Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment, UNDP and Global Environment Facility Project "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem"

Final Report

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Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem
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ABOUT THE EVALUATION[1]

Joint Evaluation: No

Report Language(s): English

Evaluation Type: Terminal Project Evaluations

Brief Description: This report is a terminal evaluation of a UN Environment, UNDP-GEF project implemented between 2010 and 2017.The project's overall development goal was to reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through sustainable land management in the productive landscape. The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN Environment, UNDP, the GEF and their executing partner OAS-GS and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Key words: biodiversity; climate change; desertification; ecosystem management; forest management; global environment facility; GEF; GEF project; governance; land degradation; production; project evaluation; sustainable forest management; SFM; sustainable land management; SLM; TE; terminal evaluation

[1] *This data is used to aid the internet search of this report on the Evaluation Office of UN Environment Website*

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CHARTS AND TABLES

Acronyms and abbreviations

APN	National Parks Administration – Argentina
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDB	Convention on Illegal Traffic of Endangered Species
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GIS	Geographical Information System
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
INTA	National Institute of Agricultural Technology
LULUCF	Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry
LZP	Land zoning plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MANCHABOL	Association of Municipalities of the Bolivian Chaco
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock – Paraguay
MDP	Ministry of Planning – Bolivia
MDRAMA	Ministry of Rural Development, Agriculture and Environment - Bolivia
MRH	Ministry of Water Resources – Bolivia
NAP	National Action Plan to Combat Desertification
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NEA	National Executing Agency
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resources Management
OAS	Organization of American States
PNCC	National Climate Change Program
SAGPyA	Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Foods
SAyDS	Secretariat for Environment and Sustainable Development
SEAM	Environment Secretariat
SERNAP	National Parks Service – Bolivia
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SINASIP	National Protected Areas System – Paraguay
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SNAP	National Protected Areas System – Bolivia
SRAP	Sub-Regional Action Program for the Sustainable Development of the Gran Chaco
TNC	The Nature Conservancy Trust
TVP	Technology Validation Project
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UPEA	Environmentally and economically sound productive unit
VMCRH	Vice-Ministry of Watersheds and Water Resources
WB	World Bank

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

UN Environment Sub-programme:	Ecosystems Management; Environmental Governance	UN Environment Expected Accomplishment(s):	
Implementing Agency	UN Environment; UNDP	Executing Agency	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Argentina); Ministry of Water and Environment (Bolivia); Secretariat for Environment (Paraguay); General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS)
UN Environment ID	ADDIS 00280	IMIS number	GFL-2328-2713-4B47
UN Environment approval date; UNDP approval date	01 September 2010 (UN Environment) 04 April 2011 (UNDP)	UN Environment Programme of Work Output(s):	
GEF project ID:	2505	Project type:	FSP
GEF Operational Programme #:		Focal Area(s):	LD-BD-CCM
GEF approval date:	29 September 2009	GEF Strategic Priority:	SFM: SP2, SP3 and SP7
Expected start date:	September 2010	Actual start date:	08 September 2010
Planned completion date:	June 2015	Actual completion date:	Under implementation (as of June 2017)
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 6,9209,091	Actual total expenditures reported as of June 2016:	USD 20,356,699.58
GEF grant allocation:	USD 3,249,800 UN Environment USD 3,659,291 UNDP	GEF grant expenditures reported as of June 2016:	USD 5,495,644
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 500,000	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	USD 645,300
Expected Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 18,370,852	Secured Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 17,126,896
First disbursement:	08 September 2010 (UN Environment)	Date of financial closure:	Open
No. of revisions:	1	Date of last revision:	August 2014
No. of Steering Committee meetings:		Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: 16 September 2016 / Next: n/a
Mid-term Review *(planned date):*	January 2013	Mid-term Review (actual date):	September 2014
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*		Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	September 2016
Coverage - Country(ies):	Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay	Coverage - Region(s):	Latin America and the Caribbean
Dates of previous project phases:	August 2005-March 2009	Status of future project phases:	n/a

Executive Summary

1. This report presents the findings, lessons and recommendations of the Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the GEF-UN Environment project that "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem". The project was co-implemented by UN Environment and UNDP, and executed by the governments of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay with the Organization of American States (OAS) providing a supportive role as regional executing agency for the UN Environment portion of the project. Project performance and impact were assessed according to criteria that included relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, preparedness, participation and ownership among others. The evaluation field visits were conducted during October and November 2016, considering the project's scheduled termination in December; however, the project partners decided to extend the project administratively (and programmatically in the case of Paraguay) until June 2017. Some pilot initiatives were also continuing to develop in Bolivia. As a result, some aspects of the project's final delivery in 2017, particularly the case of Paraguay, may not be fully captured by the TE.

2. The general findings of the Terminal Evaluation indicate that "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem" was moderately successful in generating expected results. Likewise, overall project performance was moderately satisfactory in relation to the established evaluation criteria. These are positive ratings considering the scale of activities that were implemented across the tri-national area, the complex institutional arrangements, and the high coordination and administrative support needs that resulted.

3. The project was strategically relevant to global, regional and national environmental objectives. The project goal of reducing land degradation in a transboundary region with high biodiversity supported the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and associated National Action Plans (NAPs) to combat desertification. Project design was aligned with UNEP's 2010-2013 Medium-Term Strategy and crosscutting priorities of Ecosystems Management and Climate Change, Environmental Governance.[2] The project addressed GEF IV's objective of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in production landscapes, and supported sub-programs for strengthening protected area networks, land use and sustainable forestry management in order to protect raise C02 absorption and lower GHG emissions. The project's relevance was reinforced by its connection with the Gran Chaco Sub-Regional Action Program (SRAP), a tri-national initiative launched by the governments of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay to reduce land degradation and promote the region's sustainable development. The SRAP was supported by a 2007 Declaration of national UNCCD focal points that establishes the regional cooperation framework for the Gran Chaco managed by a Tri-National Commission and Council.

4. The project was moderately effective in delivering its planned outputs and outcomes. Output delivery was satisfactory: Evaluation findings indicate that practically 90% of the planned outputs have been generated to some extent: 18 (58%) of the project's 31 outputs were fully delivered, 10 (32%) partially delivered and only 3 (10 %) undelivered. Among the project components, the field application of sustainable land and forest management protocols (component 2) was most effective in terms of output achievement with approximately 80% full delivery; followed by the institutional strengthening component that delivered more than half (53%) of its planned outputs. Delivery was lowest for the project exit strategy (component 3) that intended to document and disseminate sustainable land and forest management practices for up

[2] Defined as "The capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations" (MTS 2010-2014)

scaling, replication and mainstreaming at national and regional levels. This was hindered by the late implementation of demonstration projects in pilot areas and the subsequent lack of time to effectively disseminate results or systematize practices for dissemination purposes. Towards its final stages, the project contracted the production of a very good visual documentary that can assist this process, yet needs to be shown to a wider audience.

5. Greater progress was made towards country-based outputs and outcomes than regional deliverables. In particular, the implementation of SLM/SFM demonstration projects and technology validation projects across 11 pilot sites stands out as one of the project's main accomplishments. In-country demonstration projects and technology validations were more tangible for NEAs and tended to receive received more attention from the national teams. The absence of an operational tri-national framework or government-driven SRAP outside of the project also slowed the delivery of regional outputs that were essential to several outcomes. Design was a contributing factor as several outputs were excessively ambitious for the allocated timeframes, or were outside the project's influence as analyzed in the section on effectiveness.

6. As a result the project objective was not fully achieved in relation to its stated impact indicators, and most of the expected outcomes were partially achieved. The evaluation findings indicate that two out of six outcomes were fully achieved: A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity was strengthened through SFM/SLM activities. Technical instruments were developed and demonstrated in pilot sites. However, their adoption and replication did not reach the thresholds needed to have measurable impact on land degradation in the Chaco region. The project was unable to build a shared regional vision and development strategy, largely due to the lack of a functional SRAP and tri-national framework to work through, this appeared to be influenced more by varying levels of preparedness and commitment than design. Anticipated carbon sequestration benefits could not be confirmed, despite the design of a methodology for measuring emissions, due to the short time that had passed from the baseline measurements; carbon benefits are likely to manifest in the future to the extent that demonstrated practices ae sustained. The partial achievement of most outcomes indicates that the project has not had a significant impact on land degradation in the Gran Chaco outside of the pilot sites, a finding that is corroborated by objective indicators. However, it leaves an important base of demonstrated practice that can be built upon.

7. The project's greatest achievement was the implementation of demonstration projects and technology validations in 11 pilot areas. According to the final project progress report [3] 40 demonstration projects and 16 technology validations were implemented, encompassing 160 sustainable land and forest management practices. Several of these have generated (or are expected to generate) environmental and socio-economic impacts. These practices include the production and mechanized extraction of organic honey, integrated agroforestry-pasture management practices, and water harvesting and management. The project has contributed an important body of natural resource management experiences that support productive sectors and can readily be up scaled if there is political will - and funds - to do so.

8. The evaluation considers that most of the demonstrated SLM and SFM practices have a moderate to high likelihood of sustainability. The production and processing of organic honey, integrated agroforestry-pasture management, rainwater harvesting and other water management techniques (drip irrigation, insulated water catchments) have strong sustainability prospects. Organic honey production in particular is promising because it integrates environmental and socio-economic objectives - reinforcing the

[3] *Informe Semestral de Actividades* (January 2017).

protection of forests and native flora that offer pollen, providing a source of income, and strengthening the land tenure security of rural families that collect honey from the forest. Conversely, the likelihood of sustainability declines considerably at national and regional levels: The country SRAP office in Bolivia was closed and there may be continuity in Paraguay if a Desertification Office is opened within Paraguay´s Secretariat of Environment as planned; of the three countries Argentina has demonstrated the clearest commitment to carry the SRAP forward. There are opportunities for wider replication through parallel programs that include the implementation of national forest legislation in Argentina, Bolivia's national watershed plan, and upcoming green commodities and climate change adaptation fund projects in Paraguay. However, this has not been confirmed at present and the NEAs will need to approach these programs to discuss collaboration opportunities and secure the agreements needed to make this happen.

9. Efficiency was one of the weaker aspects of performance. Overall financial delivery was satisfactory with significant variances between countries and agencies. Country implementation was initially slow and gradually improved in Bolivia and Argentina, whereas the project was stalled in Paraguay until 2014 due to successive government changes and staff turnovers. The project´s complex institutional arrangements and coordination needs at different levels had an effect on administrative efficiency, contributing to delayed disbursements and procurements that disrupted the implementation of some demonstration projects. The extended implementation of pilot initiatives with high service demands continued into the project's final stages, absorbing the attention of project staff and reducing the time that was left to disseminate results and transfer SLM/SFM practices to regional and national users. Inefficiency was reinforced at country levels by changes of government, policy shifts and staff turnover (as were the case in Argentina and especially Paraguay), multi-tiered institutional and administrative arrangements and administrative guidelines that did not offer the flexibility or adaptive management support that is needed when implementing dispersed small-scale initiatives with different partners across a tri-national region. Coordination between internatonal agencies was managed by a Directive Committee. Although there was limited coordination of project activities between UNDP Country Offices, the administrative services that were offered benefitted from UNDP´s in-country representation and decentralized financial management guidelines.

10. The project's cost-effectiveness is debatable. Project impacts were almost entirely derived from small-scale demonstration and technology validation projects (TVPs) that collectively absorbed approximately half of the total budget. The expected scale of impact in Bolivia and Paraguay was downscaled considerably with the revision of SLM/SFM target indicators; although the revised targets are more realistic they have lowered the benefit-cost ratio. Country-based pilot activities were successfully implemented yet have not coalesced into the regional vision or action program that were expected. Institutional arrangements were difficult to coordinate and top-heavy for the purpose of servicing dispersed pilot initiatives. Several demonstration projects were critically under-budgeted and would have had greater impact with a more realistic allocation. The management of the demonstration component would have benefited from the experience of the GEF Small Grants Program, which operates in the three countries.

11. Other factors affected project performance as well. Preparation and readiness varied considerably between implementing agencies, NEAs and executing partners. Argentina's Soil Conservation Directorate demonstrated high levels of technical and institutional preparedness, whereas the project was inactive for two years in Paraguay due to successive changes of government and staff turnover. The inclusion of two implementing agencies and one regional executing agency with different guidelines and

reporting formats raised the project's administrative workload. Some of the administrative guidelines and procedures appeared to be unsuited for a regional project with dispersed pilot activities. The level of preparation and readiness tended to improve at decentralized levels, where competent community organizations, NGOs and research institutions supervised the implementation of demonstration projects and TVPs.

12. The project implementation approach was well-articulated and promoted sustainable resource management with key productive sectors in a region that is high in both biodiversity and poverty. This enabled the project to engage a wide range of partners that included Chaco farmers and cattle ranchers, producers associations and community-based organizations, local government and universities. The implementation strategy emulated the project's ecosystems approach by integrating vertical and horizontal dynamics and by linking outputs, outcomes and technical components through causal pathways that converged on the higher outcomes that embodied the *intermediate stages* that precede impact. On the other hand, the project's design failed to acknowledge the lack of regional preparedness and absence of a functional tri-national framework: The SRAP was not active at the project's inception, and the Tri-National Commission and Council – the entities responsible for implementation of the SRAP and key project stakeholders according to the project document - did not convene during the project's implementation. This contributed to an important vacuum at the regional level, considering that their main task was "to ensure synergies between the NAPs and the regional framework while at the same time facilitating the implementation of the SRAP putting the priority on a more focused coordination with national and international programs operating in the area and creating the conditions for a better involvement of the local stakeholders and the civil society on the decision making process as well as promoting actions to reduce poverty." [4] Instead, a Directive Committee with the participation of the three UNCCD focal points, the regional project coordinator and director, and representatives of UNDP, OAS and UN Environment met periodically to review progress and provide oversight and coordination support.

13. The lack of an operational regional context steered the project's role from technical support and facilitation towards direct support and gap filling. The project's country offices effectively became the SRAP; the national teams responded to the national executing agencies yet were often contracted and paid through the project. This lowered country ownership by encouraging the delegation of national executing responsibilities to project units that were external to the government structure. Argentina's Soil Conservation Directorate was the exception with higher levels of commitment and ownership: Project activities were aligned to SCD strategies for the Gran Chaco region, and both the Regional Project Director and National Project Coordinator were senior NEA staff members who were assigned to the project (and paid by the government).

14. The project was detailed in implementation and institutional arrangements. UN Environment was the designated GEF implementing agency, with UNDP supporting as co-implementing agency and the Organization of American States (OAS) assuming the role of regional executing agency in support of UN Environment. Each government designated a national executing agency (NEA). Actual implementation responsibilities were undertaken by a regional Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and country teams that were aligned to the national executing agency. The management performance of the PCU was generally satisfactory - despite occasional coordination difficulties with country project offices or slow processing of requests received from the field - considering the administrative and coordination demands of the project's numerous pilot initiatives and

[4] Project document, pg. 27.

extensive institutional arrangements. The Project Coordination Unit devoted considerable effort in responding to continuous administrative demands and closely monitored the implementation of field activities in the pilot sites. This contributed to the satisfactory implementation of the pilot demonstration component (as did the efforts of national teams and executing partners), yet carried a high opportunity cost by distracting attention (and time) from the socialization, transfer and up scaling of best practices. There were also delays in activating field activities in the pilot sites (particularly in the case of Paraguay). As a result, the demonstrated practices were not adopted or replicated on the scale foreseen by the project document, although there are still opportunities for this to happen.

15. Stakeholder participation was high. The project's design included consultation workshops during the preparatory phase, and there were high levels of local participation in the approval and implementation of demonstration projects and technology validations. The consistently high level of stakeholder participation across a broad spectrum of pilot initiatives was a credit to the regional Project Coordination Unit, national teams and executing partners that were contracted. Conversely, participation tended to be less inclusive at executive levels: A Steering Committee was envisioned with the participation of the committee and other stakeholders, but was not operationalized. Instead the aforementioned Directive Committee met periodically with the participation of agency representatives, national UNCCD focal points and the PCU. Although the UN Environment Task Manager visited the project on several occasions, coordination was based on the annual meetings of the Directive Committee involving the GEF implementing and executing agencies and national focal points. Although coordination and monitoring mechanisms were implemented as planned, the evaluator considers that more frequent interactions on the ground or the scheduling of e-conferences between Directive Committee meetings would have helped to resolve (or mitigate) some of the administrative/ coordination bottlenecks that affected performance. For example, the joint intervention of the UN Environment Task Manager and UNDP country focal point was instrumental to re-activate the project in Paraguay, at a critical stage when the project's cancellation was being considered.

16. Overall financial delivery was satisfactory. Cumulative expenditures had reached 80% of the budget by June 2016, four months before the project's scheduled completion, and government co-financing targets were reportedly met. The project was executed within the approved GEF budget in spite of various delays and extensions. However, there were marked differences in financial management and delivery among countries and agencies. Country delivery was lowest in Paraguay, where the project was inoperative for an extended period and has required extension. Among the international agencies, UNDP´s administrative support benefited from its country representation and comparatively decentralized financial management practices. There were occasional delays in the transfer of funds by UN Environment to OAS-GS as well as delays in disbursements that were influenced by coordination problems and slow administrative processes.[5] The agency focal points were supportive of the project, and the OAS/GS representative advanced funds from the internal budget on three occasions to cover for delayed transfers from Nairobi.

17. The project experience provides an interesting case study from which a number of lessons can be derived: There are inevitable difficulties in aligning implementation processes between countries that have different institutional-policy frameworks and governance cycles. Project performance was influenced by (i) unrealistic timelines for key outputs; (ii) institutional coordination arrangements that were broad and time-consuming; and (iii) administrative guidelines that in some cases were not ideally suited

[5] These are desribed in sections 4.5 Efficiency and 4.6.6 "Financial Planning and Management"

to the needs of this project. Alternative project modalities – implementing separate country projects with complementing regional deliverables; or using one or two instead of three international agencies - might have provided more effective options and should have been considered at the design stage.

18. Outputs and outcome indicators were often over-dimensioned in relation to the allocated timeframes or outside the project's direct influence; this is a recurrent design (and appraisal) oversight that unfairly 'raises the bar' for performance and impact assessments. Project design overestimated the regional context and in particular the momentum of the SRAP and supporting tri-national bodies; by failing to recognize the lack of preparation or readiness at the regional level, this oversight indirectly weakened the delivery of regional outputs and outcomes and shifted the project role from facilitation to direct support. Stakeholder appraisals are fundamental for the design of demonstration projects with rural populations that are often indigenous, to ensure a "cultural fit" that is compatible with local values and organizational modes. This would have helped in detecting and possibly avoiding cultural or organizational factors that weakened pilot initiatives with Ayoreo and Guaranî communities of Paraguay's Chaco, and the isolated rural residents of Chancaní in Cordoba, Argentina.

19. It is essential that NEAs continue to assist the consolidation and dissemination of project results, in order to enable the replication of sustainable land and forest management practices on a wider scale. Recently finished demonstration projects for honey production will require continued technical guidance to fulfill their impact potential. In particular, backstopping is needed to implement marketing strategies that were developed by the project, and to explore the feasibility of organic honey certification to access the international fair trade markets. Although a follow-up project has not been officially requested, further GEF and UN Environment support for the Gran Chaco should be contingent on the demonstration of tangible government policy and budget commitments to the SRAP.

