildAid, are highly experienced and respected actors in the fight to restore Ecuador's Coastal and Marine ecosystems. WildAid long-term relationships with the Ecuadorian Coast Guard and SNAP facilitated the implementation of capacity building and technical assistance support. Collectively, the consortium brought together experiences in the implementation of law enforcement actions including control, prevention, processing infractions and remote detection. With all the challenges experienced in component 1, the PMU demonstrated the determination and resilience required to deliver a complex project in such a challenging context. Without such experience from the consortium, it is unlikely that this project could have achieved the reported achievements.

The team also demonstrated adaptive capacity faced with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic whereby activities were implemented online which mitigated some of the impacts of the pandemic on activities. The face-to-face workshops were changed to virtual mode; there were delays in components where virtual communication was not possible due to internet connection problems in border areas. Everything had to be done through telephone calls. For this reason, a time extension was requested for the project (until September 2022), which was initially scheduled to end in May 2022. The CI-E team also responded to changing government priorities such as on the education strategy and worked with WildAid and external consultants to design and deliver capacity strengthening activities beyond the MAAT Education platform. CI also demonstrated responsiveness in response to Covid by modifying its procurement processes to ensure the supply of project resources in the face of price hikes and limited financial liquidity from suppliers.

Multi-stakeholder engagement

The project's multi-stakeholder approach also facilitated the achievement of objectives. For instance, park rangers and area managers were involved in the design of: i) management tools (control and surveillance plans; annual operational management plans, education plans); and ii) practical training processes in control and surveillance. Within the framework of components 2 and 3, the construction process of the Management Plans for Playa de Mar and Adjacent Strip for Punta Carnero and General Villamil Playas; and the instruments to put under management the forest ecosystems of the pilot areas (mangrove use agreement and municipal 33 ordinances) respectively, created spaces for multi-stakeholder engagement such as local governments, direct users, government institutions to contribute. With the non-responsiveness of national officials to approve of institutional proposals, the project commendably engaged with working groups and local authorities in pilot areas which consequently led to the development and adoption of key final products such as the Management Plans of Beach Strip and Adjacent zone for Punta Carnero and Playas Villamil beaches, which included the establishment of buffer zones, as well as the development of ordinances that seek to regularize the use of the beaches. Tourism service providers (approximately 1,600 people) work in the protected area and were involved in the project. Overall, governance has been strengthened so that stakeholders are actively involved and participate and can benefit from the beach without harming the resources.

The benefit of this multi-stakeholder engagement is highlighted by several consultants involved in the project as summarised by one respondent:

I would say that the incorporation of civil society actors has allowed enriching the work by having a multi-actor and multilevel group of people who are involved in the activities of the project, they have allowed community actors and institutional actors to have greater participation and involvement, this has generated a greater sense of ownership towards the project.

In Esmeraldas, supporting self-management, the project helped to parcel out 1,500 hectares, 42 lots, and generated cartography and documents for the community. Stakeholders were identified for each lot

and relevant inventories of parent trees and seed trees were carried out. In Hualtaco Huaquillas, training processes were implemented with support from the university, the canton's municipality and local stakeholders for the strengthening of tourism capacities for service providers and fishermen. The plan is to replicate these actions in other cantons, especially in sites prioritized by the Ministry of the Environment that require protection.

With an improved understanding of the stakes of marine and coastal protection, Morro's fishermen have requested the Undersecretary of Natural Heritage to expand their protected area as the benefits of in-situ conservation have been strengthened. According to MAATE officials, this proposal is in the process of being approved.

Local authorities seem to demonstrate stronger engagement and ownership of processes as well as the political will to improve the management of protected areas in their areas of authority. This is partly because local authorities tend to be more stable and did not suffer the same level of staff turnover as experienced with government agencies. Officials from the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (INPC) stated that the project had enhanced ties of cooperation with fishermen's associations and shell middens, which facilitated access and inspection of shells and islands such as San Gregorio.

Enhanced performance of the Ecuador Azul Fund

The capitalization of the Ecuador Azul sub account by more than USD 6 million within FIAS-FAP increased the revenues for the management of protected areas as well as improvement management effectiveness in the target areas. The fund receives contributions from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Walton Family Foundation (WFF), which are the entities that have provided their contribution. This fund is helping to address a crucial financial gap for basic operations, enhancing diversification while reducing dependence on limited government coffers which have been affected by reduced oil revenues and global financial economic slowdown.

Challenges

Institutional changes

This project was impacted by numerous institutional changes during implementation. Firstly, the elimination of the Secretariat for Coastal and Marine Resources by MAATE created an institutional void in the project's governance structure. There was also misalignment in lines of responsibility as MPA personnel across the network responded to zone directors that do not necessarily follow the concept of the network. This misalignment in addition to high staff turnover at the level of MAATE and MPA as well as the separation of park rangers from MPAs brought about delays and obviously institutional experience loss. Multiple National Project Directors have rotated due to political changes within Ecuador's government. The National Project Director has a direct role in the approval of expenditures. Changes in that position caused delays in procurement. As one respondent mentioned:

It should be noted that, if in two years there were 7 administrations, which means that if the minister changes everything changes, undersecretaries and the new ones who enter have to be reported again and that takes time, resources and energy.

In another area, operational changes in the MPAs and their administrative structure also meant that instead of coordination from an undersecretariat, the MPA personnel are geographically divided under 3 zone directorates, changing the dynamic of the Network concept. Administratively, these directorates appear to be reluctant to financially support integrative MPA Network activities outside of their zones that affect their limited budgets. In the area of training, new authorities within the MAATE changed the capacity building strategy of the project leading to further interruptions and implementation delays. It shows that there is no common vision amongst different authorities regarding the delivery of the MPA strategic plan which has affected ownership and is likely to impact the sustainability of this project, as

one respondent also stated: *there are also cases where the technicians rooted in certain positions within the ministry did not give way or their signature of the report to be able to move forward.* Others stated that because of the volatility and inertia from such officials, the project teams spent a lot of energy having to provide updates and bringing new officials up to speed with project activities.

These concerns have not gone away and are likely to continue beyond the project initial period. Fishermen are also concerned that other actors who have not adopted the ethos of the project could jeopardise the gains achieved. There remains a feeling of a gap in the law enforcement apparatus. This is captured in a quote from local communities.

...there is also no control or support from the authorities. The competent authority that should monitor on land is the National Police, and the Navy at sea. There is no control and surveillance from the protected areas directorates. 'Casi Pesca', it is the inspectorate, but it does not have personnel and, in addition, it is outside the port, not inside it.

Approval of deliverables by MAATE on hold

The project commendably developed a suite of guidelines, regulations, and proposals for the management of coastal and marine protected areas. Unfortunately, the MAATE counterparts did not progress with institutionalisation of some of these proposals made by the project. For instance, while the project made proposals to MAATE relating to the updating of regulatory framework and procedures for the detection and penalization of infractions, MAATE delegated the MPA administrators from Pacoche and El Pelado to lead the actions that will allow the signing of cooperation agreements, with the Vice Ministry of Aquaculture and Fisheries (VAP) and the National Directorate of Aquatic Spaces (DIRNEA). However, no progress was achieved towards this. There are also political reasons for non-approval of proposed institutional improvements and guidelines by senior government officials even though these were developed with MAATE officers.

Covid 19 pandemic

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic was a key challenge for project implementation. Firstly, field activities could not be implemented due to travel restrictions leading to delays in implementation. Secondly, national, and local government counterparts focused their attention on addressing the impacts of the pandemic to the detriment of project activities and many became unavailable when required for project activities. Thirdly and despite adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic through online working, certain field trainings which require practical exercises on the field could not be implemented. Project partners state that online working could not achieve the same results as with face-to-face working. Some officials complained that because of the pandemic, they felt that the consultants commissioned by the project did not always have a mastery of the area and the lack of field visits in some cases meant that findings were not always acceptable in the eyes of officials. For instance, one official stated:

The factors that limited success were that some consultants hired by CI were not from the area and were not present in the territory. On the other hand, they evaluated us virtually without visiting or reviewing the tools we had created in the territory; they saw the planning, but did not see the results. The consultants should be part of the support team and not only give orders or dispositions from afar. The construction of the CEPA Plan was done 'by email', the consultant never went to the field. The work was done, but there was no precise approach in the field. The Diagnostic consultancy did not allow real information to be gathered because there was no presence either.

Limited/budget reductions

During project implementation, the government reduced the operations budget of MAATE. Protected Areas faced budget and personnel cuts that created an additional drag on project implementation. The government's decision was in part linked to the national Covid-19 recovery actions but also the weak national economic situation. The budgetary reductions meant that there was almost no budgetary

allocation from the state budget to MPA operations. This situation further strengthens the needs to enhance the financial sustainability of the Ecuador Azul subaccount which so far has enabled only the target MPAs to close their financial gap.

Respondents also reported cases of underbudgeting but also cost escalations resulting in part to the Covid-19 pandemic and disruptions in global supply chains.

5.2.2. Relevance

The relevance of the project is rated Highly Satisfactory.

Respondents were also asked to assess the overall level of relevance of the project. **Figure 6** shows that 59% considered the relevance as satisfactory while 18% ranked the project as highly satisfactory with another 23% reporting moderate relevance.

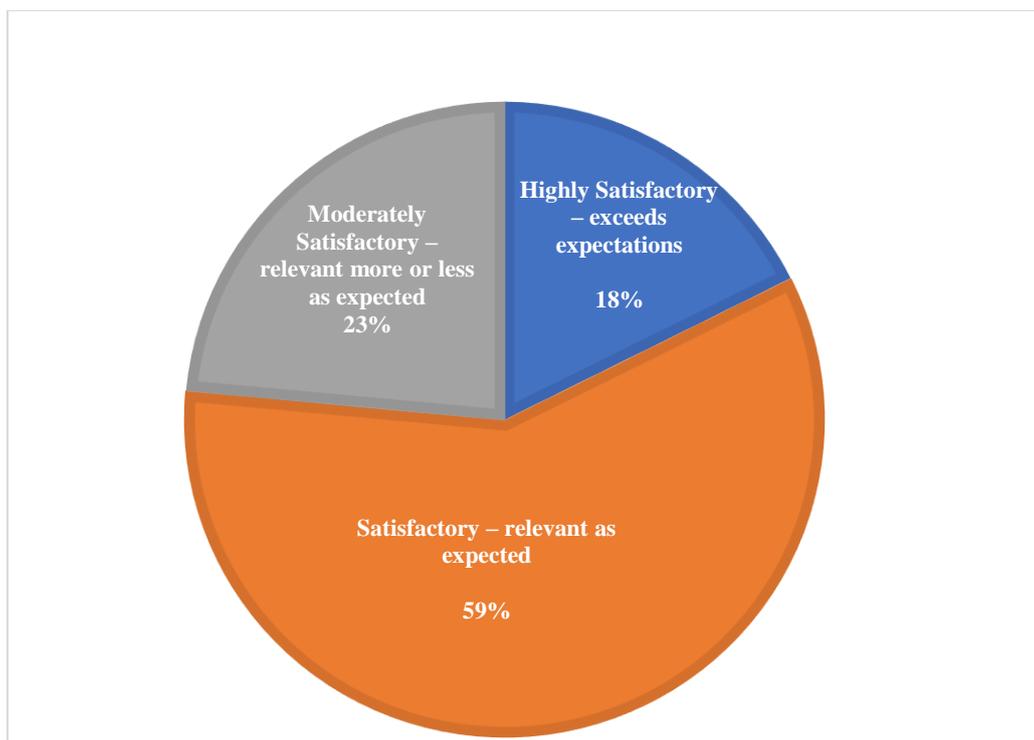


Figure 6: Perception of TE respondents on the relevance of the project (sample size: 17)

The following sections provide further analysis of these results.

Relevance to GEF Focal Area and/operational program strategies

The goal of the GEF biodiversity focal area strategy¹⁵ is to maintain globally significant biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services that it provides to society. To achieve this goal, the strategy encompasses four objectives: (a) improve sustainability of protected area systems; (b) reduce threats to biodiversity; (c) sustainably use biodiversity; and (d) mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors. This project is aligned with GEF-6 Objective 1 of the Biodiversity Focal Area (BD1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems). The objective is to substantially improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity through an effective coastal and marine protected areas network in mainland Ecuador which is consistent with Program 1: Improving Financial Sustainability and Effective Management of the National Ecological Infrastructure. Specific outcome 1.1 to 1.3 seek to improve the institutional

¹⁵ [GEF/R \(thegef.org\)](http://thegef.org)

framework, enhance law enforcement, and ensure financial sustainability required for effective management of the country's ecological capital. GEF resources contribute to the strengthening the implementation of the MPA's 10-year strategic plan in line with BD1 Outcome 1.1 as well as boosting the Ecuador Blue Fund which seeks to address the long-term financial challenges facing the country's MPA network (BD1 Outcome 1.2.). As highlighted by the GEF, restricted government budgets in many countries lead to reduced financial support for protected area management. This was effectively the case during the implementation of this project where MPA budgets were reduced by the government. The creation of the Ecuador Blue sub account responds to the need for new financing strategies for protected area systems to reduce existing funding gaps and improve management. The project was therefore highly relevant and successfully delivered on its objective to close the financial gap for the five target MPAs to 38% through the distribution of investment returns from the Ecuador Blue Fund.

This project is also consistent with LD-2: Forest Landscapes: Generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services, including sustaining livelihoods of forest dependent people, Program 3: Landscape Management and Restoration. To contribute to these goals the project worked towards embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies, and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity in line with focal area objective four: Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes and seascapes and sectors¹⁶. The project sought to contribute to these priorities through development of guidelines and regulations for integrated management of coastal and marine areas (project outcome 2) as well as strengthening the connectivity of mangroves with inland ecosystems within the MPA network (project outcome 3). A key focus was to achieve these goals through a process of co-creation working with local stakeholders on the ground, strengthening awareness and creating the enabling environment for local groups, MPA staff and officials to conserve and maintain natural connectivity. Activities carried out on tourism certification, signalling and communications with tourism operators and other local actors around the Puntilla Santa Elena Marine Coastal Fauna Production Reserve (REMACOPSE - Santa Elena province) and the Playas de Villamil National Recreation Area (ANRPV - Guayas province) were also consistent with Programme 9: Managing the Human Biodiversity interface aimed at reducing the impact of tourism and livelihoods activities on the protected areas.