20. This assessment is reflected in the following performance ratings, which are presented with summary assessments under the Conclusions section, in accordance with the evaluation criteria established in the Terms of Reference.

Project Performance Ratings

CRITERIA	RATING
A. Strategic Relevance	6 (HS)
B. Achievement of Outputs	Regional outputs: MS Argentina: S Bolivia: S Paraguay: S[6] Rating: 5 (S)
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Results	
1. Achievement of Direct Outcomes	3 (MU)
2. Likelihood of Impact	4 (ML)
3. Achievement of Project Goal and Planned Objective	2 (U)
D. Sustainability and Replication:	General Rating: 3 (MU)[7]
1. Socio-Political	Regional: U Argentina: ML Bolivia: ML Paraguay: ML General Rating: 4 (ML)

[6] Based on progress achieved during the extension of country activities until June 2017

[7] UN Environment evaluation guidelines require that the lowest sustainability rating be used as the general rating for this criteria.

2. Financial	Regional: U Argentina: ML Bolivia: ML Paraguay: ML General Rating: 4 (ML)
3. Institutional Framework	Regional: U[8] Argentina: HL Bolivia: MU Paraguay: MU General Rating: 3 (MU)
4. Environmental	6 (HL)
5. Catalytic Role & Replication	Argentina: MS Bolivia: MU Paraguay: MU General Rating: 3 (MU)
E. Efficiency	3 (MU)
F. Factors Affecting Performance:	
1. Preparation & Readiness	Regional: U[9] Argentina: S Bolivia: MS Paraguay: U General Rating: 3 (MU)
2. Project Implementation & Management	5 (S) [10]
3. Stakeholder Participation, Participation & Partnership	Argentina: S Bolivia: S Paraguay: S General Rating: 5 (S)
4. Communications & Public Awareness	4 (MS)
5. Country Ownership & Driven-ness	Argentina: HS Bolivia:MS Paraguay: MU General Rating: 4 (MS)
6. Financial Planning & Management	3 (MU)
7. UN Environment Supervision & Backstopping	4 (MS)
8. Monitoring and Evaluation	
a. M&E Design	6 (HS)
b. Budgeting	5 (S)
c. M&E Plan Implementation	5 (S)
AVERAGE SCORE AND GENERAL PROJECT RATING:	4.1 MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

***Rating Scale**: 6: Highly satisfactory, 5: Satisfactory, 4: Moderately Satisfactory, 3: Moderately Unsatisfactory, 2: Unsatisfactory, 1: Highly Unsatisfactory. The ratings used for the assessment of sustainability and likelihood of impact are: 6: Highly Likely, 5: Likely, 4: Moderately Likely, 3: Moderately Unlikely, 2: Unlikely, 1: Highly Unlikely. The ratings were conducted according to instructions contained in the ToRs.*

[8] This refers to the regional inter-governmental entities that were created to promote the Gran Chaco SRAP, ie. Tri-National Commission and Council

[9] Idem.

[10] In relation to the performance of the regional Project Coordination Unit (PCU).

Resumen Ejecutivo

1. l presente informe contiene los hallazgos, lecciones y recomendaciones de la evaluación final del proyecto del FMAM-ONU Ambiente "Manejo sostenible de bosques en el ecosistema transfronterizo del Gran Chaco Americano". El Proyecto fue co-implementado por ONU Ambiente y el PNUD y ejecutado a nivel regional por los gobiernos de Argentina, Bolivia y Paraguay, con el apoyo de la OEA como agencia ejecutora regional para el componente correspondiente a ONU Ambiente. El rendimiento e impacto del Proyecto fueron evaluados en base a criterios de relevancia, eficiencia, eficacia, sostenibilidad, preparación, participación y apropiación; entre otros. Las visitas de evaluación de campo se realizaron en los meses de octubre y noviembre de 2016, en base al calendario que preveía la finalización del Proyecto en diciembre; sin embargo las partes del Proyecto aprobaron una extensión administrativa (y programática en el caso de Paraguay) hasta junio de 2017; mientras que en Bolivia aún continúan desarrollándose algunas iniciativas piloto. Por lo tanto, algunos aspectos finales logrados por el Proyecto durante 2017, particularmente en el caso de Paraguay, pueden no estar totalmente reflejados en la presente evaluación.

2. Los hallazgos generales de la evaluación final señalan que el proyecto "Manejo sostenible de bosques en el ecosistema transfronterizo del Gran Chaco Americano" fue moderadamente exitoso con relación a los resultados esperados. De igual forma, la ejecución general del Proyecto fue moderadamente satisfactoria según los criterios de la presente evaluación. Sin embargo, estas valoraciones pueden considerarse positivas, tomando en cuenta la escala de las actividades que fueron implementadas en un área tri-nacional, los complejos acuerdos interinstitucionales y el intenso apoyo de coordinación y administración que esto ha requerido.

3 El Proyecto fue estratégicamente relevante para los objetivos ambientales a nivel global, regional y nacional. La meta del Proyecto de reducción de la degradación del suelo en una región transfronteriza caracterizada por su alta biodiversidad apoya la implementación de la Convención de las Naciones Unidas de Lucha contra la Desertificación (UNCCD) y los Planes de Acción Nacionales para combatir la desertificación. El diseño del Proyecto estuvo alineado con la Estrategia de Medio Término 2012-2013 de ONU Ambiente y las prioridades transversales: gestión de ecosistemas y cambio climático, y gobernanza ambiental.[11] El proyecto abordó el objetivo del FMAM IV de integrar la conservación de la biodiversidad en los paisajes productivos y apoyó los subprogramas de fortalecimiento de redes en áreas protegidas y de manejo sostenible de tierras y bosques, con el fin de mitigar la absorción de C02 y reducir las emisiones de GEI. La relevancia del proyecto se vio reforzada por su vinculación con el Programa de Acción Subregional para el Gran Chaco (PAS-Chaco), iniciativa tri-nacional lanzada por los gobiernos de Argentina, Bolivia y Paraguay para reducir la degradación de suelos y bosques, y promover el desarrollo sostenible de la región. El PAS-Chaco está respaldado por una declaración del año 2007 de los Puntos Focales Nacionales de UNCCD que establece el marco de cooperación regional para el manejo del Gran Chaco, gestionado por una Comisión y un Consejo tri-nacionales.

4. El proyecto fue moderadamente exitoso en el logro de los productos, resultados y efectos previstos. Los hallazgos de la evaluación indican que casi el 90% de los productos fueron alcanzados en cierta medida: El 18 (58%) de los 31 productos del proyecto fueron alcanzados en su totalidad, 10 (32%) alcanzados parcialmente y únicamente 3 (10%) no fueron alcanzados. Entre los componentes del proyecto, la

[11] Definida como "La capacidad de los países para desarrollar y hacer cumplir las leyes y fortalecer las instituciones para lograr los objetivos y metas ambientales internacionalmente acordados y cumplir con las obligaciones relacionadas" (MTS 2010-2014).

aplicación en terreno de los protocolos de manejo sostenible de tierras y bosques (componente 2) fue el más eficaz en términos de alcances, con aproximadamente el 80% de productos logrados. Le sigue el componente de fortalecimiento institucional que logró más de la mitad (53%) de los productos previstos. Los productos menos logrados fueron los de la estrategia de salida del proyecto (componente 3) que tenía la intención de documentar y difundir las prácticas validadas de manejo de tierras y bosques, a fin de promover su replicación a mayor escala y transversalización a nivel de políticas nacionales y regionales. Esto se vio obstaculizado por la aplicación tardía de proyectos demostrativos en zonas piloto y la consiguiente falta de tiempo para difundir eficazmente los resultados o sistematizar las prácticas con fines de difusión. En las etapas finales del proyecto, se contrató la producción de produjo un muy buen documental visual que puede ayudar en este proceso; sin embargo necesita ser mostrado a un público más amplio.

5. Se avanzó más en la consecución de productos y resultados nacionales que en los regionales. En particular, la ejecución de 30 proyectos demostrativos MST/MSB y 45 proyectos de validación de tecnologías en 11 áreas piloto constituye uno de los principales logros del proyecto. Los proyectos demostrativos y las validaciones tecnológicas representaron el aspecto más tangible del PAS-Chaco y tendieron a recibir más atención de parte de los equipos nacionales. La ausencia de un marco tri-nacional operacional impulsado por los gobiernos (más allá del proyecto) también frenó la consecución de productos regionales, los cuales eran esenciales para el logro de varios resultados. El diseño del Proyecto fue un factor que contribuyó en esto, ya que varios productos eran excesivamente ambiciosos para los plazos asignados o estaban fuera de la influencia del proyecto. Estos aspectos son considerados con mayor profundidad en las secciones que analizan la eficiencia y efectividad del proyecto.

6. Los hallazgos de la evaluación indican que no se cumplió el objetivo general del Proyecto en su totalidad, en relación a los indicadores de impacto previamente establecidos, y que la mayoría de los resultados esperados fueron alcanzados parcialmente. Solo dos de los seis resultados esperados fueron totalmente alcanzados: se fortaleció un núcleo crítico de áreas prioritarias para la biodiversidad mediante acciones de MST/MSB. También se desarrollaron prácticas de manejo sostenible que fueron aplicados en las áreas piloto; sin embargo, el uso y la réplica de los mismos no alcanzaron los umbrales necesarios como para tener un impacto medible en la degradación de tierras y bosques a nivel regional. El Proyecto no fue capaz de construir una estrategia de desarrollo regional compartida debido, en gran parte, al débil funcionamiento del marco tri-nacional del PAS-Chaco. Al parecer esto fue afectado más por cuestiones de preparación y compromiso institucional, que por factores de diseño. Los beneficios esperados de la retención de carbono no pudieron confirmarse, a pesar del diseño de una metodología para medir las emisiones, debido al corto tiempo transcurrido desde las mediciones de la línea de base. Sin embargo, es probable que se hayan beneficios en el futuro en la medida que se sustenten las prácticas demostradas. El alcance parcial de la mayoría de los resultados denota que el Proyecto no ha tenido impacto significativo en la degradación de tierras y bosques del Gran Chaco más allá de las áreas piloto. Sin embargo, el Proyecto deja una base importante de prácticas validadas de manejo sustentable a partir de la cual se puede continuar.

7. El principal logro del Proyecto fue la implementación de 40 proyectos demostrativos y 16 proyectos de validación de tecnologías en 11 áreas piloto, a través de los cuales se testearon 160 prácticas de manejo sostenible de bosques. Varias de estas han generado (o se espera que generen) impactos socioeconómicos y ambientales. Estas prácticas incluyen la producción de mecanismos de recolección de miel orgánica, prácticas de manejo agro-silvopastoril y manejo, recolección y gestión del agua. El Proyecto ha contribuido con un bagaje de importantes experiencias sobre manejos de

recursos naturales y apoyo a los sectores productivos que pueden aplicarse a escala mayor si se dan las condiciones políticas y existen los fondos para esto.

8. La evaluación considera que la mayoría de las prácticas demostrativas de MST y MSB tienen de moderada a alta probabilidad de sostenibilidad. La producción y procesamiento de miel orgánica, el manejo integrado agro-silvopastoril, la cosecha de agua de lluvia y otras técnicas de manejo de agua (riego por goteo, captación de agua cubierta de membrana), tienen grandes perspectivas de sostenibilidad. La producción de miel orgánica, en particular, es prometedora porque integra objetivos socioeconómicos y ambientales, reforzando la protección del bosque y la flora nativa de la cual proviene el polen, proveyendo una fuente de ingresos y fortaleciendo la seguridad en la tenencia de la tierra de las familias recolectoras de miel del bosque. En cambio las probabilidades de sostenibilidad disminuyen considerablemente a nivel nacional y regional: la oficina del PAS Chaco-Bolivia fue cerrada y la continuidad de actividades en Paraguay dependerá de la apertura de una Oficina de Desertificación que está en consideración; en comparación, Argentina ha demostrado mayor compromiso de continuar las iniciativas apoyadas a través de la Dirección de Suelos del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente. Sin embargo, en general no hay un compromiso evidente de parte de los gobiernos de ejecutar el PAS como programa regional. Existe la posibilidad de implementar réplicas a nivel de país mediante programas paralelos como ser: implementación de la legislación forestal nacional en Argentina, el plan nacional de cuencas hidrográficas de Bolivia y los próximos proyectos de productos verdes y proyectos de adaptación al cambio climático en Paraguay. Esto no ha sido confirmado hasta el momento y las ANE deberán negociar las oportunidades de colaboración y asegurar los acuerdos necesarios para la realización de estos programas.

9. La eficiencia fue uno de los aspectos más débiles del rendimiento del Proyecto. La ejecución financiera fue satisfactoria en general, con variantes significativas entre países y agencias. En Bolivia y la Argentina, la implementación se inició de manera lenta y fue mejorando gradualmente; mientras que en Paraguay el proyecto se estancó hasta el año 2014 debido a sucesivos cambios gubernamentales y rotación de personal. Los procesos administrativos centralizados y lentos, así como el involucro de tres agencias internacionales con sistemas administrativos distintos, generaron retrasos en las adquisiciones e interrupciones en la implementación de proyectos demostrativos que dependían de los ciclos agrícolas o biológicos. La implementación extendida de las iniciativas piloto con alta demanda de servicios continuó hasta las fases finales del Proyecto absorbiendo la atención del personal, en desmedro del tiempo destinado a la difusión de los resultados y transferencia de las prácticas MST/MSB a los usuarios regionales y nacionales. La ineficiencia fue reforzada a nivel país, debido a cambios en los gobiernos, en las políticas y la rotación de personal (como sucedió en la Argentina y especialmente en el Paraguay). Por otra parte, los acuerdos institucionales y administrativos entre múltiples niveles, y las directrices administrativas, no ofrecieron la flexibilidad o gestión adaptativa de apoyo que se requieren cuando se implementan iniciativas dispersas de pequeña escala, con diferentes socios, en una región tri-nacional. Hubo coordinación entre agencias implementadoras y ejecutoras a través de un Comité Directivo. Si bien se constató una falta de coordinación conjunta entre las oficinas de país del PNUD, los servicios administrativos del PNUD contaron con los beneficios de tener representación a nivel de país y una gestión financiera descentralizada.

10. La rentabilidad del Proyecto es debatible. Los impactos del Proyecto fueron logrados en casi la totalidad de los pequeños proyectos demostrativos y de validación de tecnología, los cuales absorbieron aproximadamente la mitad del presupuesto total. La escala de impacto esperada en Bolivia y Paraguay se redujo considerablemente con la revisión de los indicadores de MST/MSB, que si bien son más realistas, han reducido la relación costo-beneficio. Las actividades piloto por país fueron implementadas

exitosamente, pero no se integraron a la visión ni al programa de acción regional, como era esperado. Los acuerdos institucionales para la prestación de servicios a las iniciativas piloto dispersas fueron difíciles de coordinar. Varios proyectos demostrativos tuvieron presupuestos críticamente bajos y habrían tenido mayor impacto con una asignación más realista. La gestión del componente de demostración podría haberse beneficiado de la experiencia del Programa de Pequeñas Donaciones del FMAM, el cual opera en los tres países.

11. Otros factores que afectaron el desempeño del Proyecto fueron: la preparación y la disponibilidad, que fueron considerablemente diferente entre las agencias implementadoras, las ANE y los socios ejecutores. La Dirección de Conservación de Suelos de la Argentina demostró altos niveles de preparación técnica e institucional, mientras que el Proyecto de Paraguay estuvo dos años parado debido a cambios sucesivos en el gobierno y rotación de personal. La inclusión de dos agencias internaciones implementadoras (ONU Ambiente y PNUD) y una agencia regional de ejecución (OEA-SG) con diferentes directrices y formatos de presentación de informes aumentó la carga de trabajo administrativo del proyecto. Algunas de las directrices y procedimientos administrativos fueron inadecuados para un proyecto regional con actividades piloto dispersas (particularmente en el caso de la OEA). El nivel de preparación y disponibilidad fue mayor en los niveles descentralizados, en los cuales las organizaciones comunitarias competentes, las ONG y las instituciones de investigación supervisaron la ejecución de proyectos demostrativos y de validación de tecnología.

12. El enfoque de implementación del proyecto estuvo bien articulado y promovió la gestión sostenible de los recursos con los sectores productivos clave, en una región caracterizada por su rica biodiversidad, así como por su alto grado de pobreza. Esto permitió al proyecto involucrar a una amplia gama de socios que incluyó a agricultores y ganaderos del Chaco, asociaciones de productores y organizaciones comunitarias, gobiernos locales y universidades. La estrategia de implementación emuló el enfoque eco sistémico del proyecto integrando dinámicas verticales y horizontales y vinculando productos, efectos y componentes técnicos a través de rutas causales, con el logro de resultados más altos durante las etapas intermedias que preceden al impacto. Por otra parte, el diseño del Proyecto falló en no identificar la falta de preparación regional y la ausencia de un marco funcional: el PASR no estaba activo al inicio del proyecto y la Comisión Tri-nacional y el Consejo Tri-Nacional - instancias inter-gubernamentales responsables de la ejecución del PAS Chaco, según el documento de Proyecto - no se reunieron durante la implementación del Proyecto. Esto afectó a la dimensión regional del proyecto, ya que se esperaba que las instancias regionales del PAS-Chaco aseguraran sinergias entre los programas nacionales y el marco regional (según el documento del proyecto). Como alternativa, se constituyó un Comité Directivo compuesto por los tres puntos focales nacionales a la Convención de las Naciones Unidas de Lucha contra la Desertificación, el Director y Coordinador Regional del proyecto, y los representantes de ONU-Ambiente, PNUD y OEA-SG. El Comité Directivo tuvo seis reuniones durante el transcurso del proyecto.

13. La falta de un contexto operacional regional reencauzó el rol del proyecto desde el apoyo técnico y la facilitación, hacia el apoyo directo y el llenado de brechas. Las oficinas nacionales del Proyecto actuaron efectivamente como PASR. Los equipos nacionales respondieron a las Agencias Ejecutoras Nacionales, las cuales fueron muchas veces contratadas y pagadas a través del proyecto. Esto redujo la apropiación de parte de los países, ya que estimuló la delegación de las responsabilidades nacionales de ejecución a las unidades de Proyecto, las cuales eran externas a la estructura de los gobiernos. La Dirección de Conservación de Suelos de la Argentina fue la excepción, pues logró mayores niveles de compromiso y apropiación: las actividades del Proyecto estuvieron alineadas con las estrategias de la Dirección para la región del Gran Chaco, y tanto el

Director Regional como el Coordinador Nacional del Proyecto (ambos puestos pagados por el gobierno argentino) fueron altos funcionarios de la Dirección.

14. El proyecto fue detallado en la implementación y arreglos institucionales. ONU Ambiente fue designada como la agencia implementadora del FMAM, con el apoyo del PNUD como organismo de ejecución conjunta y la Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA) asumiendo el papel de organismo regional de ejecución en apoyo a ONU Ambiente. Cada gobierno designó una Agencia Nacional Ejecutora (ANE). Las responsabilidades reales de ejecución fueron asumidas por una Unidad de Coordinación del Proyecto (UCP) regional y equipos de países dependientes del organismo ejecutor nacional. El desempeño de la administración de la UCP regional fue generalmente satisfactorio (a pesar de algunas dificultades de coordinación con las oficinas nacionales que demoraron el procesamiento de solicitudes) considerando los desafíos administrativos y de coordinación planteados por las iniciativas piloto del proyecto y los extensos acuerdos institucionales. La Unidad de Coordinación del Proyecto dedicó considerables esfuerzos a responder a las continuas demandas administrativas y supervisó estrechamente la ejecución de las actividades de campo en las 11 áreas piloto. Esto contribuyó a la implementación satisfactoria del componente de demostración piloto (al igual que los esfuerzos realizados por los equipos nacionales y los socios ejecutores); pero implicando un alto costo de oportunidad, al distraer la atención (y el tiempo) de la socialización, transferencia y difusión de las mejores prácticas. También hubieron demoras en el inicio de las actividades de campo en los sitios pilotos (sobre todo en Paraguay). Como resultado, las prácticas demostrativas no fueron adoptadas o replicadas en la escala prevista por el documento de proyecto, aunque todavía hay oportunidad para que esto suceda a futuro.