The GEF is the financial mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity, and projects supported with GEF funding must align with relevant CBD priorities and strategies¹⁷. The CI-GEF project supports CBD objectives by supporting the Convention's Articles 6 (General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use), 8 (In-situ Conservation), 13 (Education and Awareness), and 17 (Exchange of Information). The project is supportive of the CBD's Program of Work on Protected Areas, and also especially supports the following Aichi Biodiversity Targets 11: By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes. Respondents also affirm that while aligned with GEF objectives, the project was tightly aligned with the national government priorities. For official stated that:

Totally aligned with the mandate of the Ministry of the Environment, and the legal framework of the time. That is, the project takes into consideration the convention on biological diversity, which is the basic document for the construction of the environmental code and the other regulations that govern the country.

Other officials reassured that the activities were carried out within the framework of the Organic Environmental Code and the planning of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs) that must act on the land use planning of their territories. The planned activities were also in accordance with the National Mangrove Plan.

¹⁶ <https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF-6%20Programming%20Directions.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/convention/articles/?a=cbd-25>

Relevance to CI Institutional Priorities

Conservation International delivers on a range of projects geared towards providing global environmental benefits and supporting the needs of partner countries. Specifically, projects focus on four overarching project themes.

- Improving Natural Capital Conservation and Governance
- Improving Sustainability of Production in Terrestrial and Marine Ecosystems
- Ensuring a Sustainable Flow of Ecosystem Services.
- Preventing Loss and Degradation in Ridge to Reef Ecosystems

The project is therefore very well aligned with the first three themes. This project responds to CI actions in the Americas, which seek to protect tropical rainforests and endangered species, conservation, and upscaling restoration to help prevent illegal fishing. The project is well aligned with the priorities of protecting and managing vital seascapes¹⁸ in Ecuador. More specifically, it is designed in line with ocean conservation, Landscapes sustainable and Financial and scientific innovation global initiatives¹⁹. This project builds on CI-Ecuador's 20 years' experience of conservation of natural ecosystems and the provision of services to ensure sustainability. Nature conservation, sustainable use of resources and maintenance of environmental services provided by oceans, beaches, mangroves, and other ecosystems are key priorities for CI-Ecuador under its Marine and Coastal Programme. CI-E focuses its efforts on space planning and management, sustainable fisheries management, and support for the effective management of marine and coastal protected areas. The project also fully aligns with the CI's country engagement approach to work directly with national government (Ministry of Environment and Water) to identify and design projects and advise on project implementation by ensuring the highest technical and financial standards and goals are met.

Appropriateness of project design in delivering the expected outcomes

This project was designed to build on the GEF project, Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Conservation (GEF ID: 3548) which initiated the establishment of a network of coastal and marine protected areas, to administer the mainland's MPAs under the jurisdiction of the Undersecretary of Marine and Coastal Management (SGMC) of the Ministry of Environment, and development of a ten-year strategic plan. The MPA network's ten-year strategic plan has four major goals:

- To strengthen the administrative and technical capacities to manage and develop the network of MPAs;
- To incorporate MPAs into integrated coastal management processes;
- To integrate MPAs into the Ecuadorian seascape with connectivity along the Carnegie ridge;
- To integrate MPAs into the coastal landscape, ensuring connectivity with terrestrial protected areas, forests and wetlands.

This project was therefore designed to deliver on this strategic plan and to continue efforts to address the main challenges facing Ecuador's mainland, coastal and marine biodiversity: (i) increasing habitat loss and fragmentation, and (ii) overexploitation of fishery resources. The main causes of coastal and marine habitat loss and fragmentation are (i) accelerated coastal development for urban development, tourism, farming, aquaculture, and other purposes, and (ii) pollution from land-based sources (e.g., agricultural and land runoffs, untreated wastewater and solid waste discharges, mining-related pollution).

More specifically the project focused on addressing the main barriers which limit addressing current pressures on MPAs and the development of the MPA network.

¹⁸ <https://www.conservation.org/places/americas>

¹⁹ <https://www.conservation.org/ecuador/inicio>

Barrier 1: Limited experience with protected areas network management by the Ministry of Environment, and particularly the Undersecretary of Marine and Coastal Management (SGMC).

Barrier 2: MAE's institutional and administrative arrangements do not fully support delegated management of protected areas.

Barrier 3: There is limited capacity to administer the new network. High staff turnover and the lack of opportunities for training and guidelines for newcomers and MPA staff on key aspects such as governance, conflict management and marine surveillance limits performance.

Barrier 4: Current legal tools are insufficient. There are major limitations to administer fisheries and tourism within MPAs, and to sustain enforcement and sanction of infractions. There are no specific regulations to administer fisheries in MPAs. Finally, there is limited coordination with other control bodies like the coastguard and the fisheries authority.

Barrier 5: The systems for surveillance and enforcement are deficient and cannot contain the strong pressure from illegal activities. Existing control systems are insufficient to detect and detain those flaunting regulations while modern monitoring and control equipment are systems are lack

Barrier 6: MPAs are not articulated with local governments' plans and actions. Local governments have not fully internalised the principles and practices of integrated coastal management and consequently municipal and provincial plans and actions do not always consider the impacts and pressures they generate to neighbouring MPAs and coastal and marine biodiversity at large.

Barrier 7: Funding is insufficient. Despite the important increase in government funding for the SNAP, several MPAs do not receive sufficient resources to fulfil their basic operation. In addition, funding for protected areas has relied mostly on government support. Overdependence on a single source of funding has proven frail under the current conditions of declining oil prices (the main income source of the country).

Barrier 8: Coastal communities and stakeholders are unaware of the value and need for ecological connectivity. There is little understanding of the dynamic needs and natural connection between marine, coastal and inland habitats and ecosystems. Therefore, decisions on land use changes do not consider the impacts on habitat fragmentation and creation of barriers which impede wildlife movements such as roads and monoculture plantations.

Source: PIF pg 10-11

The key expected contributions of the project were to:

- Assist the process to scale up to an MPA network.
- Improve the capacity for detection, detention, and sanction of alleged defaulters.
- Increase the financial sustainability of the MPA network.
- Advance incorporating MPAs into integrated coastal management processes.
- Gain experience and prepare tools to improve connectivity with coastal and marine areas.

Project design considered and built on a wide range of GEF funded projects implemented in the country by CI-E and government agencies. This enabled the project to formulate baselines and to set targets for the project in line with identified risks and assumptions. The project was comprehensive in its three components to achieve the project outcomes and objective. The outputs were sufficient to deliver on the outcomes through a significant number of activities. The logic of intervention was feasible with outcome 1 focused on creating a favourable institutional environment for effective management; enhancing law enforcement and financial sustainability; outcome 2 tackled lesson learning and the development of guidelines for protected area management while outcomes 3 addressed the challenges of connectivity. The key deficiency particularly for output one, was the high dependency of indicators on government approval processes which was beyond the control of the project. Additionally, indicators linked to monitoring, surveillance and law enforcement did not always have the required resources for

delivery of targets. For instance, resources for testing of technology to detect irregularities and cases of illegality in the field. Fortunately, the project partner Wild Aid stepped in to provide funds for acquisition of equipment. As one respondent stated on this matter, the project had nice semantics but no resources. The issue of resources was compounded because the resources for marine operations were to come from the State (counterpart in the project) which unfortunately, was unable to deliver on resources required for marine operations (gasoline, spare parts for vessel maintenance).

At design, the implementation of project goals was subject to 7 risks ranging from medium (4/7 - 53%) and high (3/7- 43%). In the course of project implementation, the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic added an additional layer of complexity to the delivery of the action. Consequently, 50% of the identified risks can be considered as high suggesting this was a high-risk project. The proposed mitigation measures helped to mitigate some of the risks but those linked to changes in government and limited interest, contributed to the delay in the adoption of proposals for improving the institutional environment and integration of the MPA strategic plan within SNAP, which only happened on December 31, 2022. However, stakeholders report that while institutional changes were foreseen, the scale of changes in government and rotation in authorities was beyond expectation. Others highlight the fact that the project underestimated the level of bureaucracy involved in the development, approval and implementation of policy and institutional guidelines. The view of one government official respondent summarises the views of many respondents on this matter.

Four years have not been enough. It is very difficult to achieve anything if the interested parties do not reach agreements, do not have the will, or if there is no political support from the authorities. Signing the instruments takes a long time. In the project design, it was expected that these instruments would be approved and implemented. However, only approval has been achieved. This was a very ambitious result.

This also highlights a gap in the risk analysis linked to the political economy context of the project whereby personal interests, weak governance, and law enforcement as well as freedom of information could impact outcome 1 goals of enhancing detection, reporting and prosecution of offenders. The view of the respondent below provides an overview of cross cutting responses received on this subject:

...and in some areas of the ministry that information was vetoed and it was impossible to access it, taking into account the legal component and the monitoring matrix at the legal level that it was impossible to lift it if you did not have the will of the legal departments of each of the provinces involved by MAE now MAATE. ... consultants could not access the information about the open or sanctioned trials that MAATE had, but this information was forbidden to the consultants.

In the design of the project, the focus on gender, stakeholder engagement and learning ensured that the views of key stakeholders were integrated and considered in implementation. The intention of the project to work with national training institutions was laudable but unfortunately, the project decided not to engage ESPOL further in the project which could have been an opportunity for learning and training a new crop of graduates capable of working in the area of interest of the project.

5.2.3. Efficiency

Efficiency is rated *Satisfactory*

Project Financing

The overall budget of the project was 39,552,993 USD²⁰ as presented in **Table 3**

²⁰ ProDoc

Table 3: Ecuador MPA project budget

Agency	Amount (USD)
GEF grant	5,813,303
Ministry of Environment (MAE) (In kind)	29,100,000
Walton Family Foundation (WFF) (Subsidy)	2,000,000
WildAid (In kind)	400,000
WildAid (Subsidy)	600,000
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (In kind)	489,690
Conservation International	1,000,000
GIZ	150,000
Total	39,552,993

Analysis of GEF funds by project components

In terms of distribution, the funds from GEF were utilized in the implementation of all three components of the project and equally covered project management costs (**Table 4**)

Table 4: Disaggregation of GEF funds by component (Source: ProDoc)

Component	GEF funds allocated (USD)	Co-financing allocated (USD)
Component 1: Establishing the basis for the efficient operation of the MPA network	4'459.000	23'894.845
Component 2: Active learning in the field	650,000	5,694,845
Component 3: Strengthening the connectivity of mangroves with inland ecosystems within the MCPA network.	427,480	3,150,000
Project Management Cost (PMC)	276,823	1,000,000

Financial Management

Annual workplans and budgets were prepared and this constituted the basis for the implementation of project activities. Where required especially during the era of Covid-19, approved budgets were revised based on prevailing circumstances. The CI-GEF finance team also conducted regular monitoring of the burn rate of the project to ensure the rate of utilization of project resources is happening as expected.

As per the grant agreement established between CI-GEF and the executing agencies of the project, CI-GEF ensures that expenses follow GEF policies and minimum fiduciary standards. All project expenses go through an approval process involving several levels. First, expenses go through the finance lead and thereafter, to the Operations Director and finally through the CI-GEF Agency finance division. Hence, many eyes go through the expenses prior to the processing of payment. For contracts, grants are subjected to an intense due diligence process with a financial risk assessment and as part of the process, CI-GEF Agency trained the executing agencies on how expenses have to be managed in order to be considered eligible.

Financial reports prepared by the project team are sent to the Senior Director of Operations for the region, who reviews and clears the reports. The cleared reports are submitted to CI-GEF Agency through the Conservation Grants Portal. At CI-GEF, the reports are reviewed by the Grants Manager who looks at the transaction information by project components, updated cash requests and procurement plan. In the event of questions/comments, the Grants Manager emailed these to the regional director who consults with the project team and revert to the Grants Manager with the addressed comments

The Covid pandemic retarded the implementation of some project activities and this meant that the project could not be delivered within the earlier agreed timeline. To make up for the implementation time lost due to the pandemic, CI-GEF secured a no-cost extension for the project.

6. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

1. *Financial risk*

During the implementation of the project, some government institutions did not fully cooperate with the executing agency, which dragged some of the activities. This however did not bring any form of financial risk to the project as rather some activities were not implemented, so the project had parts of its budget intended for certain activities not spent.

“The impact of the COVID on the fund's financial issues was interesting, since capital returns were not affected, rather there were extraordinary returns. There was a return of 7.2% despite the year of COVID because good investments were made, in technology and pharmaceuticals in 2021”²¹.

There is financial risk associated with component 3 of the project. The agroforestry plans developed in Esmeraldas within the framework of the project were not implemented due to a lack of funding. This non-implementation of the developed agroforestry plans constitutes a risk, as communities do not have a way to access new funding opportunities without the support of international organizations.

For component 1 and 2, financial sustainability is guaranteed in a way since Conservation International will continue working in the concerned areas. Moreover, there is the upcoming KFW-funded project on marine protected areas which will likely capitalize on the results from this current GEF-funded MPA project.

Some respondents also expressed views that the sustainability of the project outcomes may face some financial risk, caused by the inability of the State to provide funds that could cover and maintain technical personnel. The financial risk of the project is rated **Moderately Likely**.

2. *Socio-political risk*

The project document in the preparation phase highlighted some socio-political risks including opposition, limited political support for the project activities, vandalism of surveillance and communication equipment, reluctance of law enforcement authorities, among others. Some of these risks affected the project such as the limited political support to develop and implement SNAP's new management arrangements²², which was executed in December 2022. Change of local governments in Ecuador, with new governments coming into power at the start of the project implementation, delayed some project activities but this was most often addressed. As for political risk, one respondent mentioned that there will be elections in the project areas next year and it is uncertain if new leaders will want to continue with the project activities²³.

The socio-political risk for the MPA project can be rated as **Moderately Likely**.

3. *Institutional risk*

The institutional risk the project was exposed to, was bureaucracy between the different institutions concerned, especially as local governments change and new authorities take power. This affects the importance given to certain projects and also causes delays in project implementation. One respondent explains that “there were restrictions for services or major purchases where specific authorization from

²¹ Culled from FIAS respondent

²² Formalization happened only in December 2022

²³ CI-GEF respondent

the Ministry of the Environment was required. This caused delays in certain activities because they were tied to the project document”²⁴. Similarly, another respondent cited this as institutional risk “*The high volatility of the personnel that does not allow installed capacities to be left and causes trained technicians to be replaced, without feedback. In contrast to public officials who do not let processes develop and interrupt processes*”²⁵.