15. La participación de las partes interesadas fue alta. El diseño del proyecto incluyó talleres de consulta durante la fase preparatoria y hubo altos niveles de participación local en la aprobación e implementación de los proyectos demostrativos y de validación de tecnología. El alto y constante nivel de participación de las partes interesadas en un amplio espectro de iniciativas piloto fue un logro de la Unidad de Coordinación de Proyectos regional, los equipos nacionales y los asociados ejecutores contratados. Por el contrario, la participación tuvo una tendencia a ser menos inclusiva en los niveles ejecutivos, ya que se había previsto un Comité Directivo con la participación del Comité Tri-Nacional y otras partes interesadas, sin embargo no fue operativizado. Si bien el Oficial de Programa de ONU Ambiente visitó el proyecto en varias oportunidades, la coordinación se basó en las reuniones anuales del Comité Directivo en las que participaron los organismos internacionales involucrados, las agencias de ejecución nacional y los puntos focales nacionales del UNCCD. Los mecanismos de coordinación y monitoreo fueron implementados según estaba previsto, sin embargo el evaluador considera que interacciones más frecuentes en terreno o la programación de reuniones vía conferencias electrónicas entre los miembros del Comité Directivo habrían ayudado a resolver (o mitigar) algunos cuellos de botella administrativos. Como ejemplo, la intervención conjunta del Gerente de Tareas de ONU Ambiente y el Oficial de Programas del PNUD fue decisiva para reactivar el proyecto en Paraguay en una etapa crítica en que se estaba considerando la cancelación del proyecto.

16. En general, la ejecución financiera global fue satisfactoria. Los gastos acumulados alcanzaron el 80% del presupuesto en junio de 2016, cuatro meses antes de la finalización prevista del proyecto, y se habían cumplido las metas de cofinanciación de los gobiernos. El proyecto se ejecutó dentro del presupuesto aprobado por el FMAM a pesar de varios retrasos y extensiones; sin embargo, hubo marcadas diferencias en la gestión financiera y prestación de servicios entre los países y las agencias. La ejecución más baja fue en Paraguay, donde el proyecto permaneció inoperante por un período prolongado y requirió una extensión. Entre las agencias internacionales, el desempeño

del PNUD tuvo el beneficio de contar con representación directa vía las oficinas de país y directrices comparativamente descentralizadas. Hubieron retrasos ocasionales, a veces críticos, en la transferencia de fondos por parte de ONU Ambiente y OEA, causados por problemas de coordinación y procedimientos administrativos lentos,[12] y no así por el desempeño de su personal: los oficiales de programa de las agencias apoyaron el Proyecto y el representante de la OEA adelantó fondos del presupuesto interno de la organización en tres ocasiones para cubrir los desembolsos retrasados de Nairobi.

17. La experiencia del proyecto proporciona un estudio de caso interesante del que se pueden extraer varias lecciones: existen dificultades inevitables en alinear los procesos de implementación entre países con diferentes marcos de políticas institucionales y ciclos de gobierno. El desempeño del proyecto estuvo influenciado por (i) cronogramas poco realistas para los productos/resultados clave; ii) marcos de coordinación institucional amplios y muy complejos de gestionar; y (iii) directrices administrativas que en algunos casos no fueron totalmente adecuadas a las necesidades del proyecto. Modalidades alternativas como ser la ejecución de proyectos paralelos en los países con objetivos regionales comunes, o la utilización de uno o dos en lugar de tres organismos internacionales, podrían haber proporcionado opciones más eficaces y deberían haberse considerado en la fase de diseño.

18. Varios de los productos, resultados e indicadores estuvieron sobredimensionados en relación a los plazos asignados, o estaban fuera de la influencia directa del Proyecto. Este es un caso recurrente en el diseño de proyectos que, injustamente, "eleva la barra" de expectativas de rendimiento y tiene repercusión en las evaluaciones de impacto. El diseño del proyecto sobreestimó el contexto regional y, en particular, el impulso del PAS-Chaco por los órganos tri-nacionales de apoyo, al no reconocer la falta de dinámica a nivel regional. Esto debilitó indirectamente el logro de productos y resultados regionales, y viró el papel del proyecto de la facilitación hacia el apoyo directo. Las apreciaciones de las partes interesadas son fundamentales para el diseño de proyectos demostrativos con poblaciones rurales, que son a menudo indígenas, para asegurar un "ajuste cultural" compatible con los valores locales y los modos de organización. Esto habría ayudado a detectar y posiblemente evitar conflictos culturales u organizacionales que debilitaron iniciativas piloto con comunidades Ayoreo y Guaraní del Chaco paraguayo o con productores rurales de Chancaní en Córdoba, Argentina.

19. Es esencial que las agencias nacionales de ejecución sigan ayudando a la consolidación y difusión de resultados a fin de permitir la réplica de prácticas sostenibles de manejo a una escala más amplia. Los proyectos demostrativos de producción de miel, recientemente concluidos, requerirán una orientación técnica continua para cumplir con su potencial de impacto. En particular, se necesita apoyo para implementar las estrategias de comercialización que fueron desarrolladas por el Proyecto y explorar la viabilidad de certificar miel orgánica para acceder a los mercados internacionales de comercio justo. Si bien hasta el momento no se ha solicitado oficialmente un nuevo proyecto para dar continuidad al PAS-Chaco, el apoyo del FMAM y de ONU Ambiente deberían estar supeditados a la demostración de una política gubernamental tangible y de compromisos presupuestarios con el PAS-Chaco.

20. La presente evaluación está reflejada en el siguiente cuadro de calificaciones de desempeño del Proyecto, las cuales se presentan de forma resumida en la sección de Conclusiones, de acuerdo con los criterios de evaluación establecidos en los Términos de Referencia.

[12] Estos aspectos son considerados con mayor profundidad en el análisis de eficiencia y efectividad (secciones 4.3 y 4.5).

Niveles de Desempeño del Proyecto

CRITERIO	CALIFICACIÓN
A. Relevancia estratégica	6 (AS)
B. Cumplimiento de productos	Productos Regionales: MS Argentina: S Bolivia: S Paraguay: S[13] Calificación: 5 (S)
C. Eficacia: Logro de objetivos y resultados	
1. Logro de efectos directos	3 (MI)
2. Probabilidades de impacto	4 (MP)
3. Logro de metas y objetivos previstos del Proyecto	2 (I)
D. Sostenibilidad y Replicabilidad:	General Rating: 3 (MI)[14]
1. Socio-Política	Regional: I Argentina: MP Bolivia: MP Paraguay: MP General Rating: 4 (MP)
2. Financiera	Regional: I Argentina: MP Bolivia: MP Paraguay: MP General Rating: 4 (MP)
3. Marco Institucional	Regional: I Argentina: AP Bolivia: MI Paraguay: MI General Rating: 3 (MI)
4. Ambiental	6 (AP)
5. Rol catalizador y réplica	Argentina: MS Bolivia: MI Paraguay: MI Calificación General: 3 (MI)
E. Eficiencia	3 (MI)
F. Factores que afectan el desempeño	
1. Preparación y disponibilidad	Regional:[15] I Argentina: S Bolivia: MS Paraguay: I General Rating: 3 (MU)
2. Implementación y gestión del Proyecto	5 (S) [16]
3. Participación de las partes interesadas	Argentina: S Bolivia: S Paraguay: S General Rating: 5 (S)
4. Comunicaciones y sensibilización pública/concientización	4 (MS)
5. Apropiación y conducción por país	Argentina: AS Bolivia: MS Paraguay: MI

[13] En base a los avances logrado durante la extensión del proyecto hasta junio 2017.

[14] Las directrices de la ONU para la evaluación del medio ambiente requieren que la calificación de sostenibilidad más baja se utilice como calificación general para este criterio.

[15] En referencia a las instancias inter-gubernamentales que fueron previamente creadas para impulsar el SRAP-Chaco, ej. Comisión y Consejo Tri-Nacionales., pero que tuvieron escasa participación en el proyecto.

[16] En referencia a la Unidad de Coordinación del proyecto (UCP).

	General Rating: 4 (MS)
6. Planificación y gestión financiera	3 (MI)
7. Supervisión y respaldo de ONU Ambiente	4 (MS)
8. Monitoreo y Evaluación	
a. Diseño del plan de monitoreo y evaluación	6 (AS)
b. Presupuesto	5 (S)
c. Implementación del plan de monitoreo y evaluación	5 (S)
CALIFICACIÓN PROMEDIO DEL PROYECTO:	4.1 MODERADAMENTE SATISFACTORIO

***Escala de calificación**: 6: Altamente satisfactorio, 5: Satisfactorio, 4: Moderadamente satisfactorio, 3: Moderadamente insatisfactorio, 2: Insatisfactorio, 1: Altamente insatisfactorio. Las calificaciones usadas para medir la sostenibilidad y la probabilidad de impacto son 6: Altamente probable 5; Probable, 4: Moderadamente probable, 3: Moderadamente improbable, 2: Improbable, 1: Altamente improbable. Las calificaciones se basaron en las instrucciones de los TDR.*

1. Introduction

21. This report presents the terminal evaluation findings for the UN Environment-GEF project "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem", a five-year initiative[17] that was implemented in a region that encompasses extensive areas of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. The project had the objective of reversing land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through sustainable land management in the productive landscape. UN Environment implemented the project with the participation of UNDP as co-implementing agency and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS-GS) in the capacity of regional executing agency. The counterpart national executing agencies were the Soil Conservation Directorate of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development' (MAYDS) in Argentina, the Vice Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation in Bolivia, and Paraguay's Secretariat of Environment. This was a GEF Full-Size Project with a grant that was divided between UN Environment and OAS (USD 3,249,800), and UNDP (USD 3,659,291). In addition the project received government co-financing committments of US$ 5.5 million cash and US$ 12 million in-kind contributions.

2. The Project

2.1 Context

22. The Gran Chaco Americano eco-region covers approximately 1,000,000 km2 that extend into Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. The biome is comprised of different ecosystems including savannahs, wetlands and dry forests, and hosts one of the largest remaining tracts of dry tropical forests in the world. In **Argentina**, the Chaco covers more than 62 million hectares and harbors considerable diversity of species, including an important number of endemics. Land use in the Argentinian Chaco is focused on agriculture, extensive livestock ranching and forestry, with 78% of the land owned by 4.5% of the population. A total of 11% of the Argentinian population lives in the Chaco area.

23. **Bolivia's** Chaco covers 12% of the land surface and is predominantly arid. However, the Bolivian Chaco also hosts considerable biodiversity that includes endemic species. Approximately 4.5% of Bolivia's population lives in the Gran Chaco of which nearly 80% are impoverished, affecting the various indigenous groups that inhabit the area. Most of the population relies on slash-and-burn agriculture and open range cattle ranching. In **Paraguay**, the Chaco covers approximately 60% of the national territory. The area is rich in biodiversity but a considerable number of species are threatened. Population in the area is relatively low, with indigenous communities making up a large part of the population; more than 60% live below the poverty line. The main economic activities in the Paraguayan Chaco are agriculture and ranching, encompassing 30% of the country's livestock.[18]

24. The Gran Chaco is the second largest forested ecosystem outside the Amazon in South America. The diverse ecosystems provide a rich biodiversity that includes several

[17] Extended to six years.
[18] Project document, pg. 8

endemic species, making it an important area for conservation. However, the Gran Chaco eco-region faces considerable socioeconomic and environmental challenges. The main threats have been identified as:

- Deforestation for timber
- Charcoal production and agricultural conversion
- Degradation of grasslands due to inadequate grazing management practices
- Fires
- Overdependence on forest exploitation and livestock production for livelihoods
- Unsustainable management of water resources

25. Several agreements related to the Gran Chaco have been signed by the three countries, including the Declaration of national UNCCD focal points and the Global Mechanism that established the regional cooperation framework. The declaration called for the improvement of the socioeconomic conditions in the Chaco, the establishment of concrete actions to mitigate the degradation of Chaco ecosystems, and concrete actions to preserve biological and cultural diversity. This was reinforced by the *Framework Cooperation Agreement for the Sub-Regional Action Program for the Sustainable Development of the Gran Chaco Americano* (SRAP) that was signed by the three governments in 2007. A Tri-national Council and Commission were established to move the process forward. However, the tri-national cooperation framework and SRAP were not operational when the project came into being, and have yet to be ratified by **Bolivia's** parliament.

2.1.1 Project Objectives, Components and Outcomes

26. "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem" aimed to assist Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay in overcoming the main barriers to sustainable development, through the SRAP framework. The project was centered on three technical components – institutional strengthening, demonstrations of SLM and SFM practices in pilot sites, and the subsequent replication and up scaling of these practices on a regional scale. The project's activities were expected to reduce deforestation, increase the growth of native vegetation, enable sustained natural resources utilization activities and conserve biodiversity through the creation of biological corridors. These would help to recover ecosystem services such water resources, CO_2 balance and soil fertility.

27. The following table identifies the project components, outcomes and outputs that represented the expected deliverables.

Figure 1. Project Components Outcomes and Outputs

Component 1: Institutional strengthening (GEF US$ 1,871,514)

Outcomes:

1.1 Institutional capacities have been strengthened at regional, national and local levels to formulate and apply normative frameworks and practices available for SFM and SLM (with increased budgetary allocations or investments), taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables.
1.2. SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices have been developed and mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels, taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables.

Regional Outputs:

- A proposal for a regional Gran Chaco strategic vision and policy integrating SFM/SLM, BD and CC issues developed.
- Regional collaboration and coordination mechanisms strengthened.
- Gran Chaco GIS and database developed and functioning.
- A set of common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments. Coordination strategy among the early warning systems for extreme climatic events and wild fires established.
- Sustainable traditional and new SLM and SFM technologies identified and systematized, including indigenous knowledge.
- Sustainable management manual for the Chaco.

Country Outputs:

- SRAP local offices implemented in Argentina (Santiago del Estero), Bolivia (Charagua; Yacuiba; Monteagudo; and Villamontes) and Paraguay (Asunción).
- Strengthening of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms that ensure the participation of the main stakeholder groups in decision-making processes, especially indigenous peoples and peasants.
- SLM, SFM, BD and CC policy and legal frameworks completed and harmonized in each country.
- Capacity building programs targeting SLM and SFM technical and financial instruments developed and implemented.
- Information systems strengthened.
- Economically and environmentally sound unit compatible with SLM and SFM defined for the different sub-regions.
- Environmental services identified and valued.
- Strategies and action plans for development and implementation of land zoning plans.
- Land use change monitoring methodologies and instruments by means of permanent field plots to measure desertification processes, erosion, salinization, regeneration of the native vegetation among other criteria.
- Strategies for economic incentives and benefit sharing for conservation and alternative uses of forests and sustainable use of biodiversity developed.

Component 2: Field application of SFM and SLM protocols (GEF US$ 3,482,428)

Outcomes:

2.1 A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity is strengthened through SFM and SLM activities.
2.2 CO_2 is captured and emissions avoided through SFM and SLM practices.
2.3 By the end of the project, the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied reach a critical threshold which, in the absence of major institutional barriers, allows the further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining.

Regional Outputs:

- Criteria for design, implementation and M&E of technology validation projects and demonstration projects.
- Technology validation projects and demonstration projects evaluated and results systematized.

Country Outputs:

- Technical studies and proposals for establishment of new conservation areas.
- Protected areas strengthened through management plans.
- Economic incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in private lands developed.
- CO_2 balance model and carbon stocks measured and monitored.
- Technology validation and research projects designed and implemented.
- Demonstration projects in pilot sites designed and implemented.
- Support programs to cover transition costs to SLM and SFM practices implemented in the demonstration sites.

Component 3: Exit strategy (US$ 663,490)

Outcome: 3.1 The end of the project leaves in place a mechanism to ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco.

Regional Outputs:

- Regional and national events for dissemination of results/lessons learnt and exchange of experiences.
- Integration and adoption of regional vision, policy, SFM/SLM best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the SRAP Chaco.

Country Outputs:

- Replication and up scaling of best practices through awareness raising and dissemination of findings across the Chaco region.
- Integration and adoption of best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the NAPs to combat desertification and public policies for the development of the Gran Chaco in each one of the three countries.

Component 4: Project management (US$ 609,909)

Component 5: Monitoring and evaluation (US$ 281,750)

2.2 Objectives and Approach of the Evaluation

28. UN Environment and UNDP evaluation policies require terminal project evaluations at their completion to assess performance (in terms of their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), the achievement of expected outcomes and impacts, and their sustainability. As stated in the Terms of Reference, this evaluation had the purpose of (i) providing evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) promoting operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing among UN Environment, UNDP and the GEF. In doing so, the evaluation was expected to identify relevant lessons for project formulation and implementation.

29. The terminal evaluation was conducted between November 2016 and April 2017

by an independent evaluator.[19] The evaluation approach combined the following:

- *Desk review of project reports and documentation* to establish a baseline understanding of the implementation process, the results achieved and management performance *(November 2016).* The desk review provided the basis for elaborating the TE Inception Report.
- *Field missions to the three countries (November-December 2016*) during which the evaluator met with the Regional Project Coordination Unit (PCU), the focal points for UN Environment (Panama regional office), OAS-GS, UNDP, NEAs and other executing partners. During the country visits the evaluator visited a representative sample of demonstration projects and local participants at the following pilot sites: Santos Lugares (Santiago del Estero province) and Chancaní (Córdoba province) in Argentina; the municipalities of Charagua, Monteagudo, Villamontes and Yacuiba in Bolivia; and Filadelfia and Loma Plata municipalities in Paraguay's Chaco. The sites were selected by the project team to convey the diverse activities that were supported by the project – water harvesting and conservation, beekeeping, agroforestry and pasture management, goat breeding, biodiversity conservation – at different stages of consolidation. The visits to pilot projects were generally guided by the technical focal point and local partners, and followed by on-site meetings with groups of beneficiaries that encompassed farmers, ranchers, indigenous cooperatives and local women's organizations engaged in agriculture and handicrafts.
- *Analysis of field data, systematization of regional/national performance trends and stakeholder perceptions, and formulation of the draft Terminal Evaluation Report.* (January-April). The country missions were followed the analysis of data according to the evaluation criteria. The findings of the desk review, interviews with implementing agencies, NEAs and other executing partners, and the feedback received from the direct beneficiaries were 'triangulated' and emergent trends documented. This analysis provided the base of substantive findings on which this report was drafted.

30. Despite the project's geographic scale and dispersed activities, the country missions were efficiently organized and the evaluator was able to interview a satisfactory number of participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The information and logistical support offered by the Regional Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and executing national project teams were important in this respect and very much appreciated by the evaluator.