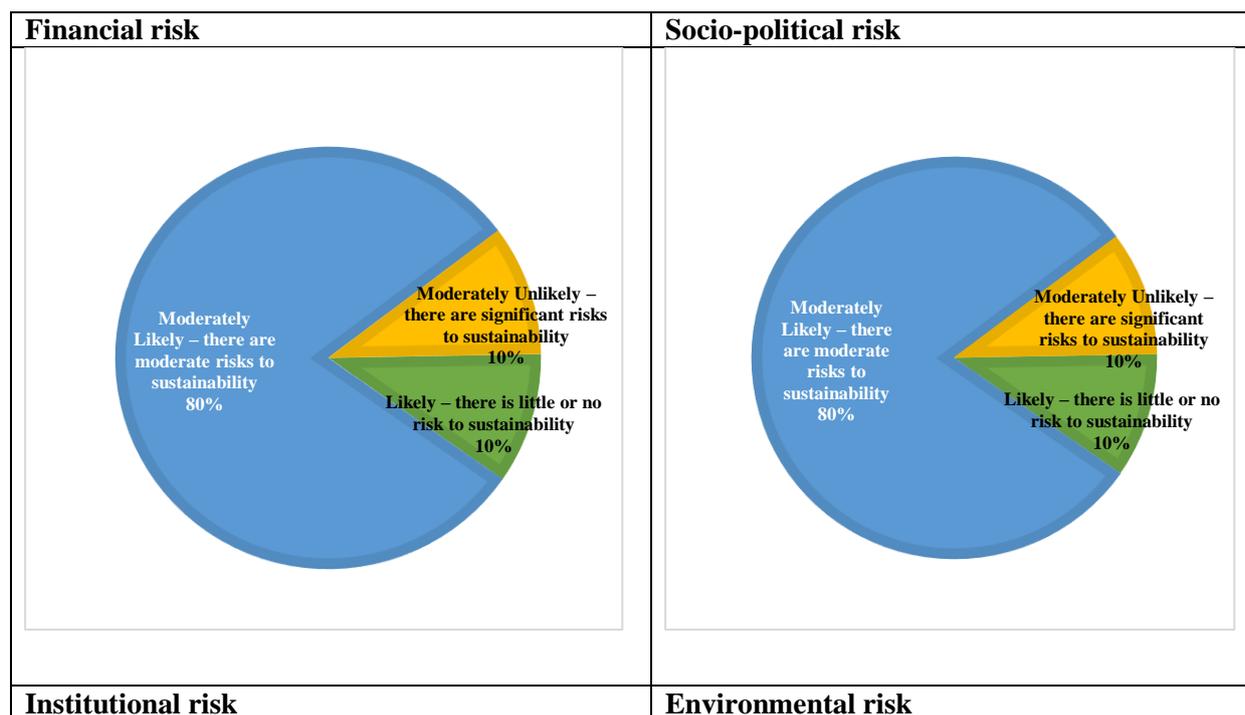
The delay in starting the project also affected the project as it took six months for hiring team members, thus technical aspects of the project had to be rushed. By the third year of implementation, the risk of complex administrative systems and frequent change of authorities and public policies remained unchanged.

Lack of timely responses and engagement from government counterparts is another risk that the project faces and this may affect the sustainability of the project. Though there was an approved Procurement Plan and Operational Plan, activities, contracts and acquisitions needed to be monitored, to ensure efficiency during project execution.

The institutional risk for the MPA project can be rated as **Moderately Likely**.

4. Environmental risk

One of the environmental risks that was identified was climate change and it remained unchanged throughout the implementation of the project, as mainstreaming climate considerations into SNAP’s strategic plan became a challenging factor. “*Climate change is always an increasingly constant risk*”²⁶. The environmental risk of the project is rated Moderately Likely.



²⁴ One respondent from CI-Ecuador

²⁵ One CI respondent

²⁶ Two respondents from CI-Ecuador

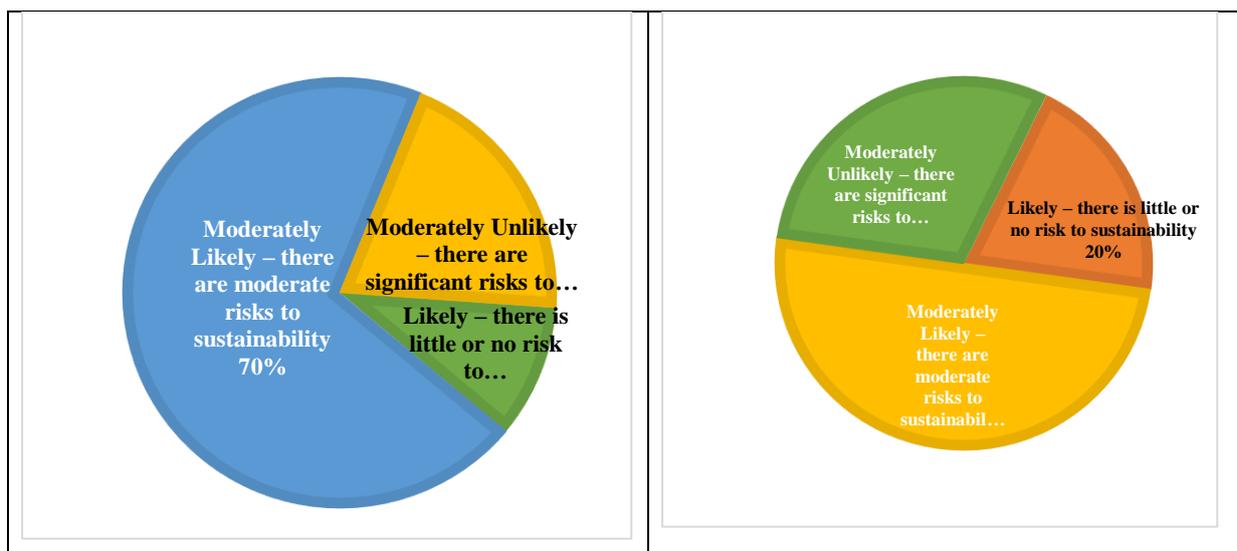


Figure 7: Perception of TE respondents on the project's sustainability risks

The majority of the TE respondents were of the opinion that financial, socio-political, institutional and environmental risk to sustainability was Moderately Likely (Figure 7).

Table 5: Sustainability rating

Sustainability dimension	Rating
Financial risk	Moderately Likely
Socio-political risk	Moderately Likely
Institutional risk	Moderately Likely
Environmental risk	Moderately Likely
Overall Sustainability ranking	Moderately Likely

7. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEMS

The overall M&E system is rated **Highly Satisfactory**. This overall M&E rating was arrived at after evaluating any gaps and weaknesses of the M&E plan at CEO approval and assessing its implementation. The summary is provided below:

7.1. M&E design

The rating for M&E design is **Highly Satisfactory**.

From the time of project design, the project had a clearly written monitoring and evaluation plan, explained in the CEO approval with clearly delineated M & E roles and responsibilities assigned to the various stakeholders involved in the project, as well as timelines for M & E activities. The allocated budget of USD \$54,500 set aside for M & E activities seemed realistic and the project clearly showed its expected outcomes as well as expected outputs. The indicators were SMART and enabled the tracking of environmental, gender and socio-economic results as well as the project baselines for the different project components. The midterm evaluation indicated that the project M & E design was complicated especially in the planning phase when progress on activities was not clear, making it hard to know which activities were pending. Monitoring and evaluation of the project was done through an inception workshop and report, debriefing, quarterly Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings and progress reports, financial and technical quarterly reports, Project Implementation Reports (PIRs),

documentation of learning and a final evaluation of the project. The majority of the TE respondents rated the quality of the M&E design of the project as Satisfactory (**Figure 8**).

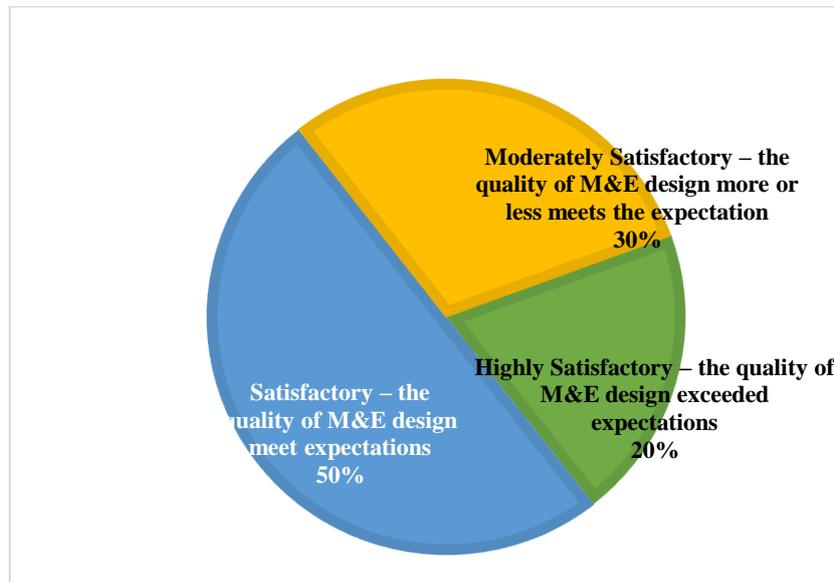


Figure 8: Perception of TE respondents on the quality of the M&E design of the project (Sample size: 10)

7.2. M&E implementation

The M & E implementation for the project is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.

The M & E plan was followed, and funding provided on time for the different activities. Data was collected that permitted to measure the progress of the various indicators, and this progress was reported during the quarterly and annual meetings and reports as well as the PIRs. The Covid-19 pandemic caused some delays that warranted adjustments, such as a revision of the annual work plan and budget to adapt to this situation. The M&E plan was modified accordingly on time as a result of changing circumstances. For instance, with the coming of the Covid-19 pandemic, some project components were slowed down and not being achieved as per the planned timeline. In 2020, the restrictions imposed by the government slowed down and limited project activities, affecting the last four months of 2020. The planned activities for this period which were delayed by the pandemic among others, included the adoption of the management tools and legal instruments developed, updating process of the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) Strategic Plan, the hiring processes and the execution of committees' meetings. This delay caused a non-execution of USD 410.000 from the total project budget and about 70% of the project activities. Some technical processes also got slowed down as a result of the pandemic as access to direct intervention zones were restricted.

Primary data collected as part of this evaluation indicated that there were different opinions on the M & E as some thought that the system was working well as quarterly reports were produced as expected, and contact with the technical team and the project staff was made either through meetings or on-the-ground support²⁷, while other respondents thought that the project focused on monitoring to the detriment of other factors. Other responses supported this claim adding that visits and interviews were carried out as planned, with regular quarterly meetings²⁸, feedback from stakeholders and a review of project progress and challenges. This feedback made it possible to improve on the project activities²⁹.

²⁷ Wild Aid Respondent

²⁸ Respondent from CI

²⁹ MAATE respondents

The TE respondents rated the execution, monitoring, and reporting of the M&E system as Moderately to Highly Satisfactory, with the majority of the respondents opining that it is Satisfactory (**Figure 9**)

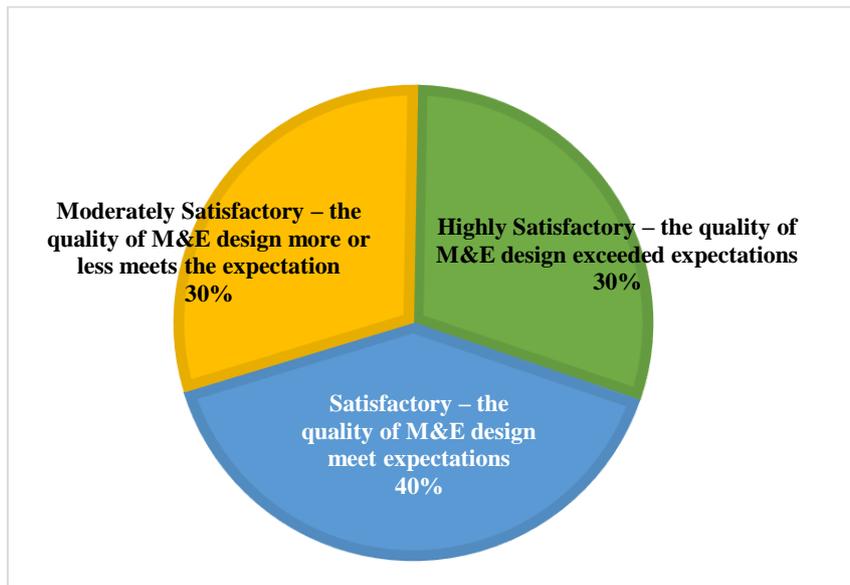


Figure 9: Perception of TE respondents on the quality of the M&E implementation of the project (Sample size: 10)

Table 6: M&E design and implementation rating

Monitoring and Evaluation	Rating
M & E Design	Highly Satisfactory
M & E Implementation	Highly Satisfactory
Overall M & E	Highly Satisfactory

Overall, project M & E was carried out as per the design at the project preparation phase and very minimal modifications were done during the implementation, which were mostly related to the coronavirus pandemic and the restrictions that came as a result of it. These restrictions called for a shift from in-person visits and meetings to virtual which were not a familiar thing and caused some delays in most project activities.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

The quality of implementation and execution is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.

8.1. Quality of Implementation

Quality of Implementation: The quality of implementation rating is **Highly Satisfactory**.

The delays and setbacks caused by the coronavirus pandemic on the project were severe, but the project sought ways of adapting to the situation at hand³⁰. To reduce the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on project activities, the team identified activities that could continue virtually such as the development of

³⁰ FY21 PIR

documents, procurement and hiring processes, drafting of reports, virtual meetings with stakeholders and authorities to follow up on activities as per the workplans as well as organizing weekly or quarterly meetings with the team through virtual platforms. A six month no-cost extension was also granted to enable the project to achieve all its Components which had been delayed by the pandemic.

CI-GEF managed the project implementation process closely, following up on the progress made in achieving expected outcomes. Annual and quarterly meetings with the PMU were held during which issues relating to the project implementation were discussed as well as any challenges resolved.

To fulfil its role of technical and financial oversight, CI-GEF supported the project implementation start-up phase by providing technical and financial guidance that would ensure compliance with GEF guidelines, safeguards requirements, and all technical and financial commitments made at CEO Approval. This was done in close collaboration with the Project Steering Committee, another relevant stakeholder in the implementation of the project.

At the project implementation phase, CI-GEF supported project implementation by overseeing all technical and financial aspects of the project, as well as any further assistance requested by the MoE. It also monitored the achievement of project outputs, ensuring the proper use of GEF funds, reviewed and approved procurement plans, budgets, Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and annual workplans prior to their submission to GEF.