31. Three limitations affected the evaluation: (i) Different national contexts and asymmetrical implementation processes make it difficult to integrate country performance findings. For example, the project wasn't operational in Paraguay until 2014; country activities were extended to June 2017 and are still in progress. (ii) The full productive or environmental impact of recently demonstrated SLM/SFM practices cannot be measured at present because they are still in process of fruition. The conservation effects of protected area management plans, new biological corridors or mixed agroforestry/pasture systems are likely to require a gestation period. (iii) The evaluator was unable to meet with the Tri-National Commission or Committee, which were created to move the Gran Chaco Cooperation Framework Agreement and Sub-regional Action Program (SRAP) forward on behalf of the three governments. As a result, the regional dimension of the evaluation did not receive the depth that would

[19] The evaluation commenced on 21 September 2016, when the project was extended to December 2016, the validity of the Legal Instrument was extended to 30 June 2017. The project workplan was accepted to run for additional months to allow for final activities to take place. Therefore, project activities were still ongoing at the time of the Terminal Evaluation.

have been desirable. (v) The evaluation missions were conducted eight months before the project's administrative closure and finalization of implementation activities in Paraguay. As a result, key documents were not received (i.e. Final Project Report, final expenditure statements, completed systematization documents) and some of the project's final developments may have been overlooked. To minimize this problem, the evaluator maintained periodic communications with the regional project coordinator following the evaluation missions, and gradually incorporated new data to the evaluation findings as they were received. In revising the draft report the evaluator has had to follow-up with interviewed stakeholders to confirm their statements, in an attempt to reconcile significant variances in their assessments of administrative performance and related delays. In this respect, a subsequent round of meetings with the agency representatives after completing the field visits, to present preliminary findings, might have helped in addressing these variances.

2.3 Target Areas and Groups

32. The project covered 1 million square kilometer area that includes sections of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. The project document anticipated over 5,000 direct beneficiaries among rural residents of the Gran Chaco in the three countries. These combined individual farmers and ranchers, producers associations, community organizations and enterprises, and indigenous groups; most are small-scale producers living in conditions of poverty. The indirect beneficiaries were the NEAs and government entities with land use and conservation mandates, local governments, research institutions and NGOs that were contracted to implement demonstration projects and TVPs under the second component. The project intended to work with diverse stakeholders at different levels and locations that are listed in the third annex

33. Most of the project's interaction with its target groups occurred in the pilot sites. Thirty demonstration projects and forty technology validation projects were implemented at 11 pilot sites, and were expected to reach the following numbers of beneficiaries: [20]

[20] Figures are drawn from *Implementación y Recursos Alcanzados* section of the draft project systematization report. Several of the initial targets in the project document were subsequently adjusted to more achievable levels by the project team and incorporated to the 2016 PIR.

Figure 2. Pilot sites and beneficiaries

Argentina [21]

- *Santiago del Estero*
- *Córdoba*
- *Formosa*

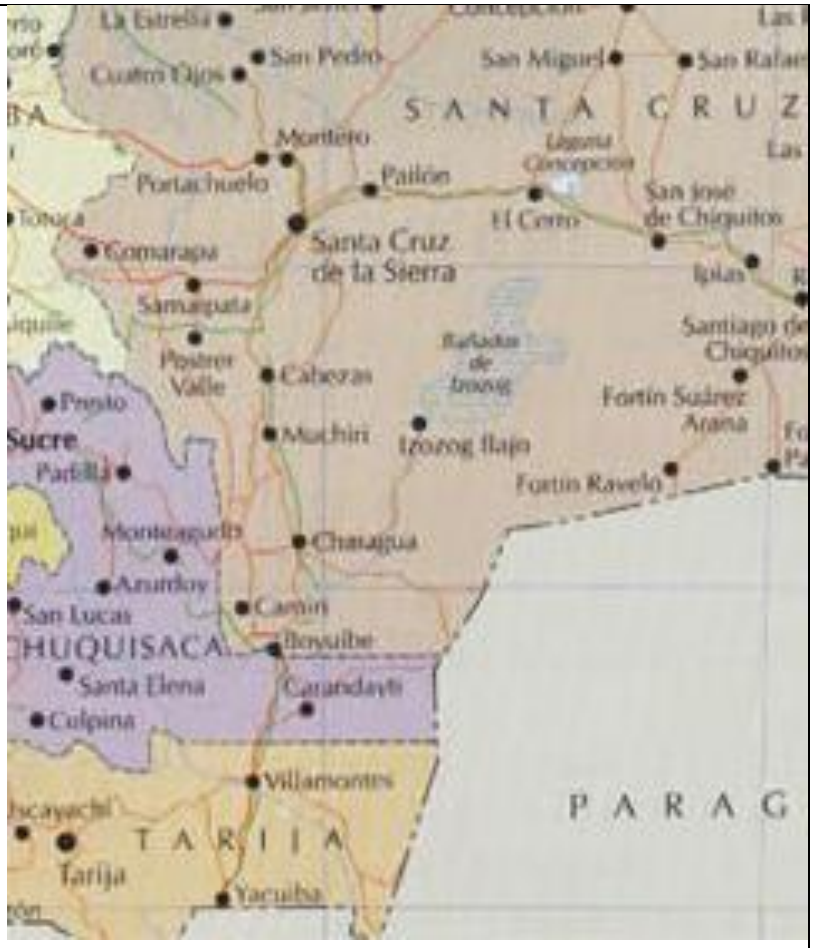
Four pilot sites were selected in Argentina and subsequently reduced to three with the exit of Chaco province. The remaining sites covered approximately 40,000 hectares (without the Teuco-Bermejito pilot site) and were expected to directly benefit more than 1,000 persons and their families.

[21] Argentina initially included a pilot site in Chaco province that was discontinued due to low commitment.

Bolivia

- *Monteagudo*
- *Charagua*
- *Villamontes*
- *Yacuiba*

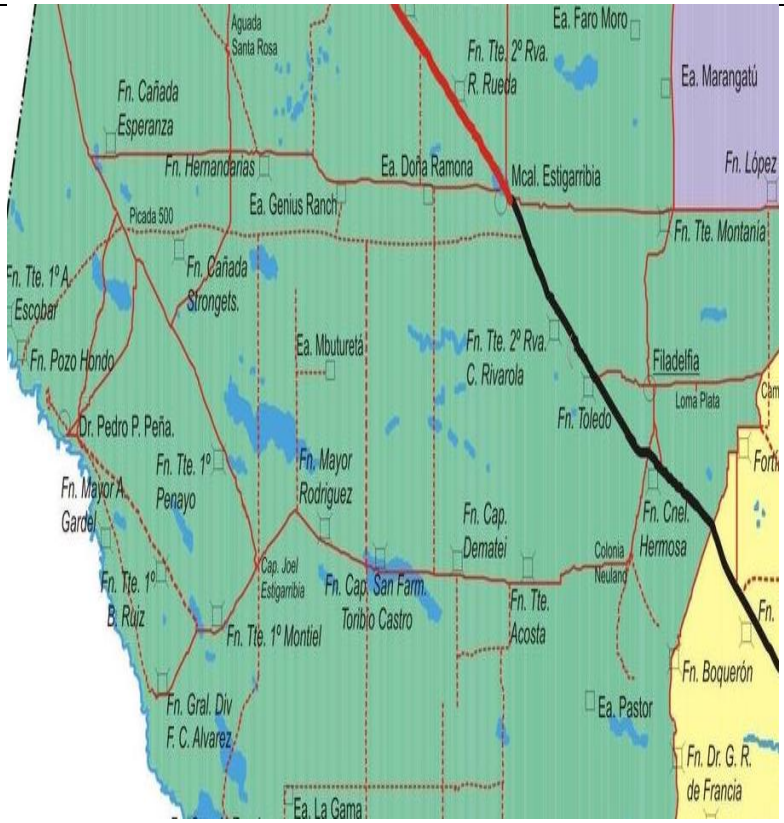
According to the project document, the four demonstration sites covered some 200,000 hectares and were expected to benefit 150 families in Monteagudo, 4,000 beneficiaries in Charagua, 1,111 families in Yacuiba and 375 families in Villamontes. This target was subsequently reduced to 50,000 hec. with demonstration effects reaching 125,000 hec.



Paraguay:

- *Loma Plata*
- *Filadelfia*
- *Boqueron*
- *Puerto Casado*

The pilot sites covered about 130,000 hec. with more than 2,500 beneficiary families from the predominantly Guaraní indigenous populations. This was subsequently downscaled to 250 families on 50,000 hec.



2.4 Milestones/key dates in project design and implementation

34. The following events and milestones marked the project cycle:

Project Approval:	September 2009
Project Commencement:	September 2010
First Disbursement:	December 2010
Mid-Term Review:	July 2013
Terminal Evaluation:	November 2016-April 2017
Planned Project Completion:	November 2015
Actual Project Completion:	December 2016 (Argentina and Bolivia); June 2017 (Paraguay)
Financial Closure:	June 2017

2.5 Implementation Arrangements

35. Implementation arrangements were detailed and connected regional, national and sub-national levels. UN Environment's Regional Office for Latin America & the Caribbean served as the lead implementing agency, with technical support provided by UN Environment's Ecosystems Division. UNDP was the designated co-implementing agency and OAS served as regional executing agency under a collaborative agreement. Responsibilities were divided: UN Environment implemented the regional component and was responsible for overall supervision, M&E and the development of SFM and SLM tools. With the benefit of its country office network, UNDP supported the implementation of country-based activities, institutional strengthening, demonstration projects and technological validation projects. OAS participated as regional executing agency and managed the portion of the budget assigned to UN Environment. These different functions led to divisions of institutional responsibilities in relation to the various project components and outcomes, as described below:

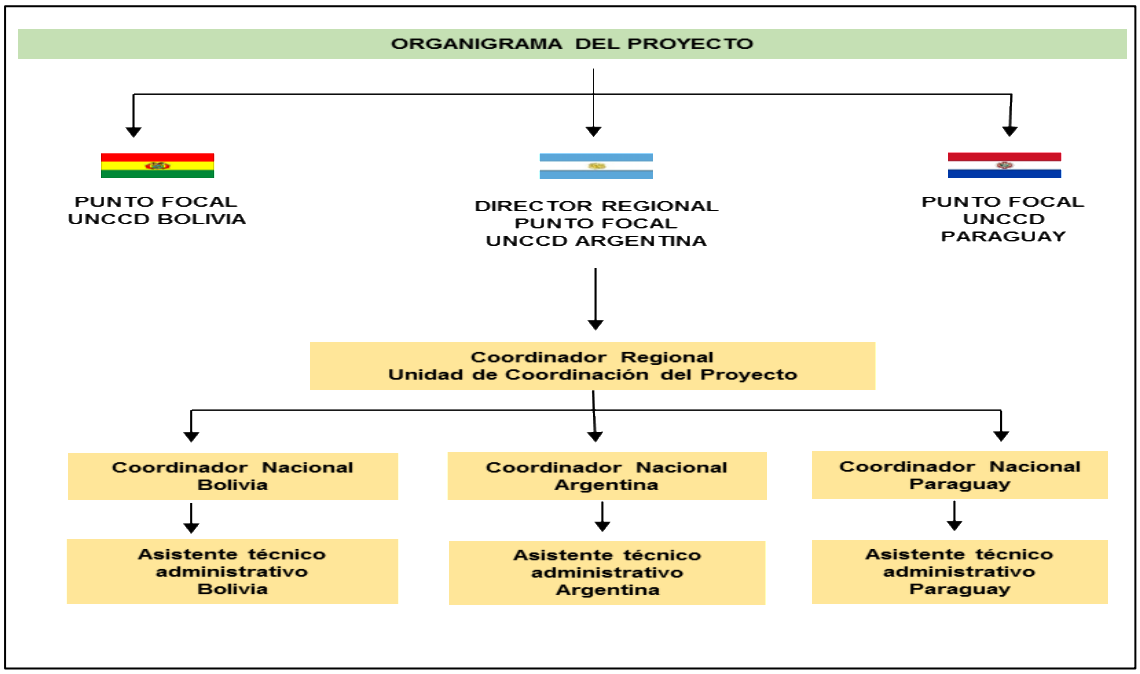
Figure 3. Distribution of Project Outcomes by Agency

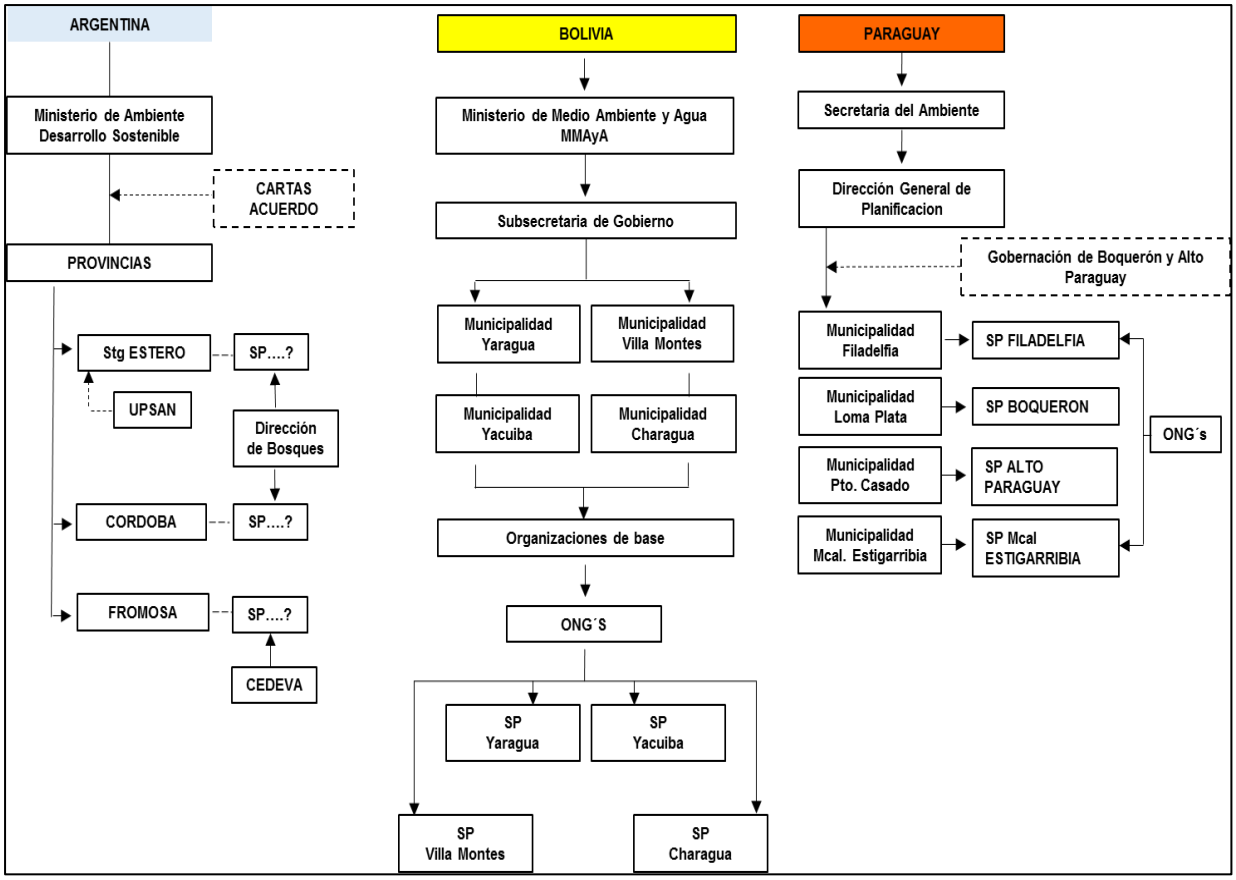
Project Components & Outcomes	Agencies
Component 1. Institutional strengthening	
Outcome 1.1 Institutional capacities	UN Environment, OAS-GS, UNDP
Outcome 1.2 SFM/SLM tools and instruments	UN Environment, OAS-GS, UNDP
Component 2. Field application of SFM and SLM protocols	
Outcome 2.1 Priority areas for biodiversity	UNDP
Outcome 2.2 CO_2 captured and emissions avoided	UN Environment, OAS-GS
Outcome 2.3 SFM and SLM practices	UNDP
Component 3. Project exit strategy	
Outcome 3.1 Sustainability mechanism	UN Environment, OAS-GS

Source: Terms of Reference

36. Management responsibilities were defined at different levels. The regional Project Coordination Unit (PCU) was in charge of executing and supervising the project in collaboration with national project teams that were initially based in the Chaco and subsequently moved to the premises of the national executing agencies in Argentina and Paraguay (the Soil Conservation Directorate and Secretariat of Environment). The country project teams were selected and supervised by NEAs, yet most staff were contracted and remunerated by the implementing agencies (the exception was Argentina's Soil Conservation Directorate, which staffed the national team). The Tri-National Commission that was created by the Framework Cooperation Agreement was to become the Project Steering Committee; however, the PSC did not materialize as planned and interactions with senior government partners have been mostly limited to annual Directive Committee meetings. The demonstration and technology validation projects under the second component were contracted to provincial government agencies and NGOs in the pilot sites.

Figure 4. Project Organigram





Source: Project Coordination Unit

37. Institutional arrangements were wide-ranging and involved many actors, consistent with the project's tri-national framework and levels of intervention. These arrangements were compartmentalized and complex to manage, as reflected in the organizational charts above.

2.6 Project Financing

38. This was a Full-Size project that received a 6.9 million grant from the Global Environment Facility[22], in addition to an expected US$ 18.3 million in co-financing from partner governments (cash and in–kind) that were being disbursed as planned. The particulars are summarized below:

Figure 5. Project financing summary data

Planned project budget at approval:	USD 6,9209,091		
GEF Allocation:	UNEP: USD 3,249,800 UNDP: USD 3,659,291	*Total expenditures reported as of June 2016:*	USD 20,356,699.58

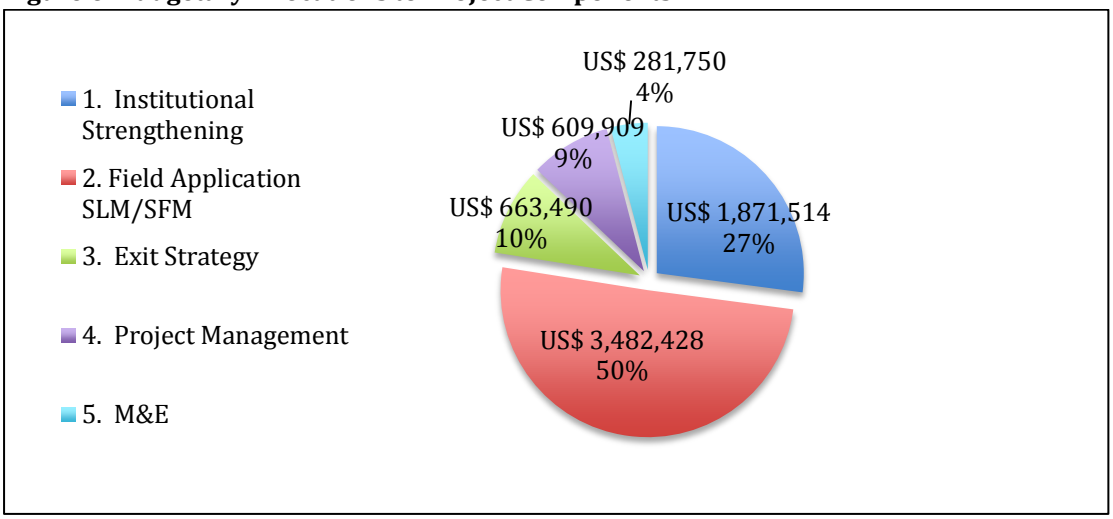
[22] The country allocations of BD (biodiversity) and CCM (climate change mitigation) resources were added to the project after its approval, following a decision made by the GEF Secretariat.