The project implementation however entailed some risks, some of which were continuous, and had been indicated in the Project Document from the preparation phase³¹ such as the lack of responses from government partners and counterparts and the constant introduction of new government administrative authorities. The project saw four government administrations within one year of implementation³². With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic which was unforeseen, CI-GEF missions were delayed and meetings had to move from in-person to virtual due to measures imposed by the government of Ecuador to help them contain the virus such as restrictions on movement, declaring a major health emergency / crisis and social distancing.

There were other challenges that somehow affected the project implementation process, including constant change of authorities with the Ministry of Environment (MoE), the merging and restructuring of the MoE into a new Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition and the disappearance of the Undersecretary of Coastal Management who was a technical stakeholder of the project. The implementation process also suffered from the lack of engagement on the part of the government in the decision-making process and this hindered the progress of project activities as planned³³. CI-GEF managed some of these risks by encouraging stakeholders to carry out virtual meetings and visits, revising the work plan and budget as well as requesting a no-cost extension to enable the achievement of project objectives.

Primary data indicates that the project design fell short in terms of taking into account the budget required in the field and this implied a revision of the budget. Also, due to the time that elapsed between the elaboration of the project design and the actual start of the project, some processes had changed and warranted the project team to do some adjustments to reflect the dynamics that have changed³⁴.

Covid was cited as one of the major challenges as it affected the project not only by bringing in delays in implementation, but also project effectiveness, as discussed by one of the TE respondents *“The high volatility of the personnel that does not allow installed capacities to be left and causes trained technicians to be replaced, without feedback. In contrast to public officials who do not let processes*

³¹ Project Document

³² FY21 PIR

³³ FY21 Q4 PIR

³⁴ CI interview respondent

develop and interrupt processes". Overall respondents rated the quality of implementation as Satisfactory and Highly Satisfactory, with majority of the respondents opining that it is Satisfactory (Figure 10). The evaluators rate the quality of project implementation as Highly Satisfactory.

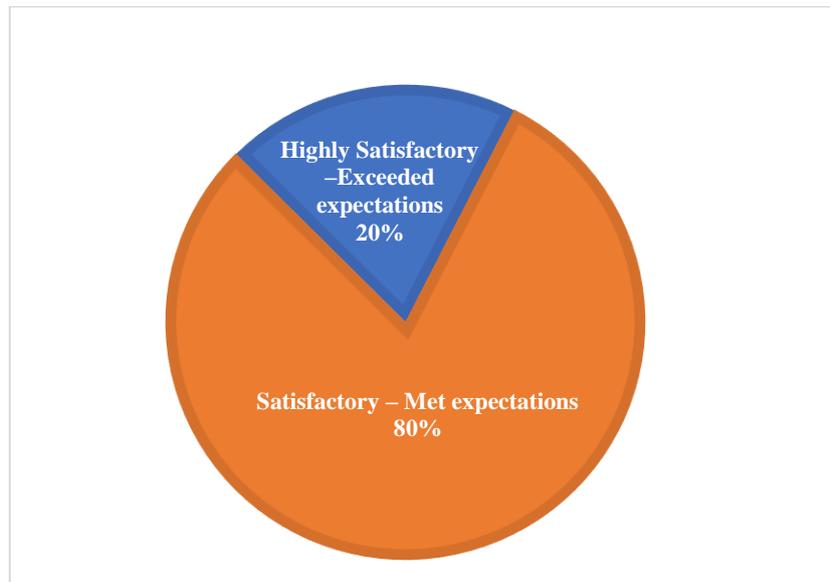


Figure 10: Perception of respondents on the quality of implementation of the project (Sample size = 10)

8.2. Quality of Execution

Quality of Execution: The quality of execution rating is **Highly Satisfactory**.

At the inception phase, a Project Steering Committee (PSC) was established to provide oversight to the delivery of the project. The PSC was initially composed of the following: Undersecretary of Coastal and Marine Management - who presides the PSC, Undersecretary of Natural Heritage, and the Director of CI-Ecuador, with the project manager serving as the secretary of the committee. The CI-GEF Regional Technical Advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean can be invited to participate in steering committee meetings as and when needed. In the course of project implementation, the Undersecretary of Coastal and Marine Management was eliminated and the PSC continued with two of its other members until in FY22 when the Director of International Cooperation (MAATE) was added to the PSC, in line with the recommendation emanating from the mid-term evaluation. A project management committee (PMC) was equally established within the framework of the project and this comprised of the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP), the DNP who serves as the committee's chair, and CI-Ecuador Marine and Coastal Programme Manager. The PMC was charged with facilitating the implementation and coordination of the project. While the PSC met in-person or virtually at least once a year, the PMC met quarterly. The MPA project also had a Project Management Unit (PMU) which was headed by the project manager who operated the project on a day-to-day basis and oversaw the implementation of project activities while providing supervision to the other staff of the PMU. The project manager was equally responsible for the elaboration of project reports, work plans, budgets and accounting records, and for maintaining smooth communication and coordination with project stakeholders and partners.

The Ministry of Environment and CI-Ecuador were the project's executing agencies. The Ministry of Environment was responsible for project implementation and management at the highest level, including the monitoring and evaluation of project activities, achievement of project results and

effective utilization of GEF resources. CI-Ecuador was tasked with executing the technical, administrative and financial actions of the project.

There was collaboration between the members of PMC, PSC, and focal groups from components 2 and 3 to advance the execution of the project, with regular meetings held to review progress made and discuss any challenges that were faced. Clear roles and responsibilities were assigned to each of the institutions concerned with the execution process. It is however indicated in the FY20 PIR that there was a risk of execution caused by complex administrative systems and frequent change of authorities and public policies³⁵. There was a non-execution of USD 410,000, from the project budget, caused by the delay in tender processes to purchase boats, outboard motors and communication systems needed for some of the project activities. It is also indicated that about 40% of the FY21 budget was not executed, particularly the budget allocated for travels and meetings. Some project components such as Component 1 was severely hit by the covid lockdown as tele-education or virtual learning for the MPA enforcers and legal system representatives became challenging. Virtual trainings were not a familiar activity to stakeholders in the country and so transiting from in-person face-to-face training to virtual was difficult³⁶. Components 2 and 3 made significant progress despite the travel restrictions imposed.

Financial Management and procurement:

At the preparatory phase of the MPA project, the plan was to review annual budgets during PSC meetings annually, semi-annually or quarterly as the case may be, while the project progresses. Quarterly and annual financial reports were developed during the project implementation and revised especially when covid presented challenges related to trainings, travelling and field visits. Financial statement audits were done to make sure that the project activities were in line with the allocated budget.

It has been highlighted however, that financial processes were negatively affected by delays in hiring processes and the political situation in the country, with constant change of focal points for the project implementation. This has affected planning of financial management strategies as well. The delays in hiring were also brought about by the unwillingness of the Ministry to cooperate as a project counterpart, causing delays in procurement. Administrative and bureaucratic delays were also cited as challenges to procurement during the project.

9. ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

9.1. Overall Environmental Safeguards Rating

Overall Environmental and Social Safeguard rating is **Highly Satisfactory**.

A safeguard screening process was conducted at the project design phase by CI-GEF, and a screening results and safeguard analysis template was used to produce a report. According to this screening report, five (5) of the nine (9) safeguards were identified to be triggered by the project including involuntary resettlement, indigenous peoples, stakeholder engagement, gender mainstreaming and accountability and grievance mechanisms.

The evaluators think that the results of the safeguard screening are appropriate to the MPA project's implementation, which involves carrying out activities in the natural environment. In order to address the identified safeguards during project implementation, the executing agency developed the following:

- An Accountability and Grievance Mechanism that ensures people affected by the project can bring their grievances to the Executing Agency for consideration and redress.
- Gender Mainstreaming Plan; and

³⁵ FY19 PIR

³⁶ MTR 2021

- Stakeholder Engagement Plan

The screening of the environmental and social risks screening of the project was updated in the course of project implementation. Following the initial screening of the project in 2016, the IP standard was triggered and in 2017, information was obtained that there was an archaeological site in the project area and this triggered the physical cultural resources³⁷. The following year, through consultations, it emerged that indigenous peoples were absent from the project sites and the IP standard had to be untriggered. Overall, just one ESS standard was triggered by the project – physical cultural resources.

Throughout the years of implementation (FY19-FY22), the project’s rating for Safeguard Implementation has been Highly Satisfactory³⁸. At TE, majority of the respondents opined that the execution, monitoring and reporting of the environmental and social safeguards was Moderately Satisfactory while the effectiveness of the safeguards plans in mitigating risk was Satisfactory (**Figure 11**).

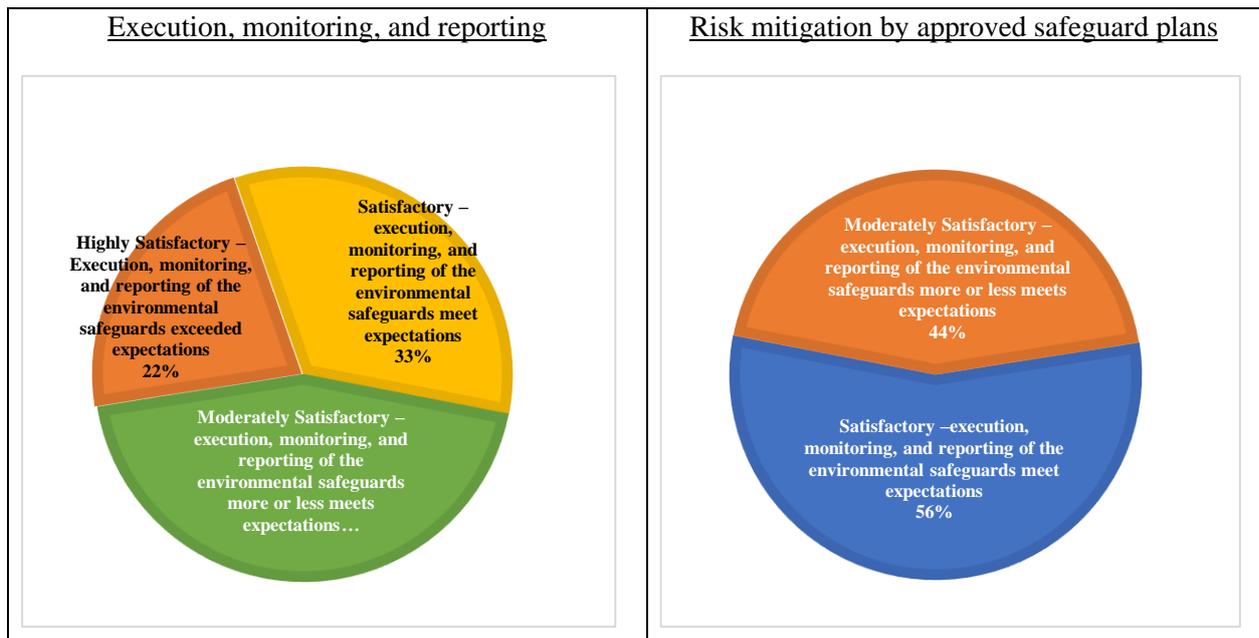


Figure 11: Perception of TE respondents on the environmental safeguard rating (Sample size: 9)

9.2. Gender

Gender is rated **Highly Satisfactory**

Significant attention was paid to gender-related issues in the MPA project design and implementation. In the ProDoc, it is indicated that a gender analysis was conducted during project design and a gender-sensitive results framework was also incorporated into the project, with sex-disaggregated indicators and direct project beneficiaries³⁹. A Gender Integration Plan was prepared to ensure that the project aligned with the Gender Mainstreaming Policy of CI-GEF. There was monitoring and reporting on gender indicators such as:

- Number of men and women that participated in project activities (e.g., meetings, workshops, consultations)

³⁷ Interview with the CI-GEF ESS team

³⁸ FY19 PIR; FY20 PIR; FY21 PIR; and FY22 PIR

³⁹ ProDoc

- Number of men and women that received benefits (e.g., training, employment, income-generating activities, access to natural resources, land tenure or resource rights, equipment, leadership roles) from the project; and if relevant.
- The number of persons that have been involved in project implementation phase (on an annual basis).

During the M&E process, the participation of women in the project activities was tracked and this information reported in both the quarterly and annual progress reports. In the implementation of project activities, keen attention was paid to the participation of women, and strategies were employed accordingly to encourage the participation of women in these activities. As per the gender mainstreaming plan, some measures were to be taken by the project to encourage women's participation and these include:

- Prepare an internal gender policy proposal for the MAE
- Prepare proposal for gender-sensitive and intercultural socio-environmental indicators
- Select a set of training, practicing and awareness activities to promote gender equity within the project; and
- Design and implement an effective mechanism to ensure equitable participation by men and women in project activities.

Existing literature enabled a gender assessment to be conducted, in addition to consultations and workshops with project stakeholders. The gender assessment and stakeholder consultations served to inform the Gender Mainstreaming Plan that was prepared for the project, which provided ideas on the elaboration of project components, results and activities during the project design phase. A Gender Mainstreaming Plan was prepared, providing the performance indicators for the project and sharing reporting responsibilities. The gender indicators that were captured in the project include:

1. Outcome 1.1: Improved institutional, legal and technical capacity to efficiently manage the APMC network.

Indicator 1.2: An online training programme is in place for enforcement and sanctioning officers to facilitate coordinated action in the APMC network.

Indicator 1.1.2a: Number of CMPA rangers per year (segregated by gender) who have completed training courses.

Indicator 1.1.2b: Number of law enforcement officials per year (segregated by gender) who have completed training courses.

Indicator 1.3: APMC officials have and apply guidelines for interaction with key stakeholders and their integration into reasonable support to protected area governance.

Indicator 1.1.4a: Number of guidelines that effectively incorporate CMAs into coastal zone management and the number of CMA staff (disaggregated by CMA and by gender) who have received an introduction to the guidelines.

Indicator 1.1.5a: Number of guidelines for moving from conflict to collaboration and the number of CPMC officials (disaggregated by CPMC and gender) trained in the use of the guidelines.

2. Outcome 2.1: Learnings from the pilots are fully incorporated into new / updated regulations and guidelines for the management of CMPAs.

Indicator 2.1.1b: Women's perception of their impact on decision-making in governance processes.