PPG GEF cost: *PPG co-financing*	USD 500,000 USD 645,300	*GEF grant expenditures reported as of August 2016:*	USD 5,495,644
Expected co- financing:	USD 18,370,852	*Secured co-financing (June 2016):*	USD 17,126,896

Source: Based on data from the PCU, the 2016 PIR report and Terms of Reference

39. As noted earlier, the project was comprised of three technical and two support components that were assigned separate budgets. Of these, the largest share in budgetary terms (50%) went to the second component that implemented demonstration projects and technology validations (TVPs) in the pilot areas. The budget distribution appeared to be appropriate.

Figure 6. Budgetary Allocations to Project Components



Source: Project document

2.7 Project Partners

40. *Designated GEF Agencies:*

- UN Environment (Lead Implementation Agency)
- UNDP (Co-implementing Agency)
- OAS-GS (Regional Executing Agency for the UN Environment-assigned portion of the project)

41. *National Executing Agencies:*

- Soil Conservation Directorate - Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Argentina)
- Vice-Ministry of Watersheds and Water Resources - Ministry of Water and Environment (Bolivia)
- Secretariat for Environment (Paraguay).

42. *Pilot Area Partners:*

- Provincial government agencies, local governments, universities, research institutions, universities, NGOs, associations of agricultural/livestock producers, community-based organizations from 11 pilot sites in 3 countries. [23]

2.8 Changes in Design during Implementation

43. There were significant changes to the project's design during implementation that re-dimensioned expectations and had direct effect on the scale of impact. Three outputs were unofficially modified in the course of implementation: Country output 1.1.3 "SLM, SFM, BD and CC policy/legal frameworks completed and harmonized in each country" was substituted for a desk review of legislation and policies affecting the Gran Chaco. The decision was taken to cancel the second round of carbon measurements under outcome 2.2: "CO2 is captured and emissions avoided through SFM and SLM practices" because insufficient time had passed since the baseline measurement. Instead of proposing an integrated regional vision for the Gran Chaco that would revitalize the SRAP (regional output 1.1.1) the project prepared a well-produced video documentary that conveys the demonstrated SLM/SFM practices. Some of the changes were made to downscale unrealistically ambitious outputs (i.e. 1.1.3) and cope with time constraints, and were therefore justified. The PCU conducted a study to update the project's baseline data and indicators;[24] the proposed changes were approved and reflected in the Steering Committee reports and the 2016 PIR.

44. At a late stage of project implementation, the regional PCU downscaled a number of indicators and targets under the second component to more achievable levels. The revisions were based on the consideration of aspects such as population density, the availability of time and funding. In the context of the terminal evaluation, these changes served the project by adjusting expectations to a realistic scale and improving performance ratings compared to what they might have been with the initial project targets. As such, they represented a good if somewhat late example of adaptive management.

45. The revisions were approved by Directive Committee and presented in the 2016 PIR report as follows:[25]

46. **Regional Indicator 2.3**

- Original: By the end of the project, the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied reached a critical threshold which, in the absence of major institutional barriers, allows the further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining. SFM and SLM practices adopted in over 500,000 hectares in nine demonstration sites, thus reducing land degradation, conserving biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration. Income will be improved for 4,586 farmers and their families.

- Revised: By the end of the project, the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied reached a critical threshold which, in the absence of major institutional barriers, allows the further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining. SFM and SLM practices will be adopted in over 300,000 hectares in nine demonstration sites, thus reducing land degradation, conserving biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration. Income will be improved for 4,586 farmers and their families.

47. **Argentina: Indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2**

[23] Detailed lists of project stakeholders are presented in Figure 5 and Annex 3.
[24] *Actualizacion de la Linea Base (2013)*
[25] UNEP-GEF PIR June 2016, pp. 68-9

- Original: Technical studies for Parque Provincial y Reserva Copo - Management plan and equipment to strengthen Parque Provincial de Uso Multiple Copo.
- Revised: Technical studies for Parque Provincial y Reserva Copo - Management plan and equipment to strengthen Parque Provincial de Uso Multiple Copo. Technical studies, management plan and strengthening of the Natural Area Bañados de Figueroa.

48. **Bolivia: Indicator R2.3**

- Original: For Y5, SLM and SFM practices will have been implemented in an area of 200,000 hectares.
- Revised: SFM practices adopted over 50,000 hectares in four demonstration sites; demonstration effects in 75,000 hectares through year 5 of the project until reaching 125,000 hectares.

49. **Paraguay: Indicators R 2.3 and R.3.1**

- Original: Improved revenue of 800 farmers and their families and a potential of 2,000 additional, through demonstration effects for Year 5 of the project (percentage increases in income to be estimated in Y1, after completing baseline studies).
- Revised: Improved income of 100 producers and their families and a potential of 250 additional, through demonstration effects for year 5 of the project.
- Original: By the end of the project an additional 2000 producers will have the potential of joining SFM/SLM.
- Revised: By the end of the project an additional 250 producers will have the potential of joining SFM/SLM.
- Original: By the end of the project 250,000 additional acres have the potential to be incorporated under SFM/SLM.
- Revised: By the end of the project 50,000 additional acres have the potential to be incorporated under SFM/SLM.

3. Reconstructed Theory of Change of the Project

50. The Theory of Change (ToC) analyzes the causal pathways that link project outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) to outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) and impact (long term changes in environmental benefits and living conditions). The ToC also serves to identify intermediate changes that need to take place in order to proceed from project outcomes to impact; these changes are referred to as 'intermediate states'. ToC also defines external factors that influence change along the major pathways and how outputs progress towards outcomes. These external factors are either drivers (when the project has a certain level of control) or assumptions (when the project has no control). [26]

51. The fundamental objective of the project was to reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through sustainable land and forest management in the productive landscape. The project's objective can be translated to the impact statement of the project as "land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco reversed'. The project aimed to contribute to this through achieving a broad range of environmental and social results including (i) consistency among national and regional priorities, (ii) a regional

[26] An in-depth presentation of ToC can be found in *The RotL Handbook: Towards Enhancing the Impacts of Environmental Projects* (GEF Evaluation Office, 2009)

collaboration framework, (iii) improved environmental policy and legal frameworks to ensure sustainable forest and land management, (iv) active stakeholder participation in planning and decision-making of project interventions in their territories through the inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, and (v) sustainable management of Chaco ecosystems through tools and protocols that reverse land degradation trends and the associated loss of biodiversity and carbon stocks.[27] Some of these results were reflected in the design of project outputs and outcomes at both regional and country levels.

52. As seen in Figures 7 and 8 below, project design was analyzed from the perspective of impact or causal pathways, and the extent to which related outputs and outcomes are connected sequentially in their design and implementation. The analysis indicates that the main project components follow a logical sequence that commences with institutional strengthening for SLM/SFM (component 1), which enhances conditions for the demonstration of sustainable practices (component 2) and their subsequent replication and up scaling (components 2 and 3); these in turn are expected to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM/SFM practices at regional, national and local levels, and a shared regional development vision for the Gran Chaco through the SRAP.

53. Most of the outputs lead to their respective outcome, with several examples of output-outcome linkages between components. For example, mainstreaming SFM and SLM policies, tools and practices at regional, national and local levels (outcome 1.2) is important to strengthen biodiversity conservation in a "critical core of priority areas through SFM and SLM activities" (outcome 2.1), and to reach the threshold of users that allows fo self-sustained adoption (outcome 2.3). Likewise, the sustainability mechanism that supports the large-scale adoption of SLM and SFM (outcome 3.1) also contributes to achieving the critical threshold of users. Output 1.1.2 "Strengthened coordination mechanisms with indigenous and farmer participation" facilitates the implementation of pilot demonstration and technology validation under national outputs 2.3.1-3. The implementation and evaluation of the demonstration projects and TVPs (country output 2.3.2) is essential to identify and integrate best practices (country output 3.1.2), and incorporate them to the SRAP (outcome 3.1.2).

54. The causal pathways tend to progress from country-based outputs – i.e. harmonized legislation and policies, demonstrated practices at pilot sites – that are aggregated into regional outputs and outcomes. Hence the harmonization of national policies and legislation under output 1.1 establishes the conditions for outcome 1.2 "SFM and SLM policies, tools and practices mainstreamed at regional, national and local level" to take hold. Likewise, institutional strengthening for SFM/SLM "with higher budgets or investments" (outcome 1.1) directly enables outcome 1.2 yet is essential to the three components.

55. Under the *first project component*, a fundamental output that triggers causal pathways connecting the first and third components is 1.1.3 "SLM, SFM, BD and CC policy/legal frameworks completed and harmonized in each country". Although this output was too ample and outside the project's possibilities, it relates closely to the aim of having a shared regional policy and program vision for the Chaco. Output 1.1.3 becomes critical to enable regional outcome 1.2 "SFM/SLM policies, tools and practices mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels" and output 3.1.2 "integration of regional vision, policies and best practices into SRAP Chaco."

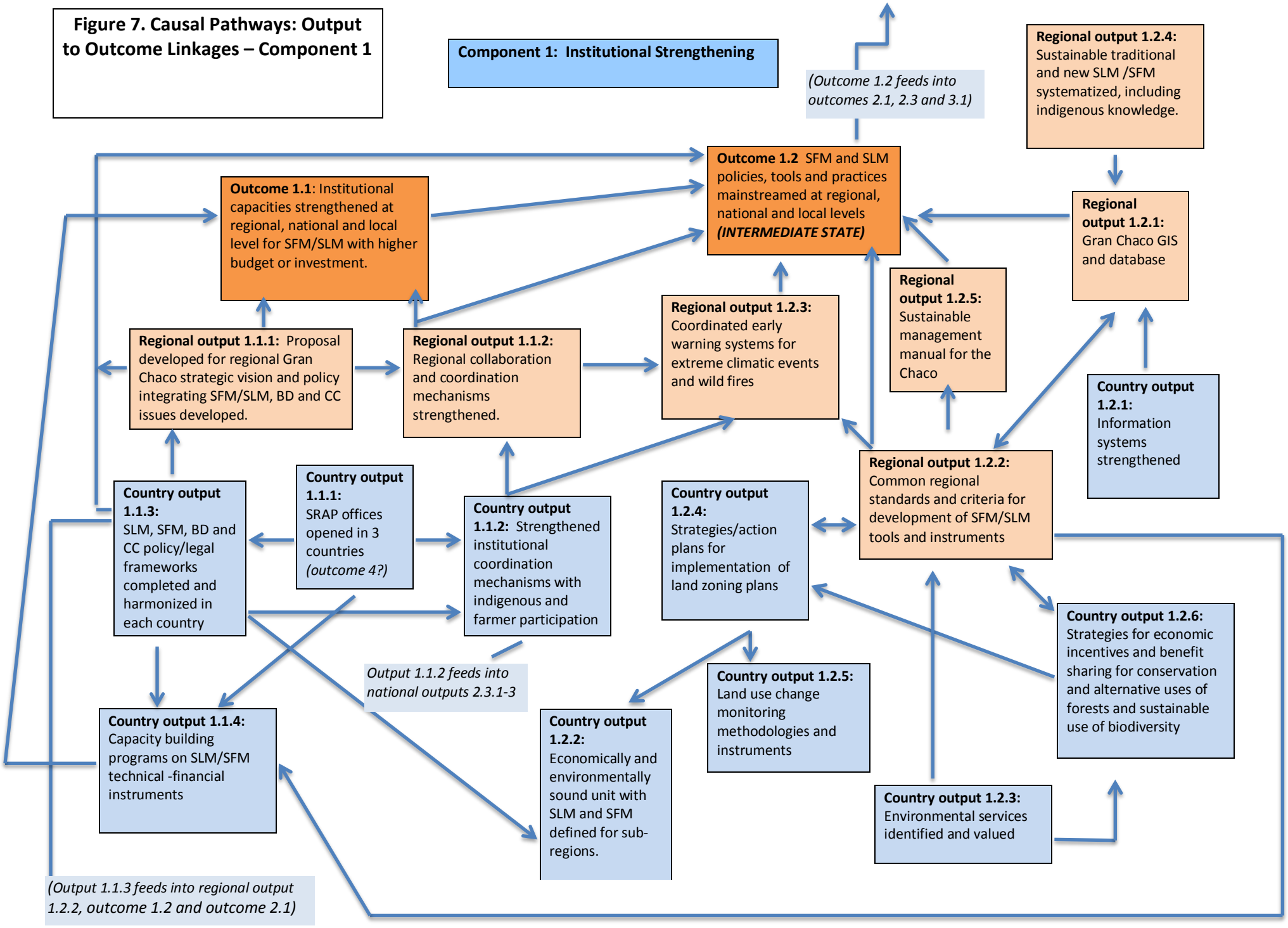
56. These linkages articulate two impact pathways for institutional strengthening that must be considered in scheduling the delivery of outputs. The first pathway starts with country SRAP offices (country output 1.1.1) and is followed by harmonized country legal and policy frameworks (country output 1.1.3) that help strengthen institutional

[27] Project document, pg. 46

capacities (outcome 1.1), expand opportunities for regional collaboration and coordination (regional output 1.1.2), and guide capacity building under country output 1.1.4. The sequence of this pathway connects outputs 1.1.1>1.1.3> 1.1.4> regional output 1.1.4 and outcome 1.1.

57. Harmonized country policies and legislation also enable improved stakeholder coordination (country output 1.1.2) and common standards for SLM/SFM (regional output 1.2.2), which in turn strengthen regional collaboration mechanisms (regional output 1.1.2) that include early warning systems (regional output 1.2.3). The pathway culminates with the mainstreaming of SLM/SFM policies, tools and practices at regional, national and local levels (outcome 1.2), which is one of the intermediate states that are necessary to have impact. This pathway sequence links outputs 1.1.3>1.1.2 (country)>1.1.2 (regional)>1.2.2 (regional) and 1.2.3 (regional)> outcome 1.2. Alternatively, the most direct pathway to outcome 1.2 begins with country output 1.1.3, enabling the adoption of common regional SFM/SLM standards (regional output 1.2.2) that directly connects to the outcome. This pathway follows the sequence of 1.1.3>1.2.2>1.2.

Figure 7. Causal Pathways: Output to Outcome Linkages – Component 1



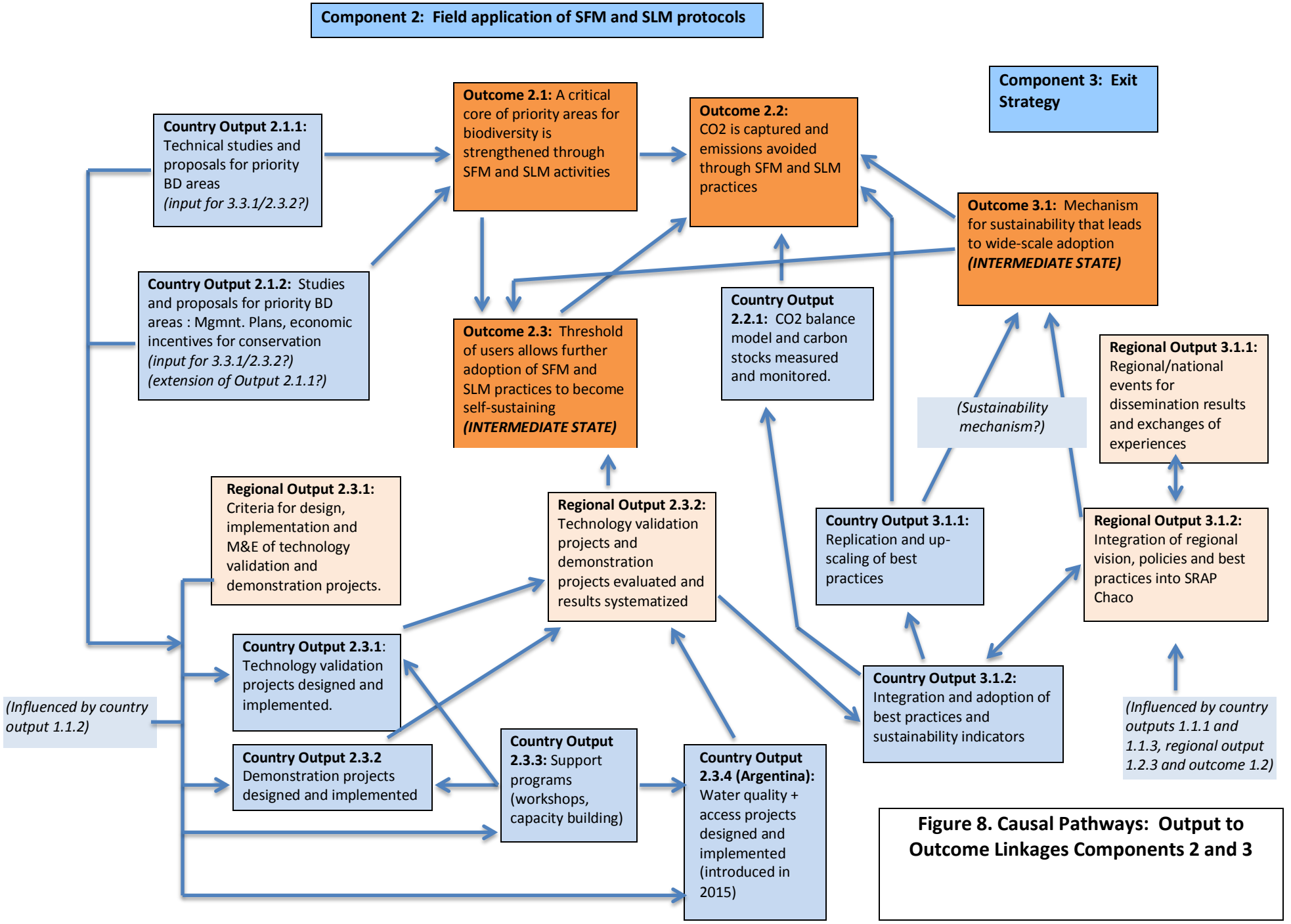


Figure 8. Causal Pathways: Output to Outcome Linkages Components 2 and 3

58. The main findings from the analysis are (i) the existence of four impact pathways that lead to the first two outcomes and can be implemented simultaneously; and that (ii) country output 1.1.3 is essential to achieve several outputs and outcomes that are located on the same pathway, and therefore should be programmed at an early stage and given sufficient time and resources.

59. The second project component demonstrates SLM/SFM practices and validates sustainable technologies in pilot sites across the tri-national region. Outcome 2.3 "threshold of users allows further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining" is therefore fundamental for the success of this component and provides inputs to outcomes 2.1 (critical core of priority areas for biodiversity strengthened through SFM and SLM) and 2.2 (increased carbon sequestration). Outcomes 2.1 and 2.3 are also reinforced by the replication and adoption of SLM/SFM practices under outcome 3.1.

60. The main causal pathway for the second component starts with the approval of regional criteria for demonstration projects (regional output 2.3.1), which encourages technical studies and project proposals (country outputs 2.1.1-3 and 2.3.1) that are approved and implemented (country outputs 2.3.1-4). Moving up the pathway, these outputs become inputs for the validation and systematization of regional results (regional output 2.3.2) that are pivotal to the broader adoption of SLM and SFM practices (outcomes 2.1 and 2.3) that enable increased CO2 absorption (outcome 2.2). This pathway links regional output 2.3.1>county outputs 2.1.1-3>country outputs 2.3.1-4>regional output 2.3.2>outcomes 2.1 and 2.3>outcome 2.2.

61. A second impact pathway integrates the second and third components. It starts with the integration of best practices and sustainability indicators from the demonstration projects (country output 3.1.2), which contribute to the CO2 balance model and emissions monitoring (country output 2.2.1) that feeds into outcome 2.2, while also contributing to the broader adoption of SLM/SFM practices (outcome 3.1). Likewise, the sustainability mechanism that leads to the large-scale adoption of SLM/SFM (outcome 3.1) supports the up scaling and replication of these practices (outcomes 2.3), which in turn contribute to increased carbon sequestration (outcome 2.2). The *third component* – the project "exit strategy" - had lower performance with the partial delivery of one output. Several outputs under this component relied on the documentation of results from demonstration projects and TVPs that were completed towards the final project stage (and continue in **Paraguay**).

62. The analysis of causal pathways includes the identification of higher-order outcomes that are directly connected to the project objective. These are the *intermediate states* that precede impact and therefore need to be reached in order to achieve the project objective. Indeed, the level of success in reaching the following outcomes/intermediate states is critical in determining the likelihood of impact:

- Outcome 1.2: SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices have been developed and mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels;
- Outcome 3.1: Mechanism for sustainability that leads to large scale adoption of SLM & SFM; and
- Outcome 2.3: Threshold of users allows further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining.

63. This analysis indicates that different clusters of outputs and outcomes should be implemented sequentially to maximize their effect and improve the likelihood of impact in reversing land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco region. An implementation approach based on causal pathways requires time and is admittedly a difficult task to achieve with three countries over a five-year period. Alternatively, the simultaneous implementation of assorted outputs that aren't

connected by causal pathways may be useful to raise delivery and expenditure yet may also lower technical quality and aggregate impact.

64. The project's design was additionally influenced by *impact drivers* that moved the implementation process forward, and by *external assumptions* that were outside the project's control. The following were identified:

***Impact Drivers**:*

- Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia's adhesion to the UNCCD and Gran Chaco SRAP.
- The recognized biodiversity and global value of the Gran Chaco region.
- The integration of demonstration projects and technological demonstrations with productive processes in pilot sites.

Assumptions:

- The three governments are committed to the implementation of the SRAP and there is an operational tri-national framework in place.
- There is political will in the three countries to provide adequate support to the project and up-scale SFM/SLM within national legislation, policies and methodological instruments.
- Participating government, non-governmental and community-based organizations have the capacities to fully participate in project activities.
- The environmental benefits associated with the demonstration and dissemination of SFM/SLM practices can be measured within the project lifetime.
- The continuity of the implementation process will not be excessively disrupted by national or local government elections.
- Climactic conditions allow for the normal implementation of field activities.
- The environmental threats that are contributing to the increased rates of land degradation in the Grand Chaco do not undermine the project results.

4. Evaluation Findings

4.1 Strategic Relevance

67. The project objective and outcomes were very relevant to global, regional and national environmental priorities. The Gran Chaco region comprises a mosaic of ecosystems that include savannahs, wetlands, one of the largest tracts of dry forest in the world and the second largest forested ecosystem outside the Amazon in South America. The project was designed to promote sustainable land and forest management (SLM, SFM) practices within the framework of the Gran Chaco Sub-Regional Action Plan (SRAP), a tri-national initiative that was launched by the governments of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay to support the UN Conventions on Desertification (UNCCD) and Conservation of Biodiversity (UNCBD). In addition, several of the demonstrated practices contributed to climate change mitigation through the expected absorption of 0.5 tons of C02/hectare into soil inorganic carbons. [28] The project's country components, institutional arrangements and pilot initiatives supported the National Action Plans to combat desertification and, in the case of **Argentina**, the implementation of national legislation for the conservation of native forests.

[28] Project document, pg. 6

68. The project's design was consistent with UN Environment and GEF's strategic priorities. It addressed GEF IV's strategic objective of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in production landscapes (through sustainable land and forest management, and support to the creation and management of protected areas in the three countries); and in particular the Biodiversity Focal Area's SP 3 and 7 that address (i) strengthened terrestrial protected area networks and management of land use; (ii) land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) to protect carbon stocks and reduce GHG emissions; and (iii) sustainable forest management in production landscapes." The project was also relevant to the UN Environment 2010-14 Medium-Term Strategy's (MTS) crosscutting priorities of Ecosystems Management and Climate Change, in addition to the Environmental Governance sub-program [29] and Expected Accomplishment in Ecosystems Management. [30] Project design built onto ongoing assistance for the implementation of UNCCD Sub-Regional Action Programs for native forests and hydrological resources in dry lands, and was compatible with the environmental objectives contained of the UNDP Country Cooperation Frameworks. From a social perspective, the project was clearly relevant to the rights of indigenous peoples and promotion of gender equity and equality (although the project's design did not include a gender component). The project was relevant to both groups, both in terms of their presence among project beneficiaries (much of the rural Chaco has predominantly indigenous populations and the project worked directly with indigenous communities and their organizations in the three countries. The project was relevant to the needs of women engaged in farming and household economies, through the provision of drip irrigation, improved water management, rainwater harvesting technology and income from beekeeping, in addition to the and the award of project grants to organized women's groups in the three countries. Although not mentioned in the project document, the project's technological validation and capacity building activities were also suppportive of the Bali Strategic Plan objectives.

69. Aside from these linkages, the project was the latest initiative in a series of of GEF-UN Environment regional projects that have supported ecosystems management and sustainable development. Past initiatives that were implemented in the region include:

- UNEP/GEF "Strategic Action Program for the Bermejo Bi-national Basin, which includes Argentina and Bolivia";
- UNEP/GEF "Sustainable Management of the Water Resources of the La Plata Basin with respect to the effects of climate variability and change";
- WB/GEF "Biodiversity Conservation in Productive Forestry Landscapes", the main objective of which is the incorporation of biodiversity in the management of forest plantations in ecosystems of regional and global importance in Argentina;
- UNDP/UNEP "Establishment of incentives for the conservation of ecosystem services of global significance (PES)" in Argentina.

70. The project implementation strategy supported South-South cooperation by working with three countries in the context of the SRAP and organizing periodic stakeholder exchange workshops. The project's approach was indirectly relevant to gender issues as well, given the role of women in the Chaco rural economy and their lead role in several demonstration projects (i.e. organic farming in Yacuiba, Bolivia; handicrafts in Paraguay and Argentina). Indeed, gender was incorporated as a social criterion for the selection of demonstration projects.[31] The evaluation

[29] Defined as "The capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations" (MTS 2010-2014)
[30] Which included support to countries in " …creating the enabling environment for the implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs, with a particular emphasis on the achievement of the Aichi biodiversity targets." (MTS 2010-2014).
[31] Project document, Appendix 19 (pg. 223).

found no other evidence of incorporation or promotion of gender equity or the project having collected gender disggregated monitoring data. The assistance given to community-based organizations for honey production in Argentina and Paraguay was expected to improve the land tenure security of economically vulnerable populations that continue to face the threat of displacement in some areas. Within the pilot sites, a number of demonstration projects have also encouraged collaboration between small and medium/large-scale producers who initially tested the SLM/SFM practices for subsequent transfer.

Evaluation rating for strategic relevance is "Highly Satisfactory"

4.2 Achievement of Outputs

71. The project results framework foresaw the delivery of 31 outputs under the three technical components. Output delivery was initially slow yet gradually improved to reach satisfactory levels; by the end of the project almost 90% of the planned outputs generated to some extent. The evaluation findings indicate that 18 outputs (58%) were fully delivered, 10 (35%) partially delivered and 3 (10%) undelivered. These are somewhat subjective estimates that combine field observation with reported data; the evaluator did not visit all of the project sites and several outputs are still in progress in **Paraguay**, where the project has been extended to June 2017. The second project component was clearly the most effective in terms of output achievement with approximately 80% full delivery; followed by the first component that fully delivered over half (53%)of its planned outputs. The project's overall performance in terms of output delivery is rated as moderately satisfactory.

72. Overall achievement levels were higher for national outputs than for regional deliverables. They were closer to country needs and tended to receive more attention from NEAs than regional initiatives. The absence of a functional tri-national framework or SRAP (outside the project itself) also discouraged the production of regional outputs and outcomes. Some of the planned outputs were unrealistic in relation to the timelines given, or outside the project's direct influence, i.e. 1.3.1 and 3.1.2.

73. The project's most notable achievement was the implementation of 75 demonstration and technological validation projects in 11 pilot areas under the second component. According to project reports, 160 sustainable practices were demonstrated in the following areas: [32]

- Soil and water conservation
- Livestock management
- Conservation and management of native forests
- Handicrafts production
- Beekeeping and honey production.

74. Several pilot projects have generated or are expected to generate environmental and socio-economic impacts through organic honey collection or integrated agroforestry-pasture management. Many practices have a strong replication potential that has not been fully promoted due to implementation delays and time constraints. Nevertheless, the project has generated a body of sustainable natural resource management practices that support the main productive activities of the region and can readily be up-scaled if there is political will to do so.

75. The third component – the project "exit strategy" - had the lowest performance with the

[32] A full listing of demonstration projects and project practices in the pilot sites is included under Annex 8.

delivery of one output. Most of the outputs for this component used the results of the demonstration projects and TVPs that were only completed at a late stage (and continue in **Paraguay**). A draft document for the systematization of best practices – an important dissemination tool - was submitted several months after the project had closed activities in two countries. The national and regional meetings to present project results and materials to a wider audience have not taken place, except for a national meeting in Argentina that could not be finished. A regional meeting with the participation of Ministers has been re-scheduled to June but has not been confirmed; the same applies to a proposed national meeting in Bolivia's Chaco. The limited progress achieved by the third component has lowered the likelihood of replication or up scaling at the levels foreseen the project document.

Figure 9. Delivery of Project Outputs: Final Status [33]

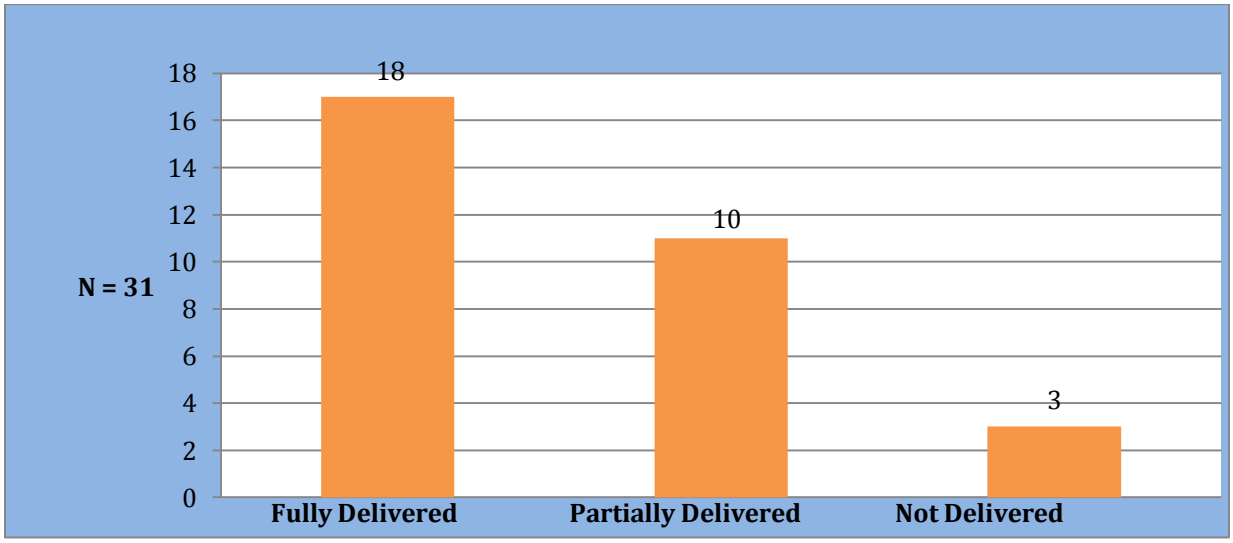
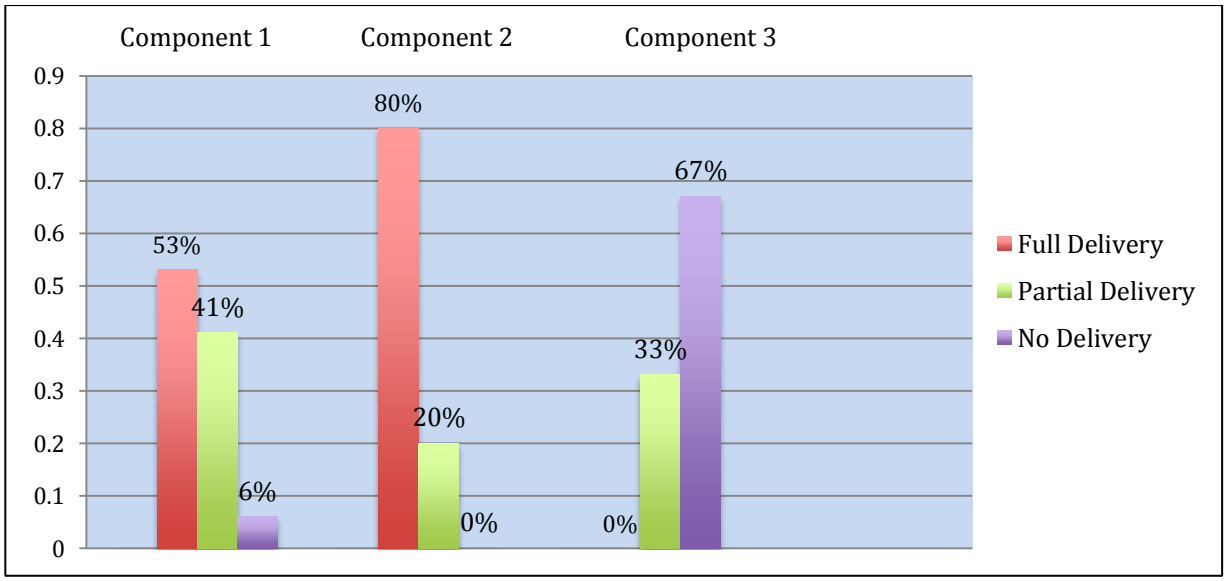


Figure 10. Output Delivery by Project Component



[33] Outputs that were completed in Argentina and Bolivia yet are underway (and expected to be completed) in Paraguay, are rated as fully delivered.

76. The following matrix describes the final status of project outputs for the three technical components, with comments on their delivery and performance:

Figure 11. Final Status of Outputs and Contributing Factors

Output	Final Status	Comments
Regional Outputs **1.1.1** Proposal developed for a regional Gran Chaco vision and development policy integrating SFM/SLM, BD and CC issues.	Partially delivered	This output is pending for the most part. There are validated practices but a regional vision- and government "buy-in" to a regional vision - is lacking. A documentary on SFM/SLM practices in the three countries was produced for dissemination. The presentation of the documentary was scheduled to coincide with a meeting of Ministers that was postponed, re-scheduled at the end of the project in Paraguay and ultimately not realized. A regional vision or development policy has not been proposed to national governments or the Tri-National Commission. In most cases validated SFM/SLM practices have not been incorporated to national or provincial development plans, or budgeted for. This situation was partially influenced by project design, since there was insufficient time to disseminate/upscale sustainable management practices under the third component. From a TOC perspective, the achievement of this output was undermined by the lack of regional counterparts or operational regional framework for the project to work through (contrary to one of the project's underlying assumptions). This signaled a gap in regional ownership: The Tri-national entities and other regional mechanisms created by the Gran Chaco Declaration have not been functional and the SRAP's momentum depended almost entirely on project activities. The impossibility of "completing and harmonizing" national policy and legal frameworks between the three countries (output 1.1.3) also hindered the achievement of this output. Which in turn affected the progress reached towards other deliverables situated on the causal pathway – in particular, output 1.1.2 "regional collaboration and coordination mechanisms strengthened" and outcome 1.2 "SFM and SLM policies, tools and practices mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels," which was one of the intermediate stages that needed to be reached in order to generate the expected impact.
1.1.2 Regional collaboration and coordination mechanisms	Partially delivered	The Tri-National Committee and Council were the regional coordination mechanisms created by the three countries for the Gran Chaco SRAP. However, functional regional mechanisms were not in place during the project period and the Tri-National Committee and Council have not participated in the project. In this context, the main regional coordination mechanism was the Directive Committee that will not continue beyond the project term. A regional early warning system was proposed but has not been adopted to date. A more promising development is the regional GIS and database that is being developed at Argentina's National Observatory on Land Degradation. The project held regional meetings of pilot site beneficiaries to exchange experiences, indirectly supported collaboration and coordination. According to the ToC analysis, the full achievement of this output was hindered by the absence of an operational tri-national framework to work with, and the partial delivery of output 1.1.1.