Gender issues were well integrated into the implementation of the project through awareness raising during trainings and workshops to mainstream gender into project activities. Trainings, meetings, and workshops took steps to ensure the participation of both men and women by making these sessions flexible, so that both men and women benefit from the project activities. Trainings courses had been designed to be in-person but with the change of authorities of the MAATE, a virtual approach became adopted for the delivery of training courses. This however caused a delay in the process as the ToR had

to be adjusted to reflect the change in approach. By the end of FY21, most of the meetings and workshops that had been organized aimed at raising gender awareness, and participant data was presented in a sex-disaggregated manner. Efforts were made to reach out to marginalised groups and get them to engage in the project activities.

The first year of the project saw a Term of Reference for Gender drafted by the PMU as part of Activity 1 on the GMP, which was approved in that same year and launched as a tender to hire a consultancy. By the end of the year, the gender consultancy had delivered a gender workplan and methodology as well as a gender analysis of the operation of the MPA Network and recommendations, and both were reviewed and approved. Two workshops were also held in May of that year to provide training on gender issues. These activities continued being implemented through the second year – FY20 and by FY21, the consultancy in collaboration with the PMU ensured that meetings and events held virtually or in-person as part of Components 2 and 3 of the project were planned and executed with equal participation, mutual respect and collective decision-making by both women and men. Also, participation data in meetings, trainings and other project-related events was registered in a gender-disaggregated manner. To support the participation of women in project activities, the project employed dedicated strategies including the use of two time slots during workshops - in the morning and afternoon, conversations with community leaders about the importance of gender inclusion, and the revision of participants lists to ensure gender equity⁴⁰.

From interviews with relevant stakeholders, gender interventions are beginning to produce results as women are more active and comfortable to participate in meetings of associations, especially for Component 2 of the project⁴¹. The gender trainings therefore capacitated women to participate in decision-making.

9.3. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement is rated **Highly Satisfactory**

In order for the project to align with the Stakeholders' Engagement Policy of CI-GEF, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was elaborated by the Executing Agency during the project design phase. This SEP clearly included the different categories of actors that will be involved in the project (state or public sector, private sector, civil society organizations, academia and international cooperation). Also, the SEP provided information on the actors present in the coastal MPAs of Ecuador as well as an Actors Map which outlined the level of power of each actor category within the management structure of the MPAs. A Relationship Map was also part of the SEP, outlining the relationship between the actors and the MPA managers into 3 scopes as such:

- Scope 1: Actors directly involved in the MPA's land management and organization
- Scope 2: Actors in support of control and cooperation in MPA management
- Scope 3: Users and regulated actors in the MPA.

A preliminary list of stakeholders was developed and updated periodically to reflect the diverse nature of participating actors as the situation warrants. To determine which actor takes part in which activity, an assessment was carried out prior to the preparation of the SEP. During the implementation phase of the project, the indicators were monitored and reporting was done periodically to CI-GEF through quarterly or annual progress reports.

Overall, there were 12 actors from the public sector:

1. MAE
2. MINTUR

⁴⁰ FY22 PIR

⁴¹ CI-GEF respondent on gender

3. DCPR – SRP-VAP
4. DCA – SA – VAP
5. Port Captancies and Naval Seals
6. PN UPMA
7. Prosecution (Aquatic spaces)
8. SNGR
9. GADs Provinces
10. GADs Cantonal
11. Parochial Councils
12. Community Council

By the end of FY21, stakeholder engagement was rated as completed or achieved as it had exceeded the targets. Around 608 stakeholders had taken part in socialization events, workshops, meetings and trainings⁴². There had been about 40 of such events organized as part of the project activities, which had seen the participation of these stakeholders or actors. Covid restrictions affected stakeholder engagement, though remote meetings were organized to make up for the in-person meetings previously organized.

Some respondents opined that the pandemic affected stakeholder engagement as stakeholders without internet access could not engage since consultations were done virtually. Another challenge was that it took time to build a relationship with actors at the local level.

Table 7: Analysis of the level of achievement of the stakeholder engagement targets

Minimum safeguards indicator	Project target	End of project status	Rating
Number of government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, forest dependent peoples, and other stakeholder groups that have been involved in the project implementation phase on an annual basis	9	62 institutions participated in the project made up of a total of 18 Government institutions, 2 academic institutions, 3 support organizations, and 49 private sector institutions.	Completed/ Achieved
Number of persons (sex-disaggregated) that have been involved in the project implementation phase (on an annual basis)	120	Around 608 stakeholders in total 348 men and 260 women have been involved in socialization events, workshops, and meetings.	Completed/ Achieved
Number of engagements (e.g., meetings, workshops, and consultations) with stakeholders	8	40 workshops, meetings, socialization and training events.	Completed / Achieved
Percentage of stakeholders who rate as satisfactory the level at which their views and concerns are taken into account by the project	80%	87%	Completed/ Achieved

⁴² FY21 PIR

9.4. Accountability and Grievance Mechanism

The project's Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM) is rated **Highly Satisfactory**

At the start of the project, an accountability and grievance mechanism was developed by CI-Ecuador for the MPA project, to ensure that complaints from stakeholders during the execution of the project are dealt with in a timely manner. This document stipulated that local communities and other stakeholders may always raise a grievance to the CI Project Manager and where necessary if the level of the problem increases, the stakeholders can raise the complaint to the PSC through the National Director of the Project. At the time the FY23 PIR was elaborated, the project had recorded no verbal nor written grievances, and this met the target which was zero. However, the accountability and grievance mechanism was still being socialized at every presentation made by the project, with banners and posters used to make the mechanism widely known among project stakeholders. CI Ecuador webpage and the project websites also publicise the mechanism. Information regarding the grievance mechanism was spread around during meetings, workshops, and presentations to make stakeholders aware of its existence. Banners and information booklets were also distributed to protected areas and local governments to inform them.

10. OTHER ASSESSMENTS

10.1. Materialization of co-financing

The government of Ecuador in collaboration with GEF was to provide co-financing. GEF grant amount was estimated at USD 5,814,303. Some of the co-financers were to provide financial support in the form of subsidy or grant, while others were to provide in kind. GEF resources were to cover costs related to the PMU and its staff, and partially cover staff costs for CI-Ecuador staff.

At the time the mid-term evaluation was conducted, co-financing was on track in terms of co-financing institutions meeting their expected targets. The first disbursement for the project was made at the end of 2018 and by June 2020, a total of USD 10,394,318 had been realized as co-financing. By April 2021, co-financing realized was about USD 17,569,929 and increased to USD 18,862,540, by June 2021.

Most of the stakeholders who were to provide co-financing were on track in making disbursements for the project, and some had gone above their expected amounts at the time of CEO Approval. By January 2023, a total of about 107% of co-financing had materialized (USD 35 million as opposed to USD 33 million committed). **Table 8** shows clearly how co-financing institutions had complied with their responsibilities this far:

Table 8: Planned and Actual co-financing received, as of December 1st 2022 (USD)

#	Type	Source	Name of co-financier	Total proposed co-financing (USD)	Amount contributed (USD)	Percentage materialized
1	In-kind	Agency	CI AFD	207764	221,109	106%
2	In-kind	Agency	CI Ecuador	792236	792236	100%
3	In-kind	Government	Ministry of Environment	29,100,000	29,133,069	100%
4	Subsidy	Foundation	Walton Family Foundation	2,000,000	3,851,164	193%
5	In-kind	CSO	WildAid	400,000	371,344	91%
6	Subsidy	CSO	WildAid	600,000	813557	136%
7	In-kind	CSO	WWF	489,690	632,552	127%
8	Grant	Donor	GIZ	150,000	163,000	109%
9			GAD Playas	0	12,000	

10			GAD Salinas	0	8,000	
11			Prefectura El Oro	0	8,433	
Total				33,739,690	35,997,463	107%

10.2. Knowledge Management

The ProDoc for this project had a knowledge management plan embedded into it, which gave directions on how knowledge generated during the project implementation will be documented and disseminated in a user-friendly way. This will be by use of websites, electronic channels, social media platforms, and emails. A communication strategy was established for the project, to provide guidance on communication within the project and a communications officer to implement the strategy. The knowledge management plan was followed as planned, as documents of the project were saved in a folder on a Google Drive created for that purpose until the web page of the project was completed. This Drive was shared among stakeholders and quarterly bulletins were elaborated to inform on project progress, which were later uploaded on the GEF web page. Steering committee meetings have served as a place to keep stakeholders up to date on the achievements of the project and also any obstacles or challenges facing the project.

Some of the communication products developed by the project included:

- Management Plans of Beach Strip and Adjacent zone for Punta Carnero and Playas Villamil beaches;
- An inventory of priority sites to intervene in the conservation/restoration of connectivity between mangroves and terrestrial habitats;
- Design of a Control and surveillance System based on the community for REMACOPSE and ANRPV;
- Monitor, control, and surveillance plans for REMACAM and Galera San Francisco;
- Ordinance proposal to declare the “Forest and Conchal Isla Seca” as a Municipal Conservation Area; and
- The proposal for obtaining the AUSCEM for Lucha y Progreso.

A portfolio of pre-made materials including PowerPoint, matrix, and summaries were also elaborated for use during restructuring processes and when there is a change of authority, or the name of the Ministry was changed. These materials helped update all actors on the progress of the project as well. In the course of primary data collection, it became clear that project activities, photos and videos were posted on social media platforms including Twitter and Facebook, while quarterly newsletters were disseminated by email.

The coronavirus pandemic became a hindering factor as some activities were delayed and virtual spaces created by the project to reduce the effects of the lockdown and covid restrictions, and continue following the established workplan. Bureaucratic issues in hiring and contracting have also posed challenges to following the knowledge management plan. These have necessitated a revision of the knowledge management plans as it needs to be adapted to the new situation.

Some stakeholders felt that communication between the project team and the Ministry of Environment was not the best and needed to be improved, as in their opinion it also affected the financial sustainability of the project⁴³. Also, it was suggested that online forms and comment boxes could serve as another option for knowledge management, within the project.

⁴³ FIAS interview respondent

11. LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1. Lessons learnt

Project design

This project was a highly innovative but complex project with ambitious targets related to the revision of the country's institutional framework for the sustainable management of the coastal and marine ecosystems of target pilot areas. The formulation of indicators was built on the assumption of expeditious and timely approval of proposed guidelines, emanating from the project by national officials. The project evaluation demonstrates that framing output indicators that are beyond the control of the project can lead to frustrations when the external assumptions do not hold true. This was demonstrated under output 1 where national government officials failed to adopt and validate proposals. Future projects while acknowledging the role of national governments, should ensure that the formulation of outputs and related indicators can be effectively delivered with the project resources.

Availability of sustained financial resources for marine and coastal protected areas

Creating the Ecuador Azul subaccount under this project has been essential to guarantee the sustainability of the protected areas. This account represents a best practice which addresses the systemic problem of financial resources facing marine and protected areas in the face of government cuts and the inability to fund protection activities. While the fund has experienced positive annual yields in the past years, transparent and equitable management of these resources are likely to further enhance the impact of the activities on the ground. This includes streamlining processes for procurement and utilisation of the funds at the level of the directorates to ensure timely implementation of activities. So far, resources have focused on protected area activities and community livelihood support remains out of the purview of the fund.

Local level ownership and buy-in is crucial for integrated governance and management of MPAs

The project evaluation found significant interest and motivation of community leaders, beach operators and local authorities to engage in the management of MPAs. Local communities valued their recognition in the project as critical actors in the management of the MPAs. While the role of national authorities was sub-optimal in part because of lack of budgets, high staff turnovers, and administrative changes, local officials and staff are more stable. They were keen to be involved and to integrate project findings into their community management plans. Future projects could draw on these experiences through allocating a stronger role for local community leaders and staff and providing the resources they need to play their role effectively. As MPA activities get integrated into local management plans, the sustainability of project gains is more likely to be secured.

Furthermore more, the project highlighted the need to adopt a multilevel governance approach to the management of MPAs. This approach acknowledges the multiple claims to the resources but also their roles, interests, and power to influence decision making on the MPAs. The organisation of workshops bringing together actors operating at different levels of the protected areas increased communication between actors, increased understanding of roles, and mitigated the emergence of conflicts between actors. The project therefore created a framework for multistakeholder participation in the management of the protected areas while opening spaces for the voices of different stakeholders to be heard including women.

Focus on gender in MPA management

The focus on gender is also a key to the success of the project goals recognising not only the role of women but also youth in sustainable management processes. Through gender actions implemented through the project, stakeholders were offered an opportunity to reflect on their own stereotypes and to explore new ways of addressing the manifestations of inequality in their communities. Focus group

discussions during the project lesson learning events highlighted the importance of continuous sensitisation and awareness raising, but also economic empowerment of women as a way of reducing inequalities and discrimination against them. Stronger gender engagement in the management of MPAs could significantly enhance the achievement of the MPA outcomes in terms of protection and conservation in target landscapes.

Monitoring, surveillance contributes to transparency but is insufficient to contribute to stronger law enforcement

The project has made progress through the acquisition and provision of equipment for monitoring, surveillance, and reporting of alleged infractions observed at sea. This is contributing to increase transparency and information on the application of national legislation. However, the evidence demonstrates that scant action is being taken by law enforcement and the judiciary regarding the reports emerging from improvement surveillance. Additionally, only WildAid and CI seems to be working on this action while wider civil society organisations that could lead advocacy for better law enforcement taking advantage of the information being generated is missing. Consequently, strengthening wider civil society and law enforcement could further enhance the performance of the network of protected areas. Drawing on lessons from independent forest monitoring by civil society in Asia⁴⁴ and Africa⁴⁵, leveraging international advocacy NGOs could also highlight and bring the matters of law enforcement to the international stage and consequently draw international attention to the perpetuation of illegalities in the country’s protected areas and inertia from authorities to sanction illegalities.

Capacity building at all levels drawing on local expertise

This project demonstrates the need for continuous capacity building for stakeholders at all levels in the management of the country’s protected areas. From communities to beach operators, rangers, and local authorities, increasing awareness and creating a favourable environment for capacity building can enhance the sustainable management and protection of target seascapes. The provision of monitoring equipment led to a significant increase in patrols and reporting of cases of illegality. The review and development of new guidelines for MPA management, provided guidance to local authorities to work collaboratively with communities and local officials in improving their oversight role. While some trainings were offered online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, beneficiaries revealed the need to complement these trainings with more face-to-face events which provide more opportunities for trainees to practice and apply their learning. Furthermore, respondents stated that they would benefit better from consultants recruited from the local area who have a better understanding of the context and the lived experiences of the trainees as opposed to dependence on external consultants.

11.2. Recommendations

The recommendations from the TE are presented in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Recommendations and action points

	FINDING/CHALLENGE	RECOMMENDATIONS
	Project design	
1.	Preparation of documents at the technical level might be faster than the process of validation at the political and decision-making level	National political and decision-making processes, priorities, and timelines are often different from that of the projects and must be taken into consideration when defining project expected results as well as assumptions in the logical framework. Partnerships with

⁴⁴ FAO (2020) Inclusive independent forest monitoring bolsters good forest governance - Indonesian CSOs empower forest communities to monitor resources, <https://www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/from-the-field/stories-details/en/c/1364521/>

⁴⁵ Mbzibain, A and Nkuinchua, T.T (2021) NGO-state relations in the monitoring of illegal forest logging and wildlife trafficking in Central Africa, *World Development*, Volume 148 (2021) 105670

	FINDING/CHALLENGE	RECOMMENDATIONS
	<p>The project committed to some tasks/deliverables beyond its control. Under outcome 1.1, a lot of the deliverables have to be approved by the government. While the project has submitted drafts to the government and followed-up on these, government approval is yet to be secured and this negatively impacts on the project's results.</p>	<p>other state and non-state actors should ensure that unattained project goals can be reached through the combined or complementary activities, initiatives, and programmes of others beyond the project lifetime. Also, in the course of the design phase of a project, the project design team should avoid to the extent possible, committing to tasks and/or deliverables whose achievements are beyond the control of the project.</p> <p>Responsibility: Government of Ecuador, CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF Timeline: Future projects</p>
	Sustainability	
2.	<p>The priorities of the government seem to have evolved or changed in the course of project implementation. This change in priorities could be a reason why the approval of the draft deliverables submitted to the government was delayed.</p>	<p>For subsequent projects of this nature where the government is the ultimate beneficiary, the project should engage closely and continuously with the government, reaffirming the state's priorities. In the event a shift in priority is identified, the project could take measures to adjust accordingly well in advance</p> <p>Responsibility: CI-GEF, CI-Ecuador, and the Government of Ecuador Timeline: Future projects</p>
3.	<p>The project has generated some results which could be capitalized upon by subsequent projects focused on marine protected areas.</p>	<p>Subsequent MPA-related projects in Ecuador should build on the results of this project. The project team should consult with the implementers of the KFW-funded project on marine protected areas and seek to establish areas of alignment between both projects so that the KFW project could capitalise on the rich experience and results of this GEF project</p> <p>Responsibility: CI-Ecuador Timeline: Before the end of the project</p>
4.	<p>Changing governments and consequently, limited political and ministerial support to project activities</p>	<p>For future interventions of this nature, long-term partnerships need to be established at the political level as such could enhance the sustainability of the project beyond the project's life and beyond any political party.</p> <p>Responsibility: Government of Ecuador, CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF Timeline: Future projects</p>
5.	<p>Delays caused by internal and external forces (new government authorities, bureaucratic hiring process, coronavirus pandemic, etc.)</p>	<p>For future similar situations, adaptive management and capacity remains a vital skill to navigate uncertainties and delays in project implementation and management.</p> <p>Responsibility: CI-Ecuador, CI-GEF Timeline: Future projects</p>

ANNEXES

ANNEX A: Stakeholders consulted

Institution	Number of individuals interviewed
Biogennia Cia. Ltda	2
MAATE-REMACAM	2
Comuna de Afroecuatorianos Lucha y Progreso	2
CI-Previous employer	1
Universidad San Francisco de Quito, ECOLAP	1
Consultants	3
Gad Provincial De El Oro	2
Oficina Técnica Loja. Dirección Zonal 6. Mintur	1
Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural (INPC)	2
Conservation International	1
Ex MAATE	3
Municipio de Playas	1
MAATE	3
GAD Municipal de Playas	2
Ex Conservation International	1
Asociación de prestadores de servicios Playas Limpas (Punta Carnero)	1
Asociación Sirenas del Mar	3
Asociación Playas Limpas	1
Asociación de Pescadores Anrtesanales Nuevo Mileño Jambelí	1
Asociación de recolectores productos del mar Archipiélago de Jambelí	1
CI-GEF	4
TOTAL	34

ANNEX B: Evaluation Terms of Reference

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Request for Proposals (RFP)

June 30th, 2022

RFP No: GEF-TE-EcuadorMPA-007

Conservation International Foundation (hereinafter referred to as “CI”) under Global Environmental Facility (GEF-Agency), is issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for **Terminal Evaluation (TE)** for the “Implementing the strategic plan for Ecuador’s Mainland Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network” program.

The successful offeror shall have the human resources to perform the evaluations in Ecuador.

The award will be in the form of a Firm Fixed Price Contract (hereinafter referred to as “the contract”). The successful offeror(s) shall be required to adhere to the code of ethics, statement of work, and the terms and conditions of the contract. A Firm-Fixed-Price Contract provides for a price that is not subject to any adjustment on the basis of the contractor’s cost experience in performing the contract.

Interested offerors should indicate their interest in submitting a proposal for the anticipated agreement by sending an email to cievaluationprocurement@conservation.org by **5:00 PM (EDT)(UTC-04:00) on July 8th, 2022.**

All Offerors are expected to exercise the highest standards of conduct in preparing, submitting and if selected, eventually carrying out the specified work in accordance with CI’s Code of Ethics, Eligibility and Environmental and Social Responsibility.

Any violation of the Code of Ethics, as well as concerns regarding the integrity of the procurement process and documents should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at www.ci.ethicspoint.com.

COVID 19 Guidelines

Service Provider shall adhere to all applicable international, national or local regulations and advisories governing travel, including safety, health and security measures in effect throughout the Period of Performance.

It is expected that CI and the Offeror will take into consideration and plan around the international, national or local regulations and advisories governing travel, including safety, health and security measures in effect

in the countries that the consultant is expected to visit. Virtual consultations are possible and expected where in-person field work is not possible.

- **Section 1. Proposal Instructions**

- **1.1 Introduction**

CI, the Contracting entity, is soliciting offers from firms to submit their full proposals to carry out Terminal Evaluation of a GEF funded project. When submitting a proposal, please include the RFP number of the evaluation your firm is bidding on, the Budget Template, and your final Bid. **Please note that the firm chosen to carry out this Terminal Evaluation is automatically disqualified if it carried out the Mid-Term Evaluation for this program.** This measure has been adopted to enhance the objectivity of the results of both evaluations.

In order to have a successful bid, the proposed staff must have previous experience with GEF evaluations. **Not having GEF evaluation experience will negatively impact the scoring evaluation section (in section 1.5).**

General Background:

All Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded projects are required to complete a Terminal Evaluation (TE). This is designed to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of a completed project by assessing its design, implementation, and achievement of objectives. The evaluation is expected to: promote accountability and transparency; and facilitate synthesis of lessons. Also, the TE will provide feedback to allow the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) to identify recurring issues across the GEF portfolio; and, contribute to GEF IEO databases for aggregation and analysis.

This RFP does not obligate CI to execute a contract(s) nor does it commit CI to pay any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of the proposals. Furthermore, CI reserve the right to reject any and all offers, if such action is considered to be in the best interest of CI.

- **1.2 Proposals Deadline**

Offerors shall submit their offers electronically at the following email address, cievaluationprocurement@conservation.org.

Offers must be received no later than **5:00 PM (EDT)(UTC-04:00) on August 5th, 2022**. Offerors are responsible for ensuring that their offers are received in accordance with the instructions stated herein. Late offers may not be considered.

- **1.3 Instruction for Offerors**

All proposals must be submitted in one volume, consisting of:

- A. Technical proposal
- B. Cost proposal using the provided Budget Template

C. Offeror Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility

• **A. Technical Proposal**

The technical proposal shall be comprised of the following parts:

- Part 1: Technical Approach, Methodology and Detailed Work Plan. This part shall be between 3 and 5 pages long but may not exceed 5 pages.

The Technical Proposal should describe in detail how the Offeror intends to carry out the requirements described in Section 2, Scope of Work (SOW). The technical proposal should demonstrate a clear understanding of the work to be undertaken and the responsibilities of all parties involved. The Offeror should include details on personnel, equipment, and contractors who will be used to carry out the required services.

- Part 2: Management, Key Personnel, and Staffing Plan. This part shall be between 2 and 5 pages long, but may not exceed 5 pages. CVs may be included in an annex to the technical proposal and will not count against the page limit. Proposed staff must have previous experience with GEF evaluations. Due to COVID 19 concerns and to promote local staffing, firms that have an established presence in the country(ies) where the evaluation will take place will be given preference. This will be reflected under Section 2 of the Evaluation Criteria.

One of the key facets of the Evaluation Criteria is the Personnel Qualifications for carrying out the evaluation. In providing CI with the CVs for the key personnel, this provides a baseline for the evaluation. Therefore, changes in key personnel under the contract must be pre-approved by CI in writing, to ensure that the substitute personnel have the similar vigor in terms of qualifications. If the Offeror issues a Subcontract, Subcontractors meet the technical profile required: language skills, GEF evaluation experience and ability to travel to the designated locations, and must be pre-approved by CI.

For the evaluation team, it is encouraged to have at least four (4) core members: project leader, assistant project leader, data specialist, coordinator/writer. The project leader must have at least 8 years of experience in doing evaluations, and he/she must have led at least three evaluation projects related to the project being evaluated for the bid. For the assistant project leader, he/she must have been involved in at least three project evaluations and with environmental and social safeguards background. For the data specialist, knowledge on data collection techniques, data processing and analysis, statistical methods and software that may be used in the project evaluation. The coordinator/writer must have sufficient experience (i.e., at least two projects involved in the past) in coordinating and writing reports for an evaluation. The technical specifications here are the minimum requirements.

- **Part 3:** Corporate Capabilities, Experience, Past Performance, and 3 client references. This part shall be between 2 and 4 pages long, but may not exceed 4 pages. Please include descriptions of similar projects or assignments and at least three client references.

- **B. Cost Proposal**

Offerors shall use the cost proposal template provided for this RFP (please use the excel file provided in the posting). The cost proposal is used to determine which proposals are the most advantageous and serves as a basis of negotiation for award of a contract. The cost proposal must be all-inclusive of profit and fees. Additional costs cannot be included after award, and revisions to proposed costs may not be made after submission unless expressly requested by CI should the offerors proposal be accepted.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of the proposal, **Offerors must price out the deliverables listed in Part III of Section 2 (Expected Outputs and Deliverables)** and provide at a minimum their hourly or daily rate, travel, and any other anticipated cost. Please refer to the Budget Template attached for details. CI reserves the right to request additional cost information if the evaluation committee has concerns of the reasonableness or completeness of an Offeror’s cost proposal.

If selected, Offeror shall use its best efforts to minimize the financing of any taxes on goods and services, or the importation, manufacture, procurement or supply thereof. If Offeror is eligible to apply for refunds on taxes paid, Offeror shall do so. Any tax savings should be reflected in the total cost.

- **C. Offeror Representation of Transparency, Integrity, Environmental and Social Responsibility**

This document must be signed by the Offerors or (Offerors representative) and submitted with the Offeror's proposal to CI and can be found in Section 5 to the RFP.

- **1.4 Chronological List of Proposal Events**

Offerors must strictly follow the calendar of important dates in the solicitation process. The dates can be modified at the sole discretion of CI. Any changes will be published in an amendment to this RFP.

Event	Due By
RFP Originally Issued	June 30 th , 2022
Notice of Intent to Participate	July 8 th , 2022
RFP Reposted, if applicable	July 8 th , 2022
Questions Due (send to: cievaluationprocurement@conservation.org)	July 15 th , 2022
Answers to Questions Distributed	July 25 th , 2022

Proposal Due Date	August 5 th at 5:00pm EDT (UTC-04:00)
Estimated Award-Interview	August 25 th , 2022

• **1.5 Evaluation and Basis for Award**

Award(s) will be made to the offeror(s) whose proposal is determined to be responsive to this solicitation document, meets the technical capability requirements, and is determined to represent the most advantageous to CI. CI reserves the right to split the award(s) among the highest ranked offerors, if such action is considered to be in the best interest of CI.

	Evaluation Criteria	Total Possible Points
I	Technical Proposal (Part 1): Technical Approach, Methodology, and Detailed Work Plan	
1	Does the proposal clearly explain, understand and respond to the objectives of the project as stated in the Scope of Work?	10
2	Does the organization have an established presence in the country (directly or through a subcontractor) where the evaluation will take?	10
3	Does the proposed program approach and detailed activities and timeline fulfill the requirements of executing the Scope of Work effectively and efficiently?	20
4	Does the proposal demonstrate the Offeror’s knowledge related to technical sectors required by the Scope of Work?	10
II	Technical Proposal (Part 2): Management, Key Personnel, and Staffing Plan	
5	Personnel Qualifications – Do the proposed team members have necessary experience and capabilities to carry out the Scope of Work?	15
6	Does the organization have extensive experience conducting GEF evaluations?	15
III	Technical Proposal (Part 3): Corporate Capabilities, Experience, Past Performance, and references	
7	Company Background and Experience – Does the company have experience relevant to the project Scope of Work?	10
IV	Cost Proposal: Cost Includes (Travel, Fee, Charges, any other expenses)	
8	Cost- Lowest Cost	10

- **Section 2. Scope of Work Terminal Evaluation**

- 2.1 Terminal Evaluation

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) requires Terminal Evaluations (TEs) for full-sized projects and encourages TEs for medium-sized projects. TEs are conducted by independent consultants and are used as an adaptive management tool by GEF Agencies and as a portfolio monitoring tool by the GEF Secretariat. TEs are primarily a monitoring tool to identify challenges and outline corrective actions to ensure that a project is on track to achieve maximum results by its completion. **All reports that are submitted must be in English.**

- I. Scope of Work:

1. Kick off meeting to introduce team, and provide project related documents for evaluations, based on the submitted proposal.
2. The evaluator will conduct a desk review of project documents (i.e. PIF, Project Document, plans related to the Environmental and Social Safeguards [including Accountability and Grievance Mechanism, Gender Mainstreaming, and Stakeholder Engagement], Work plans, Budgets, Project Inception Report, Quarterly Reports, PIRs, documents with project results, Finalized GEF Focal Area Tracking Tools, policies and guidelines used by the Executing Agency, CI-GEF Evaluation Policy, GEF Evaluation Policy, Project Operational Guidelines, Manuals and Systems, etc.), and develop draft Key informant Questionnaire and draft terminal evaluation inception report to be reviewed by CI-GEF team. The report will contain the initial information on the following:
 - a. Initial subject of the review, and relevant context
 - b. Purpose of the evaluation: why is the evaluation being conducted at this time, who needs the information and why?
 - c. Objectives of the evaluation: What the evaluation aims to achieve (e.g. assessment of the results of the project, etc.)
 - d. Scope: What aspects of the project will be covered, and not covered, by the evaluation
 - e. Identification and description of the evaluation criteria (including relevance, effectiveness, results, efficiency, and sustainability)
 - f. Key evaluation questions
 - g. Methodology including approach for data collection and analysis, and stakeholder engagement
 - h. Rationale for selection of the methods, and selection of data sources (i.e. sites to be visited, stakeholders to be interviewed)
 - i. Proposal on the system for data management and maintenance of records
 - j. Intended products and reporting procedures
 - k. Potential limitations of the evaluation

3. The evaluator will host a workshop (in person/virtual) with the Executing Agencies to clarify understanding of the objectives and methods of the Terminal Evaluation.