National Outputs **1.1.1** SRAP Chaco Office	Fully delivered	Offices were established in the three countries. Although the national offices were linked to and supervised by the NEAs, the teams were contracted and paid by the project in **Bolivia** and **Paraguay**. The **Argentina** and **Paraguay** offices were moved from the Chaco to NEA premises in the capital cities, while **Bolivia's** office remained in the project area. As noted in the TOC analysis, this output enabled the achievement of other outputs connected by causal pathways, as well as the general implementation of country-based activities.
1.1.2 Inter-institutional coordination mechanisms	Fully delivered	In all countries, the project negotiated institutional agreements with government agencies, universities, NGOs and producer organizations for the implementation of pilot projects and technological validation projects (TVPs). The project has also facilitated coordination between government environmental authorities, regional research institutions, NGOs and community organizations for the design/ implementation of pilot projects. The project enabled **Paraguay's** Sec. of Environment to work with Mennonite local governments, indigenous communities and NGOs in western Chaco. In **Argentina**, a national Chaco "synergy group" was also formed within the MAYDS. In **Bolivia,** the project reached institutional agreements with local governments, producers associations, NGOs, CBOs and a university for the implementation of pilot projects and TVPs. Institutional coordination in the three countries was affected by the inconsistent involvement of central, provincial and municipal government institutions. The full achievement of this output was fundamental to enable the implementation of pilot demonstration, TVP and water projects under outputs 2.3.1-3, which in turn were necessary to allow the systematization/dissemination of SFM/SLM practices under the third component.
1.1.3 The policy and regulatory framework has been completed and harmonized	Not delivered	Achieving this output was not feasible for three countries (one of them federal, with separate provincial legislation) within the project timeframe and budget. Instead, a desk review of policies and regulations was undertaken to assess their consistency and identify gaps. This weakened the enabling regional context for building regional collaborative mechanisms (regional output 1.1.2), a common regional vision and development agenda for the Gran Chaco (regional output 1.1.1), and the mainstreaming of SFM/SLM policies, practices and tools at regional and national levels (outcome 1.2).
1.1.4 Capacity building	Fully delivered	Training targets were met and reportedly surpassed in some cases. Approximately 10,000 producers reportedly participated in or were exposed to demonstration practices in the pilot sites. According to the mapped impact pathways, this output was partially enabled by Regional output 1.2.2 ("common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments") and was an input to the implementation of demonstration projects (country output 3.2.2) under the second component, with likely multiplier effect in and beyond the pilot areas.
Regional Outputs **1.2.1** Gran Chaco GIS and Data base developed and	Partially delivered	A GIS for the Gran Chaco was developed following ISO norms. **Argentina's** National Observatory for Land Degradation (linked to MAYDS) will serve as node for the GIS and Chaco database, which will be operational soon. Although not functional at present, the GIS and database are being loaded to the system and are expected to be operational in coming months. The Observatory and database can be accessed at

functioning		http://www.desertificacion.gob.ar/manejo-sustentable-de-bosques-en-el-ecosistema-transfronterizo-del-gran-chaco-americano/?ref=h. This output is intrinsically linked to country outputs 1.2.1 "Information systems strengthened" and 1.2.4 "sustainable traditional and new SLM /SFM systematized, including indigenous knowledge", and directly contributes to the mainstreaming of SFM/ SLM policies, tools and practices at regional, national and local levels (outcome 1.2).
1.2.2 Common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments	Fully delivered	Pilot SFM/SLM practices were validated and documented. Criteria were developed for UPEAs (environmentally sound productive units), sustainable land use and the national monitoring of land use changes (based on the Land Degradation Neutrality Index/LDNI. A proposal exists to harmonize the land use change monitoring methodology across the three countries. Again, the TOC analysis indicates that this output was an enabler for the subsequent implementation of demonstration projects and TVPs in the pilot sites (output
1.2.3 Regional strategy to strengthen and articulate capacities for extreme climatic events and wild fires.	Fully delivered	The proposal for a regional EWS strategy was prepared by a consultant.
1.2.4 Sustainable traditional and new SLM and SFM technologies identified and systematized.	Fully delivered	SLM/SFM practices for rangeland management, integrated agro-forestry-pasture systems, water management and honey production were validated and documented, and are in process of being systematized into "standardized" approaches to facilitate their replication. This output provided essential inputs for the elaboration of a project documentary (output 1.2.5) and the regional database (output 1.2.1).
1.2.5 Manual for Sustainable Management of the Gran Chaco developed	Partially delivered	A video documentary was recently completed (under output 1.1.1) that conveys the practices demonstrated at the pilot sites. Documented systematizations of project experiences and SFM/SLM practices are delayed; a draft regional document was recently submitted that is unsatisfactory and requires further work.
National Outputs **1.2.1** Information systems strengthened.	Partially delivered	A GIS and database have been developed and could strengthen national information systems once the regional node is operational (linked to regional output 1.2.1). It is expected that this will be achieved in the next months. In **Paraguay**, this output contributed to the creation of a Department of Geomatics within SEAM.
1.2.2 Environmentally and economically sound productive unit (UPEA)	Partially delivered	UPEAs were designated from successful demonstration projects in **Argentina** and **Bolivia** but are at an incipient stage of development (as UPEAs) and will require follow-up support. Identification of a UPEA in **Paraguay** is pending. According to some respondents, the criteria for designating UPEAs among demonstration projects have not been clear. From a ToC perspective, the partial achievement of this output may have lowered the expected levels of SLM/SFM adoption and replication (outcomes 2.1 and 2.2)

1.2.3 Environmental services	Fully delivered	In **Argentina** this aspect was covered by GEF project "Establishment of Incentives for the Conservation of Ecosystem Services of Global Significance (PES"), which was expected to collaborate on this issue as stated in the project document; hence this is considered fully delivered. A consultancy and workshop were held in **Bolivia**. In **Paraguay** a consultant elaborated a proposal for nominal value of ecosystem services that had not been reviewed or approved by SEAM.
1.2.4 Strategy and action plan for development of land zoning plans	Fully delivered	The project contributed to the conservation of approximately 280,000 hec. that have been designated as biological corridors, according to project reports. In **Argentina** this aspect was addressed by the national Forest Law 26.331 through its work with territorial designation and sustainable management of native forests. A consutlancy and socialization workshop took place in **Bolivia** and support was given to the elaboration of a national Management Plan for Lands and Forests (PGIBT). The consultancy in **Paraguay** proposed new legislation.
1.2.5 Instruments to monitor land use changes	Fully delivered	Instruments for monitoring land degradation were proposed by project consultancies and tested in the three countries**.**
1.2.6 Strategy for economic incentives to alternative uses of the forest developed	Fully delivered: Argentina, Bolivia Partially delivered: Paraguay	This aspect was covered in **Argentina** by the national forest legislation and its implementation in native forests. The **Bolivia** consultancy was completed and results shared with NEA and Chaco municipalities. **Paraguay** was in process of contracting a consultant.
2.1.1 Technical studies for prioritization of high biodiversity areas.	Fully delivered: Argentina, Bolivia Partially delivered: Paraguay	Activity plan for Reserve of Bañados de Figueroa in SDE was designed and presented in **Argentina.** Technical study and Management Plan elaborated for planned municipal Aguarague reserve in Charagua, **Bolivia**, enabling the declaration of the protected area. An ecotourism study was also elaborated for Chaco sites in **Bolivia.** A consulting company was contracted in **Paraguay** and the study was in progress at the time of the evaluation visit.
2.1.2 Management Plan and equipment (Argentina only)	Partially Delivered	The Bañados de Figueroa plan was elaborated as indicated above. The equipment component does not appear to have been addressed.
2.1.3 Proposal for implementation of private reserves. (Argentina only)	Fully delivered	Proposal formulated for **Argentina's** Teuco reserve in Chaco province (the province was subsequently dropped from the project).
2.2.1 C02 balance model and carbon stocks measured and monitored	Partially delivered	A methodology was designed with the participation of **Argentina's** University of Formosa and shared with the other countries through workshops. Baseline measurements were conducted at pilot sites in the three countries, but there was not a second measurements in 2015 or afterwards as had been planned. This decision was taken due to the insufficient time that had lapsed from the baseline measurement to have an effect on carbon emissions. Arrangements for future monitoring between the three countries do not appear to be in place. In **Bolivia,**

		university thesis students participated in the baseline measurement. This output was enabled by country output 1.1.2 ("strengthened institutional coordination mechanisms with indigenous and farmer participation") and regional output 1.1.2. In the absence of a second measurement, a proxy model was designed with the support of the UN Environment-GEF Carbon Benefits project.
Regional Outputs: **2.3.1** Criteria for design, implementation and M&E of technology validation projects and demonstration projects developed	Fully delivered	The criteria for demonstration and TVPs were defined and approved by the project team. However, some participants consider that the criteria for UPEAs are not clear.
2.3.2: Technology validation projects and demonstration projects evaluated and results systematized	Fully delivered: Argentina, Bolivia Partially delivered: Paraguay	Pilot and technology validation project were implemented and completed in **Bolivia** and **Argentina**, and are still underway in Paraguay. Reporting by beneficiaries was inconsistent and consultancies for the systematization of results are still ongoing.
National Outputs: **2.3.1** Technology validation projects designed and implemented	Fully delivered	This was one of the project's most successful deliverables in terms of the validation of sustainable resource management practices. A total of 16 technological validation projects were supported that included water boxes and insulated "Australian" water dams in **Argentina** and **Paraguay**, cattle fattening facilities in **Bolivia**, and improved pasture management in the three countries. This output was enabled by the full delivery of regional outputs 1.2.2 ("common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments") and 2.3.1 "criteria for technology validation and demonstration projects), and the strengthened institutional coordination mechanisms under country output 1.1.2. Likewise, the delivery of this output provided an essential to outcomes 2.1-3.
2.3.2 Demonstration projects designed and implemented	Fully delivered: Argentina, Bolivia Partially delivered: Paraguay	This was the project's most successful deliverable in terms of the results achieved in the field and the validation of SLM/SFM practices. The project implemented 40 demonstration projects that combined 160 SLM/SFM practices in 11 pilot sites (3 in Argentina, 4 in Bolivia and Paraguay) covering approximately 500,000 hec. The pilot projects focussed on soil and water conservation, livestock management , conservation and management of native forests, beekeeping/honey production, and production of handicrafts. The projects have been completed for the most part in **Argentina** and **Bolivia**, and are continuing in Paraguay until June 2017. Many of the demonstrated practices are potentially sustainable and several have generated social and environmental impact in the pilot areas. According to internal reports the practices demonstrated in the pilot sites have generated additional income for 4,600 farmers and their families.

		This output was enabled by the full delivery of regional outputs 1.2.2 ("common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments") and 2.3. "criteria for technology validation and demonstration projects), and the strengthened institutional coordination mechanisms under country output 1.1.2. Likewise, the delivery of this output provided an essential to outcomes 2.1-3.
2.3.3 Support projects	Fully delivered: Argentina, Bolivia Partially delivered: Paraguay	Exchange workshops were held between demonstration project participants in **Argentina**. Support was given to the design of a proposal for replicating SLM/SFM practices in Monteagudo, Yacuiba and Villamontes in **Bolivia**, with proposed funding form the *Plan Nacional de Cuenc*as among other sources. Support activities were being planned in **Paraguay.**
2.3.4 Projects for improved access and management of water resources (Argentina)	Fully delivered	Cisterns for domestic water harvesting and animal consumption were implemented in three provinces. The funds came form the portion of the budget that was not used by Chaco province.
Regional Outputs **3.1.1** Regional and national events for dissemination of results/lessons learnt and exchange of experiences	Partially delivered	There were rotational annual meetings for the exchange of experiences that included participants from the three countries. However there has been little dissemination to "upstream" government and policy levels as envisioned under this component. A national event was held in **Argentina** but was interrupted due to unforeseen circumstances. A regional meeting to present final results to focal Ministers of the three countries was suspended and has been re-scheduled to take place at the administrative closure of the project; a national event in the **Bolivian** Chaco is also being considered. Confirmation is pending in both cases. According to the ToC analysis, the patial delivery of this output undermined the project's ability to mainstream SLM/SFM policies and tools at regional and national levels (regional output 3.1.2), or fully achieve the wide-scale adoption and replication that were foreseen under outcomes 2.1-3.
3.1.2: Integration and adoption of regional vision, policy, SFM/SLM best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the SRAP	Not delivered	The systematization of results in the three countries is still underway and a regional policy vision was not articulated or promoted, aside from documenting pilot SFM/SLM practices in the field. There was limited sharing or dissemination of results to upstream government policy levels (see output 3.1.1.). The institutional context was also lacking: The absence of a functional SRAP and Tri-National Commission or Council created a void that discouraged the formulation and adoption of a regional policy vision. The regional and national project teams have lacked the time to process the implementation experience, generate a "critical mass" of SFM/SLM practices or influence policy, as was foreseen under the third component. Efforts were instead focused on the various pilot projects and TVPs until the end (and continue in Paraguay). As noted above, the achievement of this output was undermined by the delayed implementation of demonstration projects and insufficient time to systematize/disseminate results and best practices under regional output 3.1.1. These limitations have had an indirect effect on the levels of adoption and replication foreseen under outcomes 2.1-3.

National Outputs 3.1.1 Replication and up scaling of best practices	Not delivered	Replication and up scaling of validated practices were well below the levels foreseen in the project document. There were some examples of local replication within pilot areas in **Argentina** and **Bolivia**. Financing for 1,300 additional beehives was approved in **Argentina** under the implementation of the native forest legislation. However, there has not been significant up scaling within government policies or programs in any of the three countries. To a large extent, time limitations undermined the achievement of this output: The efforts of both the regional and national teams were largely devoted to the demonstration projects until a late stage; demonstration projects were extended in **Paraguay until June** 2017 to enable their completion and some degree of replication. The documentation of project results and practices – which are essential to promote up scaling - was delayed as a result. While present levels of replication and up-scaling are too incipient to merit a "partial achievement" rating, there are opportunities for broader replication through implementation of the *Ley de Bosques* in **Argentina**, the *Plan Nacional de Cuencas* in **Bolivia** (which is in expected to fund two SLM replications in Monteagudo), and *Green Commodities* and Climate Change Adaptation projects that are starting in **Paraguay**. However, making full use of these opportunities will require follow up on the part of the NEAs.
3.1.2 Integration and adoption of SFM/SLM best practices and indicators into the NAP and public policies for the development of the Argentinean Chaco	Partially delivered	The evaluation did not find indications that SFM/SLM practices and indicators developed by the project have been incorporated within public policies for the Chaco, aside from where they already existed **(Argentina)** and in the case of **Paraguay's** NAPs to Combat Desertification, which was updated during the project period. There were discussions to incorporate rainwater harvesting into Santiago del Estero's public housing program in Argentina, although this has not happened to date. In part, the transfer of project results and best practices to policy levels was affected by time constraints and the limited engagement of key government partners. An important exception was **Argentina'a** Soil Conservation Directorate that hosted the regional and national project teams, and is likely to continue promoting SLM/SFM through its core programs. There national SRAP office conitiues to function within the SCD, and is expected to remain open. This has not happened **Bolivia** where the office was closed at the end of the project. A consultant was contracted to draft guidelines for incorporating best practices and indicators within local government plans, although their adoption is pending. Some of Bolivia's best practices could be expanded through the National Watershed Plan and support programs, although this needs to be pursued. In **Paraguay** it is premature to assess the policy impact the project could have, and a consultancy was in process of being contracted to draft guildelines for the best practices and indicators in local government plans.

Evaluation rating for achievement of outputs is "Satisfactory"

4.3 Effectiveness

4.3.1 Achievement of Direct Outcomes

77. The assessment of outcome achievement is based on the analysis of performance in relation to the respective success indicators. This analysis indicates that two outcome were fully achieved (outcomes 2.1 and 2.3), two outcomes were partially reached (outcomes 1.1-1.2 and 2.3, and two (2.2 and 3.1) were not achieved. Expected reductions in C02 emissions under outcome 2.2 were not met because insufficient time had lapsed from the initial baseline measurement to have an impact; hence the decision was made to cancel a second measurement. Based on the above the overall level of outcome achievement is rated as moderately unsatisfactory.

78. As with many of the outputs, progress towards project outcomes was mainly country-driven and derived from the implementation of demonstration projects and TVPs at pilot sites, with less progress achieved at national or regional levels.

Outcome 1.1: Institutional capacities have been strengthened at regional, national and local levels to formulate and apply normative frameworks and practices available for SFM and SLM
Indicators:
• Regional vision of the Gran Chaco is adopted by the Tri- national Commission • Regional Development Policy for the Gran Chaco adopted by the Tri-national Commission • National Chaco SRAP Office incorporated into the institutional organization and budget allocated • Chaco SRAP Office incorporated into the institutional organization and budget allocated • Number of legal, technical and financial instruments identified, designed, validated and adopted for application of SLM and SFM • Number of trained staffs from key public and private institutions in charge of natural resources management
Status of Outcome: Partially achieved

79. Progress towards the outcome 1.1 varied between regional and country levels. As mentioned in other sections, the regional aspects of the project tended to advance less than the country-based initiatives. The imbalance reflected the absence of an enabling regional context for project implementation, and the focus of NEAs towards in-country deliverables. For the evaluator, the lack of an operational tri-national program context encouraged a dual role in which national project teams managed SRAP offices and were responsible to the national executing agencies, yet in most cases were contracted by GEF agencies paid with project funds. As a result the project's role increasingly shifted from facilitation towards direct support and "gap filling". During the entire project period the PCU was unable to get the Tri-National Commission or Council to convene as the Project Steering Committee, aside from meetings with national focal points to the Directive Committee. Nor did UNCCD focal Ministers attend the invitation to view the project documentary, meet some of the stakeholders and be informed of the results; their participation was postponed and the event re-positioned as a national meeting that ultimately had to be suspended. A new regional meeting was planned in Paraguay towards the project´s administrative closure in June 2017, in collaboration with SEAM; however this event was ultimately not held.

80. According to the 2016 PIR report, the regional vision wasn't developed because it required previous actions by governments – updating the SRAP with inputs from the s to combat Desertification. [34] This did not happen, although **Paraguay's** new NAP endorses SLM/SLN practices. Aside from the visual documentary that was very well made and conveys the various demonstration practices, there does not seem to have been much in terms of regional policy formulation or "upstream" technical advice. The shared regional vision and development policy for the Gran Chaco are still needed, with the difference that there is now an additional body of sustainable resource management practices that have been demonstrated and can be replicated.

"We still need to learn how to apply transboundary issues to programs.

- A Bolivian NGO participant

81. There were advances in strengthening institutional capacities through demonstration projects and TVPs. Rural organizations and producers were exposed to land and forest management techniques that conserve natural resources, assist production and were often new to the area. The challenges of managing honey collection, extraction and marketing for a growing number of producers have helped UPSANG expand and further developas an organization in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina**. The same is true of the farmer organizations in Monteagudo and Yacuiba **Bolivia,** and participating Guaraní cooperatives in **Paraguay**. In the village of Betania, the repair of a communal water tank and installation of a water line with drip irrigation for vegetable farming have prompted the creation of a small cooperative that manages a revolving fund with member contributions. One producer harvested 140 kg of onion in his backyard that were sold by the nearby Chaco highway, generating additional family income. The Parapetiguazú technical training institute of Charagua, **Bolivia** has added honey production and agroforestry-pasture management systems to its training curricula. It is for these reasons that the outcome was partially reached.

Outcome 1.2: SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices have been developed and mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels, taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables
Indicators:
• Technical and financial instruments for SFM/SLM in the Gran Chaco have been developed • Information systems strengthened, including early warning systems
Status of Outcome: Partially achieved

82. Outcome 2.1 was also partially achieved. SFM and SLM practices were demonstrated at the pilot sites. As technical instruments they provide a foundation for replicating validated SLM/SFM practices and informing national and regional policy. However, these practices have yet to be fully documented - or mainstreamed – because the implementation of demonstration activities in the pilot sites continued until a late stage of the project period, and there was insufficient time left to integrate and up-scale best practices as had been planned. Systematizations of project experiences and results was delayed, and a draft regional document was circulated after the project had already closed in **Argentina** and **Bolivia**. Unfortunately, the draft document fails to systematize the technical instruments that

[34] July 2015-June 2016 PIR, pg. 17

were demonstrated and has limited as a tool for dissemination or replication. A proposal for a regional early warning system against extreme climactic events was drafted but has not been adopted to date. The project has helped to develop a regional GIS and database that will be hosted by Argentina's National Observatory on Land Degradation and activated soon; this is probably the most important regional achievement.

83. Some outputs were delivered but have not been adopted or "mainstreamed" thus far. There are good opportunities (that need to be explored further) for replicating SLM and SFM practices through the implementation of native forest legislation in **Argentina** and **Bolivia's** national watershed plan. There are already cases of farmer-to-farmer transfer and the partner organization in Monteagudo, **Bolivia** has sought government funding to replicate sustainable practices in neighboring watersheds. Established and technically capable institutions such as CEDEVA in **Argentina**, Asunción National University in **Paraguay** and NATIVA in **Bolivia** are likely to incorporate and continue applying some of these practices.

Outcome 2.1: A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity is strengthened through SFM and SLM activities

Indicators:
Number of protected area mamagement plans developed locally
Increase in area for conservation purposes (with a target of 280,000 hec.)