The conclusion of the workshop will be summarized in a Terminal Evaluation Workshop Report with the following information:

- a. Final subject of the review, and relevant context
- b. Purpose of the evaluation: why is the evaluation being conducted at this time, who needs the information and why?
- c. Objectives of the evaluation: What the evaluation aims to achieve (e.g. assessment of the results of the project, etc.)
- d. Scope: What aspects of the project will be covered, and not covered, by the evaluation
- e. Identification and description of the evaluation criteria (including relevance, effectiveness, results, efficiency, and sustainability)
- f. Key evaluation questions
- g. Methodology including approach for data collection and analysis, and stakeholder engagement
- h. Rationale for selection of the methods, and selection of data sources (i.e. sites to be visited, stakeholders to be interviewed)
- i. Final system for data management and maintenance of records
- j. Intended products and reporting procedures
- k. Potential limitations of the evaluation

4. The evaluator will undertake the evaluation of the project, including any interviews and in-country site visits, based on the Guidelines for the Evaluator/s section II.

The evaluator will Present initial findings to the Executing Agency, CI's General Counsel's Office (GCO) and CI-GEF Agency at the end of TE mission.

5. Based on the document review and the in-country interviews/site visits, the evaluator will prepare a draft evaluation report following the outline in Annex 1. The report will be shared with the Executing Agencies and the CI-GEF Agency. Each party can provide a management response, documenting questions or comments on the draft evaluation report.

6. The evaluator will incorporate comments and will prepare the final evaluation report. The evaluator will submit a final evaluation report in word and PDF and will include a separate document highlighting where/how comments were incorporated.

- II. Guidelines for the Evaluator(s):

- Evaluators will be independent from project design, approval, implementation and execution. Evaluators will familiarize themselves with the GEF programs and strategies, and with relevant GEF policies such as those on project cycle, M&E, co-financing, fiduciary standards, gender, and environmental and social safeguards.

- Evaluators will take perspectives of all relevant stakeholders (including the GEF Operational Focal Point[s]) into account. They will gather information on project performance and results from multiple sources including the project M&E system, tracking tools, field visits, stakeholder interviews, project documents, and other independent sources, to facilitate triangulation. They will seek the necessary contextual information to assess the significance and relevance of observed performance and results.
 - Evaluators will be impartial and will present a balanced account consistent with evidence.
 - Evaluators will apply the rating scales provided in these guidelines in Annex 2.
 - Evaluators will abide by the GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines.
- III. Expected Outputs and Deliverables:

Number	Activity	Deliverable	Proposed Cost \$US
1	Introductory Call	Summary of the introductory call to introduce team members and review evaluation timeline	Insert Cost US\$
2	Desk review of all relevant project documents	Draft Terminal Evaluation Inception Report and Key Informant Questionnaire	Insert Cost US\$
3	Host Evaluation Inception workshop with Executing Agencies (virtual/in person)	Final Terminal Evaluation Inception Workshop Report	Insert Cost US\$
4	Evaluation of the project via interviews and site visits	Presentation of initial findings	Insert Cost US\$
5	Draft Final Report	Terminal Evaluation Final Report (Draft)	Insert Cost US\$
6	Revised report incorporating comments from CI	Final Terminal Evaluation Report (word and PDF), including document showing how comments/questions were incorporated	Insert Cost US\$

- **Annex 1: Outline for Draft and Terminal Evaluation Report**

The draft and final evaluation reports should at the minimum contain the information below:

- General Information

The Terminal Evaluation report will provide general information on the project and conduct of the Terminal Evaluation. This includes information such as:

- GEF Project ID
- Project name
- GEF financing
- Planned and materialized co-financing
- Key objectives
- GEF Agency
- Project countries
- Key dates
- Name of the Project Executing Agency(ies)

The Terminal Evaluation report will also provide information on when the evaluation took place, places visited, who was involved, the methodology, and the limitations of the evaluation. The report will also include, as annexes to the main report, the evaluation team's terms of reference, its composition and expertise.

Where feasible and appropriate, the Terminal Evaluation reports should include georeferenced maps and/or coordinates that demarcate the planned and actual area covered by the project. To facilitate tracking and verification, where feasible, the Terminal Evaluations should include geo-referenced pictures of the sites where GEF supported interventions were undertaken.

- Project Theory of Change

The Terminal Evaluation report will include a description of the project's theory of change including description of: the outputs, outcomes, intermediate states, and intended long-term environmental impacts of the project; the causal pathways for the long-term impacts; and, implicit and explicit assumptions. The project's objective(s) should also be included within the theory of change.

Some of the projects may already have an explicit theory of change. Where appropriate, after consultations with the project stakeholders, the evaluators may refine this theory of change. Where an explicit theory of change is not provided in the project documents, the evaluators should develop it based on information provided in the project documents and through consultations with the project stakeholders. The report should provide an explicit (or implicit) statement on project's theory of change - i.e. how through a causal chain project activities would lead to project outcomes and long term impact. It should describe how causal links among the outputs, outcomes and long term impacts are supposed to work. The report should also include the assumptions made in the project's theory of change.

- Assessment of Project Results

The TE must assess achievement of project outputs and outcomes, and report on these. While assessing a project's results, evaluators will determine and rate the extent to which the project objectives – as stated in the documents submitted at the CEO Endorsement stage – have been achieved. The evaluator(s) should also indicate if there were any changes in project design and/or expected results after start of implementation. If the project did not establish a baseline (initial conditions), where feasible, the evaluator should estimate the baseline conditions so that results can be determined. Where applicable, the Terminal Evaluation report will include an assessment of the level of achievement of the GEF corporate results targets/core indicators to which the project contributes and will also incorporate data from the focal area tracking tool and/or core indicator worksheet .

Outputs

The evaluator should rate the extent to which the expected outputs were actually delivered. An identification and assessment of the factors that affected delivery of outputs should also be included.

Outcomes

The evaluator should rate the extent to which the expected outcomes were achieved and the extent to which its achievement was dependent on delivery of project outputs. They should also assess the factors that affected outcome achievement, e.g. project design, project's linkages with other activities, extent and materialization of co-financing, stakeholder involvement, etc. Where the project was developed within the framework of a program, the assessment should also report on the extent the project contributed to the program outcomes.

Criteria for Outcome Ratings

Outcome ratings will take into account the outcome achievements of the projects against its expected targets.

Project outcomes will be rated on three dimensions:

- a. Relevance: Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, country priorities, and mandates of the Agencies? Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes?
- b. Effectiveness: Were the project's actual outcomes commensurate with the expected outcomes?
- c. Efficiency: Was the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects?

Rating Scale for Outcomes: An overall outcome rating will be provided on a six-point scale (highly satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory) after taking into account outcome relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency (See Annex 2).

- Sustainability

The assessment of sustainability will weigh risks to continuation of benefits from the project. The assessment should identify key risks and explain how these risks may affect continuation of benefits after the GEF project ends. The analysis should cover key risks, including financial, socio-political, institutional, and environmental risks. The overall sustainability of project outcomes will be rated on a four-point scale (Likely to Unlikely) based on an assessment of the likelihood and magnitude of the risks to sustainability. Higher levels of risks and magnitudes of effect, imply lower likelihood of sustainability. Annex 2 describes the rating scale for sustainability.

- Progress to Impact

It is often too early to assess the long-term impacts of the project at the point of project completion. This said, some evidence on progress towards long-term impacts, and the extent to which the key assumptions of the project's theory of change hold, may be available and it may be feasible to assess and report on the progress. The evaluators should also assess the extent to which the progress towards long-term impact may be attributed to the project.

The evaluators should report the available qualitative and quantitative evidence on environmental stress reduction (e.g. GHG emission reduction, reduction of waste discharge, etc.) and environmental status change (e.g. change in population of endangered species, forest stock, water retention in degraded lands, etc.). When reporting such evidence, the evaluator should note the information source and clarify the scale/s at which the described environmental stress reduction is being achieved.

The evaluators should cover the project's contributions to changes in policy/ legal/regulatory frameworks. This would include observed changes in capacities (awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, monitoring systems, etc.) and governance architecture, including access to and use of information (laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc.). Contribution to change in socioeconomic status (income, health, well-being, etc.) should also be documented.

Where the environmental and social changes are being achieved at scales beyond the immediate area of intervention, the evaluators should provide an account of the processes such as sustaining, mainstreaming, replication, scaling up and market change, through which these changes have taken place. The evaluators should discuss whether there are arrangements in the project design to facilitate follow-up actions, and should document instances where the GEF promoted approaches, technologies, financing instruments, legal frameworks, information systems, etc., were adopted/implemented without direct support from, or involvement of, the project. Evidence on incidence of these processes should be discussed to assess progress towards impact.

When assessing contributions of GEF project to the observed change, the evaluators should also assess the contributions of other actors and factors. The evaluators should assess merits of rival explanations for the observed impact and give reasons for accepting or rejecting them. Where applicable, the evaluators are encouraged to identify and describe the barriers and other risks that may prevent further progress towards long-term impacts.

The evaluators should document the unintended impacts – both positive and negative impacts – of the project and assess the overall scope and implications of these impacts. Where these impacts are undesirable from environmental and socio-economic perspectives, the evaluation should suggest corrective actions.

- Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

The evaluators will include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the project M&E plan and its implementation.

M&E Design. To assess the quality of the M&E plan, the evaluators will assess:

- a. Was the M&E plan at the point of CEO Endorsement practical and sufficient?
- b. Did it include baseline data?
- c. Did it: specify clear targets and appropriate (SMART) indicators to track environmental, gender, and socio-economic results; a proper methodological approach; specify practical organization and logistics of the M&E activities including schedule and responsibilities for data collection; and, budget adequate funds for M&E activities?

M&E Implementation. The evaluators should assess:

- a. Whether the M&E system operated as per the M&E plan?
- b. Where necessary, whether the M&E plan was revised in a timely manner?
- c. Was information on specified indicators and relevant GEF focal area tracking tools gathered in a systematic manner?
- d. Whether appropriate methodological approaches have been used to analyze data?
- e. Were resources for M&E sufficient? How was the information from the M&E system used during the project implementation?

Project M&E systems will be rated on the quality of M&E design and quality of M&E implementation using a six-point scale (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory). Annex 2 provides more details on the scale.

- Assessment of Implementation and Execution

The assessment of the implementation and execution of GEF projects will take into account the performance of the GEF Implementing Agencies and project Executing Agency(ies) (EAs) in discharging their expected roles and responsibilities. The performance of these agencies will be rated using a six-point scale (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory). See Annex 2 for more information on the scale.

Quality of Implementation: Within the GEF partnership, GEF Implementing Agencies are involved in activities related to a project's identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion, and evaluation. To assess performance of the GEF Agencies, the evaluators will assess the extent to which the agency delivered effectively on these counts, with focus on elements that were controllable from the given GEF Agency's perspective. The evaluator will assess how well risks were identified and managed by the GEF Agency.

Quality of Execution: Within the GEF partnership, the EAs are involved in the management and administration of the project's day-to-day activities under the overall oversight and supervision of the GEF

Agencies. The EAs are responsible for the appropriate use of funds, and procurement and contracting of goods and services to the GEF Agency. To assess EA performance, the evaluators will assess the extent to which it effectively discharged its role and responsibilities.

- Assessment of the Environmental and Social Safeguards

The evaluator will assess whether appropriate environmental and social safeguards were addressed in the project's design and implementation (See Annex 2 for more details on the rating scale). It is expected that a GEF project will not cause any harm to environment or to any stakeholder and, where applicable, it will take measures to prevent and/or mitigate adverse effects. It is also expected that projects actively seek to do good, by identifying opportunities to advance gender equality, social inclusion and meaningful participation of stakeholders in project implementation. The evaluator should assess the screening/ risk categorization of the project along with the implementation of the safeguard plans that were approved by the GEF Agency. There should be an analysis of the implementation of management measures, as outlined at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including findings on the effectiveness of management measures and lessons learned.

In projects that included local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should guarantee that their voices are adequately heard and represented in the evaluation, through primary data collection.

Gender: The evaluator will determine the extent to which the gender considerations were taken into account in designing and implementing the project. The evaluator should report whether a gender analysis was conducted, the extent to which the project was implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits, and whether gender disaggregated data was gathered and reported on beneficiaries. In case the given GEF project disadvantages or may disadvantage women or men, then this should be documented and reported. The evaluator should also determine the extent to which relevant gender related concerns were tracked through project M&E, and if possible, addressing whether gender considerations contributed to the success of the project.

At the minimum, the evaluator should assess the progress towards achieving gender sensitive measures and/or targets as documented at CEO endorsement/approval in the Gender Mainstreaming Plan or equivalent. The evaluator should at least attempt to address the following questions:

- a) How effective was the project in reaching women and integrating gender mainstreaming throughout its activities? were all activities planned in the GMP implemented? Yes/No Why?
- b) Did the project face any challenges in implementing the GMP as initially proposed? Which challenges? How were the challenges overcome?
- c) Compared to the original GMP, did the project had to implement any adaptations to promote meaningful participation of women and advance towards other gender sensitive targets?
- d) Did the project team/stakeholders/beneficiaries observed any qualitative outcomes (either positive or negative) related to gender equality, that are difficult to capture in a quantitative project target?

e) Considering all the above, what are the recommendations for future similar projects to effectively advance towards gender sensitive targets or seize opportunities to promote gender transformational change?

d) Were there any key lessons learned and/or good practices identified in the project's efforts to implement gender sensitive measures?

In projects that included local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should also explore:

- To what extent did the project enhanced women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making spaces and processes?
- To what extent did the project facilitated and enhanced the capacity of women and men to change negative gender norms, that could potentially prevent women from fully benefiting from project's Outputs and Outcomes?
- Are there any indications of the project influencing or enabling women's agency, access and control over assets, access to new economic opportunities or productive or conservation opportunities or roles?
- Were there any unintended outcomes (positive or negative) related to gender equality at the community level?

Stakeholder Engagement: The evaluator should, where applicable, review and assess the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and project specific aspects such as involvement of civil society, indigenous population, private sector, etc. The evaluator should also indicate the percentage of stakeholders who rate as satisfactory, the level at which their views and concerns are taken into account by the project.

At the minimum, the evaluator should explore the progress, challenges, the strategies advanced to overcome them, and outcomes on stakeholder engagement (based on the description of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan included at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

In projects that included local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should also give an account on the efforts made by the project to enhance their meaningful participation in project implementation. It should also explore if there were any additional efforts implemented to promote the participation of vulnerable or marginalized groups present in the prioritized communities.

Accountability and Grievance Mechanism: The evaluator should review and assess the project's Grievance Mechanism. The evaluator should analyze and assess whether project stakeholders were aware of the grievance mechanism and whether the mechanism was effective in addressing grievances.

In projects that include local communities and/or indigenous people as beneficiaries or key stakeholders, the evaluator should review and assess if established channels and procedures, were accessible and responded to their specific context and needs.

The evaluator should also review and assess any other safeguard plans that were triggered.

Overall, the evaluator should identify key lessons learned in the implementation of the ESMF (ESS, gender, stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanism), including what worked well and what needs to be improved. The evaluator should also provide recommendations to guide upcoming future GEF projects.

- Other Assessments

The Terminal Evaluations should assess the following topics, for which ratings are not required:

- a. Need for follow-up: Where applicable, the evaluators will indicate if there is any need to follow up on the evaluation findings, e.g. instances financial mismanagement, unintended negative impacts or risks, etc.
- b. Materialization of co-financing: the evaluators will provide information on the extent to which expected co-financing materialized, whether co-financing is cash or in-kind, whether it is in form of grant or loan or equity, whether co-financing was administered by the project management or by some other organization, how shortfall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results, etc.
- c. Knowledge Management: the evaluators should provide an assessment of whether the Knowledge Management Plan as included in the Project Document was implemented. If possible, the evaluators should also include the list of knowledge products developed throughout project implementation, including internet references if available.
- d. Lessons and Recommendations: Evaluators should provide a few well-formulated lessons that are based on the project experience and applicable to the type of project at hand, to the GEF's overall portfolio, and/or to GEF systems and processes. Wherever possible, Terminal Evaluation reports should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation that have led to effective stakeholder engagement, successful broader adoption of GEF initiatives by stakeholders, and large-scale environmental impacts. The evaluators should describe aspects of the project performance that worked well along with reasons for it. They should discuss where these good practices may or may not be replicated. Recommendations should be well formulated and targeted. The recommendations should discuss the need for action, the recommended action along with its likely consequences vis-à-vis status quo and other courses of action, the specific actor/actors that need to take the action, and time frame for it.

Annex 2: Rating Scale

The main dimensions of project performance on which ratings are first provided in terminal evaluation are: outcomes, sustainability, quality of monitoring and evaluation, quality of implementation, and quality of execution. The CI-GEF Agency also includes ratings for environmental and social safeguards.

Outcome Ratings:

The overall ratings on the outcomes of the project will be based on performance on the following criteria:

- a. Relevance
- b. Effectiveness
- c. Efficiency

Project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings.
- Satisfactory (S): Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- Unsatisfactory (U): Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

The calculation of the overall outcomes rating of projects will consider all the three criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The rating on relevance will determine whether the overall outcome rating will be in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is in the unsatisfactory range, then the overall outcome will be in the unsatisfactory range as well. However, where the relevance rating is in the satisfactory range (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency rating, be either in the satisfactory range or in the unsatisfactory range.

The second constraint applied is that the overall outcome achievement rating may not be higher than the effectiveness rating. During project implementation, the results framework of some projects may have been modified. In cases where modifications in the project impact, outcomes and outputs have not scaled down their overall scope, the evaluator should assess outcome achievements based on the revised results framework. In instances where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has been scaled down, the magnitude of and necessity for downscaling is taken into account and despite achievement of results as per the revised results framework, where appropriate, a lower outcome effectiveness rating may be given.

Sustainability Ratings:

The sustainability will be assessed taking into account the risks related to financial, sociopolitical, institutional, and environmental sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability will be assessed using a four-point scale.

- Likely (L): There is little or no risk to sustainability.
- Moderately Likely (ML): There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Unlikely (MU): There are significant risks to sustainability.
- Unlikely (U): There are severe risks to sustainability.

- Unable to Assess (UA): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Project M&E Ratings:

Quality of project M&E will be assessed in terms of:

- Design
- Implementation

Quality of M&E on these two dimensions will be assessed on a six-point scale:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design/implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design/implementation.

Implementation and Execution Rating:

Quality of implementation and of execution will be rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF Agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of Execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF Agencies and executed the funded activities on ground. The performance will be rated on a six-point scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/execution met expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation more or less met expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation

Environmental and Social Safeguards:

The approved environmental and social safeguard plans will be rated according to the following scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution.

• **3. Brief Overview of Project Being Evaluated**

Implementing the strategic plan for Ecuador's Mainland Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network	Fiscal Year: 2022
	Location(s): Ecuador
RFP Number: GEF-TE-EcuadorMPA-007	
Awarding Agency:	Global Environmental Facility (GEF-Agency)
Type of Contract:	Firm Fixed Price
Planned Terminal Evaluation: October 1 st , 2022	
Total Estimated Cost/Amount	
Range Budget:	\$25,000 - \$30,000
Scope of Work/ Deliverables: Section 2.1 of RFP	
Link to Project Being Evaluated: https://www.conservation.org/gef/projects-list/implementation-of-the-strategic-plan-ofecuador-mainland-marine-and-coastal-protectedareas-network	

- **4. CI's Service Agreement Template & Code of Ethics**

Any resulting agreement will be subject to the terms and conditions of CI's Services Agreement. A model form of agreement can be provided upon request.

5. Offeror Representation of Transparency, Integrity, • Environmental and Social Responsibility

This form to be signed by the Offerors or (Offerors representative) and must be submitted with the proposal to CI. No revisions may be made.

Solicitation Number: GEF-TE-EcuadorMPA-007

All Offerors are expected to exercise the highest standards of conduct in preparing, submitting and if selected, eventually carrying out the specified work in accordance with CI's Code of Ethics. CI's Code of Ethics provides guidance to CI employees, service providers, experts, interns, and volunteers in living CI's core values, and outlines minimum standards for ethical conduct which all parties must adhere to. Any violations of the Code of Ethics should be reported to CI via its Ethics Hotline at www.ci.ethicspoint.com.

CI relies on the personal integrity, good judgment and common sense of all third parties acting on behalf, or providing services to the organization, to deal with issues not expressly addressed by the Code or as noted below.

With respect to CI's Code of Ethics, we certify:

We understand and accept that CI, its contractual partners, grantees and other parties with whom we work are expected to commit to the highest standards of Transparency, Fairness, and Integrity in procurement.

With respect to social and environmental standards, we certify:

We are committed to high standards of ethics and integrity and compliance with all applicable laws across our operations, including prohibition of actions that facilitate trafficking in persons, child labor, forced labor, sexual abuse, exploitation or harassment. We respect internationally proclaimed human rights and take no action that contributes to the infringement of human rights. We protect those who are most vulnerable to infringements of their rights and the ecosystems that sustain them.

We fully respect and enforce the environmental and social standards recognized by the international community, including the fundamental conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO) and international conventions for the protection of the environment, in line with the laws and regulations applicable to the country where the contract is to be performed.

With respect to our eligibility and professional conduct, we certify:

We are not and none of our affiliates [members, employees, contractors, subcontractors, and consultants] are in a state of bankruptcy, liquidation, legal settlement, termination of activity, or guilty of

grave professional misconduct as determined by a regulatory body responsible for licensing and/or regulating the offeror's business

We have not and will not engage in criminal or fraudulent acts. By a final judgment, we were not convicted in the last five years for offenses such as fraud or corruption, money laundering or professional misconduct.

We are/were not involved in writing or recommending the scope of work for this solicitation document.
We have not engaged in any collusion or price fixing with other offerors.

We have not made promises, offers, or grants, directly or indirectly to any CI employees involved in this procurement, or to any government official in relation to the contract to be performed, with the intention of unduly influencing a decision or receiving an improper advantage.

We have taken no action nor will we take any action to limit or restrict access of other companies, organizations or individuals to participate in the competitive bidding process launched by CI.

We have fulfilled our obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country where the contract is to be performed.

We have not provided, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we do not and will not knowingly provide, material support or resources to any individual or entity that commits,

attempts to commit, advocates, facilitates, or participates in terrorist acts, or has committed, attempted to commit, facilitate, or participated in terrorist acts, and we are compliant with all applicable Counter-Terrorist Financing and Anti-Money Laundering laws (including USA Patriot Act and U.S. Executive Order 13224).

We certify that neither we nor our directors, officers, key employees or beneficial owners are included in any list of financial or economic sanctions, debarment or suspension adopted by the United States, United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, or General Services Administration's List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement or Non-procurement programs in accordance with E.O.s 12549 and 12689, "Debarment and Suspension".

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX C: Composition of the Evaluation Team

Prof. Kalame Fobissie (Team Leader, Canada)

Fobissie is the CEO of Fokabs Inc. He has experience in 60+ countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas in the areas of climate change vulnerability, adaptation, mitigation, policy, and finance. He has led and provided climate change advisory services to 35+ African countries and to organizations such as the World Bank, AfDB, GCF, EY, PwC, and UN (UNDP, IOM, UNIDO, UNECA, UNEP, UNFF, UNICEF, UNOPS).

Since 2007, he is actively engaged in international climate policy as a resource person and a negotiator for the African Group of Negotiators. During the drafting of the Paris Climate Agreement, he led some of the negotiations for Africa. He has supported the development, implementation, and revision of NDCs of 19+ African countries.

He is currently the Director of a “Certificate Climate Finance Course” in Canada and Leads a “Climate Finance and Green Investment Lab” in Canada, supported by the Canadian Government. He has evaluated over 13 projects including global programmes.

Fobissie is a Professor at the School of International Development, University of Ottawa-Canada, and a Professor of Tropical Forest Management, University of Helsinki-Finland. He holds a Ph.D. in Agriculture, Forestry, and Climate Change, and a master's degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Helsinki. He holds an Executive MBA from the University of Ottawa, Canada.

Kevin Enongene (Deputy Team Leader, Canada)

Kevin is a Senior Manager, of Climate Finance and Green Investment at FOKABS. He has over 11 years of experience in the field of climate change and natural resource management. He has managed and coordinated the execution of consultancy assignments for diverse clients: the Green Climate Fund (GCF), UNDP, UNESCO, World Bank, WWF, Caribbean Development Bank, GIZ, UNICEF, and Japanese Forest Technology Association (JAFTA) among others. Kevin has been involved in the evaluation of over fifteen complex regional and multi-country projects for different donors that cut across diverse fields: climate change, green economy, COVID-19 forestry, and civil society capacity strengthening.

Kevin holds three master’s degrees in Carbon Management from the United Kingdom, Renewable Energy from New Zealand, and Natural Resource Management from Cameroon.

Prof. Aurelian Mbzibain (International Consultant, United Kingdom)

Aurelian Mbzibain is a Professor of International Development with over 15 years of experience in project management and evaluation. His areas of focus include civil society, forest and wildlife governance, and climate change. His publications are in World Development, Forest Policy, and Economics, Energy Policy amongst others. He has led several research projects, reviews, and evaluations on various topics ranging from climate change, conflict and resilience, NDCs, capacity building, youth and civil society effectiveness amongst others

Estefany San Andres (National Consultant)

Estefany is a Socio-cultural Anthropologist with master studies in Analytical Psychology (University of Essex-England). She has experience in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and

public policies of social development, economic inclusion of refugees, and intercultural education. She has extensive knowledge of participatory methodologies of qualitative research and popular education methodologies. Estefany has Volunteering experience in Ecuador, Bolivia, Turkey and South Africa.

Gabriela Ponce (National Consultant)

Gabriela is currently a freelance environmental researcher and writer based in Ecuador. She has a good theoretical knowledge of conceptual categories on environment, gender, natural resources, sustainable development, and sustainable projects. She has a good understanding and analytical skill to evaluate the issues/relations around society & nature, and its interactions within the specific geographical, historical, cultural, and economic context. She has been part of and led multidisciplinary teamwork which gave her and developed management skills. She has developed a gender sensitiveness and uses gender approach in her work. She has experience in environmental studies, conflict resolution, attention to emergency events, assisting natural and mankind-made disasters. Her expertise is based also in developing, managing, and monitoring public policies, strategies, programs, and projects related to the design and implementation of comprehensive programs and projects. She holds knowledge around the use of statistics, physics, chemistry, biology and environmental history, gender when analysing use and management of renewable natural resources, she also implements tools to generate cross-cutting indicators to develop preventive and corrective measures in the short and long term in the environment. She is Spanish native speaker.

ANNEX D: Standard GEF Rating Scale

Outcome	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings
Satisfactory (S):	Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings
Unsatisfactory (U):	Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements
Sustainability Ratings	
Likely (L):	There is little or no risk to sustainability
Moderately Likely (ML):	There are moderate risks to sustainability
Moderately Unlikely (MU):	There are significant risks to sustainability
Unlikely (U):	There are severe risks to sustainability
Unable to Assess (UA):	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability
Project M&E Ratings	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations
Satisfactory (S):	There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations
Moderately Satisfactory (MS):	There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design/implementation somewhat lower than expected
Unsatisfactory (U):	There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design/implementation.
Implementation and Execution Rating:	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	There were no short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S):	There were no or minor short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/execution met expectations
Moderately Satisfactory (MS):	There were some short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation more or less met expectations.

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	There were significant shortcomings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U):	There were major short comings and quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	There were severe short comings in quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of environmental and social safeguard plans design/implementation
Environmental and Social Safeguards	
Highly satisfactory (HS):	There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations
Satisfactory (S):	There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS):	There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):	There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected
Unsatisfactory (U):	There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):	There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
Unable to Assess (UA):	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution.

ANNEX E: References

Project progress reports (PIRs and annual progress reports)

Annual workplans

Project Document (ProDoC)

Project Identification Form (PIF)