Status of Outcome: Fully Achieved

84. Outcome 2.1 appears to have been fully achieved based on the management plans that were supported and the overall area covered by the project. Technical support was given for the creation of biological corridors connecting protected areas in the three countries, and the design of management plans for both new and existing protected areas**.** These are in process of being adopted and implemented by the corresponding authorities. One of the biological corridors will be designated as a municipal protected area and managed by **Bolivia's** first indigenous municipal government in Charagua**.** The project has also supported the design of protected area management plans in **Argentina** and **Paraguay.** The ongoing implementation of native forest legislation under the *Bosque y Comunidades* program has already financed the replication of selected pilot activities in **Argentina's** Santiago del Estero province, and provides a potential vehicle for further replications of SLM and SFM practices in high-biodiversity areas.

Outcome 2.2: CO2 is captured and emissions avoided with SFM and SLM practices

Indicator:
0.5 tons C/hectare/year of additional carbon sequestered on project demonstration sites as a result of adoption of SFM and SLM practices

Status of Outcome: Not achieved

85. Outcome 2.2 was not achieved, largely due to time factors. A methodology for determining baseline CO2 levels was developed by the University of Formosa (Argentina) and shared at workshops in the three countries. A baseline was established and subsequent measurements were planned at pilot sites in 2015, yet these were not undertaken because

insufficient time had passed to enable reductions in C02 emissions. As a result, sequestration benefits cannot be confirmed at present and the outcome is considered unachieved. It is likely that reduced C02 emmisions may accrue over time in at least some of the pilot areas – for example, biological corridors and afforested sites - but this is speculative. Despite the outcome's non-completion due to time factors, the work of the project team was satisfactory as reflected in the proxy measuring model that was developed (providing a long-term perspective) and the positive feedback received from the GEF regional Carbon Benefit Program.

Outcome 2.3: By the end of the project, the number of producers and area with SFM/SLM practices will reach a critical threshold that, in the absence of major institutional barriers, allows the further adoption of SFM and SLM practices

Indicators:
- Set of common technical criteria for design, implementation and M&E of activities in demonstration sites developed
- Technology validation projects and demonstration projects evaluated

Status of Outcome: Fully achieved

86. Outcome 2.3 was fully achieved only in relation to both of the listed indicators. However, the evaluation considers that these indicators are not representative of the full outcome. Common technical criteria were developed for the demonstration sites. Demonstration projects and TVPs were evaluated and SLM/SFM practices validated by producers and community organizations. There are indications of sustained practice and incipient replications at several pilot sites. Both the project teams and most local partners consider that then enabling conditions for sustainability and repliction were reached. However, it is not clear at this stage whether the 5,000 persons exposed to these practices constitute the "critical threshold" of producers that is needed to fully achieve the outcome. The role of UPEAS as permanent demonstration sites needs to be strengthened to assist further adoption.

Outcome 3.1: The end of the project leaves in place a mechanism to ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco

Indicators:
- The SRAP Chaco incorporates elements to ensure its sustainability
- Number of potential additional producers to be incorporated into SLM and SFM practices
- Number of additional hectares to be incorporated under SLM and SFM
- NAP incorporates elements to ensure its sustainability

Status of Outcome: Not achieved

87. The third component – the "exit strategy' - was designed to build on the successful demonstration projects and institutional strengthening, and was therefore dependent on

their results to make the case for sustainability mechanisms and large-scale adoption. It was assumed that the project provided adequate time to systematize SLM/SFM approaches, integrate best practices into replicable 'packages' and transfer these to national, regional and local stakeholders for replication and mainstreaming.

88. The evaluator did not find indications of large-scale adoption or a sustainability mechanism that would lead to it. The real timelines for implementing a project of this complexity were underestimated and both regional and national teams were absorbed by the demands of 75 dispersed demonstration projects and TVPs. Towards the end of the project the PCU and national teams lacked the time to implement the events and establish contacts that are needed to transfer SLM/SFM practices, inform policy levels and encourage replication on a regional scale. However, the project documentary that was produced towards the end of the project offers a convincing visual record of the demonstrated practices that can be used for dissemination purposes.

89. The sustainability of the SRAP is almost a non-issue as the project effectively became and represented the SRAP through the country offices. Otherwise there was very little to sustain. The PCU was unable to gather the national UNCCD focal Ministers to view the documentary and meet some of the participants. The absence of an operating Tri-National Commission - or of a functional SRAP with some level of inter-governmental coordination - undermined the impact the project might have had at a regional level. As noted by more than one respondent, the component's focus should have been on "transferring" instead of "exiting" and approached with more time and preparation.

90. There are understandably few examples of replication because most of the demonstration projects and TVPs were completed recently and some are still in progress. Some of the demonstrated practices are only now starting to yield results: Beneficiaries in the three countries have recently completed the first extraction of honey with installations provided by the project. The full benefits of the honey projects will not materialize until the product is sold and commercialization channels are established that offer better prices. The benefits of integrated agroforestry-pasture management are also incipient, although cattle were saved from severe drought in Charagua, **Bolivia**. The afforestation projects planted *algarroba* saplings are still young and will not yield pods or flour for several years. Permanent UPEA demonstration units were identified in **Bolivia** and **Argentina** but do not seem to be operating in that capacity in any of the three countries, although CEDEVA has an established dissemination mandate. Demonstration projects started very late in **Paraguay** and several were still being implemented during the evaluation visit. **Paraguay's** NAP was elaborated after the project started and incorporates SLM/SFM practices, although this is unlikely to encourage large-scale adoption by itself.

Evaluation rating for achievement of outcomes is "Moderately Unsatisfactory"

4.3.2 Likelihood of Impact based on ToC Analysis

91. The fundamental objective of the project was to reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through sustainable land and forest management in the productive landscape. The project's objective can be translated to the impact statement of the project as "land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco reversed'. This was expected to generate a broad range of environmental and social results including (i) consistency among national and regional priorities, (ii) a regional collaboration framework, (iii) improved environmental policy and legal frameworks to ensure sustainable forest and land management, (iv) active stakeholder

participation in planning and decision-making of project interventions in their territories through the inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, and (v) sustainable management of Chaco ecosystems through tools and protocols that reverse land degradation trends and the associated loss of biodiversity and carbon stocks.[35] Some of these results are reflected in the design of project outputs and outcomes. Several results were disaggregated and quantified at the country level, as reflected in indicators for the adoption of SLM/SFM practices (area, number of beneficiaries) and reduction of carbon emissions.

92. The likelihood of impact (land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco reversed) is influenced by the degree to which the "intermediate states" – the changes that are required between project outcomes and impact - had been achieved at the time of the evaluation. These intermediate states are linked to higher-order outcomes that connect directly to the project objective (i.e. outcomes 1.2, 2.3 and 3.1) and other expected impacts stated in the project document.

93. The evaluation findings indicate a high likelihood of impact in biodiversity conservation within the areas supported by the project, and a moderate likelihood of impact in decreasing land degradation trends in the pilot sites. The project successfully demonstrated SLM/SFM practices in the pilot areas, yet has had little impact at regional or national policy and program levels. This has undermined the mainstreaming and application of these practices on the scale that was expected. Contributing factors included implementation delays and externalities such as the preparedness and commitment levels. An exception may be Argentina's national program for the implementation of native forest legislation, which has funded the replication of demonstration practices in Santiago del Estero province and received technical support from the project (for geo-referencing forest areas). SLM and SFM practices are proposed in Paraguay's National Action Plan to Combat Desertification.

94. The project supported the declaration of new protected areas and management plans for existing protected areas that have high biodiversity. The project was able to reach most of the SLM/SFM targets; however, several of these were downscaled to more achievable levels at a late stage of implementation and do not provide the "threshold" needed for the self-sustained expansion of SLM/SFM practices. CO2 measurements were not taken after the initial baseline survey due to the insufficient time that had lapsed for demonstration projects to have an effect on carbon emissions.

95. There is not a sustainability mechanism in place to enable the wide-scale replication and adoption of SLM/SFM practices, either nationally or regionally. To an extent, planned dissemination and up-scaling activities under this component were affected by the late implementation of demonstration projects. There are examples of replications in progress through the implementation of native forest legislation in Argentina (*Bosques y Comunidades* program) and Bolivia's National Watershed Plan, yet formal agreements or other arrangements for larger scale replications are lacking at present. Bolivia has not ratified the SRAP.

96. The likelihood of impact through the achievement of outcomes and intermediate states with ratings is attached to this report under Annex 4.

Evaluation rating for likelihood of impact is "Moderately Likely"

[35] Project document, pg. 46

4.3.3 Achievement of the Project Goal and Planned Objective

97. As noted, the project objective was to reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco by supporting sustainable land management in the productive landscape. This objective was supported by the impact statement described in the previous section. To achieve this the project implemented three technical components aimed at Institutional strengthening, demonstrating sustainable land (SLM) and forest (SFM) management practices, and transferring best practices for replication and up scaling.

98. As stated in the project document, the achievement of the project objective was based on the following indicators: [36]

Argentina:

- SFM and SLM practices adopted throughout 250,000 hectares in 4 demonstration sites and demonstration effects on 300,000 hectares by PY5, thereby reducing land degradation, conserving biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration.
- The surface areas of biological corridors between Protected Areas located in demonstration sites increase by 100,000 additional hectares managed under conservation status and leading to improved connectivity.
- 0.5 tons C/hectare/year of additional carbon sequestered on project demonstration sites as a result of adoption of SFM and SLM practices (incremental amount of sequestration to be confirmed in PY1 after completion of baseline studies).
- Improved income of 1,350 producers and their families and an additional potential 1,000 through demonstration effects by PY5 (percentage of increase in income to be estimated in PY1 after completion of baseline studies).

Bolivia:

- SFM and SLM practices adopted throughout 200,000 hectares in 4 demonstration sites and demonstration effects on 300,000 hectares by PY5, thereby reducing land degradation, conserving biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration.
- The surface areas of biological corridors between Protected Areas located in demonstration sites increase by 130,000 additional hectares managed under conservation status and leading to improved connectivity.
- 0.5 tons C/hectare/year of additional carbon sequestered on project demonstration sites as a result of adoption of SFM and SLM practices (incremental amount of sequestration to be confirmed in PY1 after completion of baseline studies).
- Improved income of 2,436 producers and their families and an additional potential 1,000 through demonstration effects by PY5 (percentage of increase in income to be estimated in PY1 after completion of baseline studies).

Paraguay:

- SFM and SLM practices adopted throughout 50,000 hectares in 4 demonstration sites and demonstration effects on 250,000 hectares by PY5, thereby reducing land degradation, conserving biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration.
- The surface areas of biological corridors between Protected Areas located in demonstration sites increase by 50,000 additional hectares managed under conservation status and leading to improved connectivity.

[36] As listed in the project document Results Framework

- 0.5 tons C/hectare/year of additional carbon sequestered on project demonstration sites as a result of adoption of SFM and SLM practices (incremental amount of sequestration to be confirmed in PY1 after completion of baseline studies).
- Improved income of 800 producers and their families and an additional potential 2,000 through demonstration effects by PY5 (percentage of increase in income to be estimated in PY1 after completion of baseline studies).

99. All of these indicators were country based. This is an interesting finding for a tri-national initiative that supported a sub-regional action plan, followed an ecosystems approach, and foresaw regional outputs and outcomes related to capacity building, information systems and other issues. The oversight suggests that NEA expectations were centered more on (and driven by) national deliverables. Although actual effectiveness was determined by the combination of regional and country-based implementation, the indicators steer the analysis towards the pilot demonstration component.

100. The objective was not achieved, based on the scale of impact that was envisioned. Reductions in land degradation were realized within pilot sites through the demonstration of SLM and SFM practices, and there have been some "spillover" effects that are documented in this report. SLM and SFM targets were reportedly met in **Argentina** with the approval of national legislation for native forests, an independent development that includes provisions for the sustainable management of forests that cover much of the Chaco. In **Bolivia** and **Paraguay**, SFM/SLM targets were met to the extent that management plans for proposed biological corridors are also indicative of "sustainably managed territories". Demonstration projects were extended in **Paraguay** to compensate for delays and several are still under implementation. Impacts in Paraguay are therefore not evident at this stage, although a local cattle rancher near Loma Plata considers that the fencing of pastures and rotation of cattle will allow him to expand his herd inside the same area.

101. A determining factor in this analysis is the scale of impact. Outcome and output indicators addressing SLM/SFM targets were significantly downscaled in the cases of Bolivia and Paraguay, as described under section H. "Changes in Design during Implementation". While the adjustment of country indicators to more realistic and achievable levels has helped the project in delivering the associated country outputs, they fall well below the scale of impact that is required to have a tangible effect on land degradation in the broader Gran Chaco region. Hence the evaluation assigns a "moderately unsatisfactory" rating in relation to the achievement of the project objective.

"The project was very beneficial for us, because we started to think about new practices and modules."

- A demonstration project participant from Santiago del Estero, Argentina

"We have lived this as a very positive experience. The producers have learned good practices. I congratulate everyone for what was achieved."

- Director of Forest Directorate in Cordoba Province, Argentina (quoted from video)

102. Stakeholder perceptions of demonstration projects and TVPs were generally positive in spite of the delays that affected several. Beneficiaries from the three countries were very appreciative of project support and consider that their production and income have improved, or are likely to improve, with the new practices. These perceptions underscore tangible results within the pilot areas: Integrated agroforestry-pasture management has proven to be beneficial in trials conducted in the three countries. Ranchers in **Bolivia** who planted native *algarroba* (a leguminous tree of the *prosopis* genus), *gaton panic* grass and fenced their pastures into separate areas for cattle rotation, were able to overcome severe drought

in 2015 without loss of cattle or cattle weight, whereas neighboring herds declined. *Algarroba* pods provide nutrition in times of scarcity and are recommended for human consumption as well. Protein-rich *algarroba* flour is being processed in Charagua and sold to the municipal government as school biscuits that otherwise would be purchased outside the municipality. The extension of water pipes from plastic-lined Australian water catchments to drinking trenches has stabilized cattle movements and reduced rancher workloads; before the project, one rancher from Villamontes, **Bolivia** needed to truck water to his cattle five times a day. Likewise, the storage of compacted hay mixed with *gaton panic* lowers the need to purchase cattle feed during the dry season.

103. Honey production and its mechanized extraction have been shown to serve multiple purposes: Reinforcing the conservation of forests that provide flora and pollen; generating sustainable income for families; strengthening organizational and marketing capacities with potential export opportunities. Expanded honey production and the installation of an extraction facility triggered a growth of membership within the UPSANG association of Santiago del Estero province in **Argentina.** Although the evaluator's visit preceded the first honey collection, UPSANG members were expected to receive additional income according to the number of bee boxes. For example, twenty boxes (a scale of production that some farmers were managing) could yield up to 100 kg of honey that would sell at an average of USD 3 /kg. With two harvests each year, this would generate additional family incomes exceeding US$ 600/year in some of Argentina's most poverty-stricken rural areas. In Monteagudo, **Bolivia** a demonstration fish-farming pond was excavated in flooded land and is providing growing income as fish multiply; a second pond is planned nearby.

104. Project timelines restricted the full impact of demonstration practices on land degradation. The two-year period allocated to demonstration projects and TVPs was inadequate in many cases, and in the absence of follow-up assistance it is likely that their full impact will not be realized or documented. Carbon baselines were established at pilot sites applying a common methodology that has been endorsed by the UN Environment – GEF Carbon Benefits Project, yet the carbon sequestration benefits of SFM/SLM practices were not measured as planned because too little time has passed since the baseline measurement.

105. Demonstration projects have had social impact as well. Aside from expanding the scale of honey production and creating opportunities for direct commercialization with better prices, these initiatives strengthen the land tenure security of small-scale farmers who are still vulnerable to displacement by expanding cattle ranching and soy cultivation. The project has strengthened UPSANG position as an organization representing the interests of small-scale area producers. Rainwater harvesting for domestic consumption with solar energy was an unexpected project development in **Argentina** that addressed a fundamental human need that was lacking. The project team had earmarked funds to extend drinking water to goat pens, and subsequently realized that beneficiary families had to walk to communal wells or buy water from trucks. In Monteagudo, **Bolivia** the project contributed to social inclusiveness by demonstrating sustainable practices on the sites of prosperous farmers who were willing to innovate, and who subsequently shared these practices with *campesino* farmers from the surrounding area.

106. There was less progress towards the integrated regional policy and development vision that was foreseen in the project document, or the mainstreaming of best practices at various levels. In this regard the omission of regional baseline indicators was logical in the absence of an enabling framework: The SRAP and the Tri-National Commission and Council– the main regional stakeholders identified in the project document - were not operational, and **Bolivia** has yet to legally approve the SRAP. The lack of tangible national support to operationalize

the SRAP undermined one of the fundamental justifications of the project, and has limited the project's regional effectiveness. Inevitable asymmetries between the three countries made it difficult to align national implementation processes or achieve regional outcomes, and raised questions on the comparative advantage of utilizing a regional project modality instead of having separate country projects implemented in a parallel manner with shared regional deliverables.

Evaluation rating for achievement of project goal and objective is "Moderately Unsatisfactory"

4.4 Sustainability and Replication

107. Sustainable land and forest management practices were demonstrated in the field, and the challenge is now finding ways to replicate them on a broader scale. The project's catalytic role in triggering a critical mass of SLM/SFM practices that would expand on its own momentum has not been achieved thus far. There are promising conditions for the continuity of honey production, rainwater harvesting, drip agriculture and integrated agroforestry-pasture management in the three countries. Sustainability and replication are conditioned by the economic viability of the specific activity, organizational capacities and the availability of external funding. The sustainability mechanism that was envisioned under the third project component and outcome did not materialize and is still needed.

108. Sustainability is likely to be affected by is the absence of a follow-up project proposal – either regional or national - on the part of the NEAs. This is unfortunate as the project is leaving an important foundation of demonstrated SLM/SFM practices and institutional relations that enhance conditions for the reduction of land degradation on a regional scale, yet needs to be nurtured and carried forward. However, there are ongoing national initiatives and upcoming GEF-UN projects in the three countries that may be in a position to replicate these practices in the Gran Chaco.

4.4.1 Socio-Political Sustainability

109. The likelihood of socio-political sustainability varies between countries and pilot locations as a result of the different stakeholders, partner institutions and national/local contexts. In general, sustainability seems to be weakest at regional and national levels, and tends to improve at sub-national levels and pilot areas. The project did not have the expected impact on national policies, nor was it successful in shaping future regional agendas for the Gran Chaco SRAP. During much of the project, the attention of regional and national project teams were focused on the 75 demonstration projects and TVPs that required continuous support. At the end there was insufficient time left to transfer best practices, develop policy proposals, create sustainability mechanisms and "mainstream" SLM and SFM at national or regional levels, as envisioned in the project document. Regional socio-political sustainability has been weakened by the lack of an operational framework outside of the project. Thus far, only Argentina's NEA has supported the continuity of the national SRAP office beyond the project period. As noted earlier, there aren't any follow-up project proposals – regional or national - to consolidate and build on project achievements.

110. The levels of NEA ownership and commitment towards the project were also inconsistent. **Bolivia** never formally approved the SRAP and does not plan to do so in the immediate future. The Vice-Ministry of Water Resources did not play an active role in accompanying the country team or directly participating in the execution of activities (largely due to staff limitations); this generated a void that could undermine the sustainability and

replication of project –supported initiatives. The National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Desertification doesn't seem to have much effect on budget decisions and is not a reliable option for sustaining project results. Conversely, the implementation of the National Watershed Plan (*Plan Nacional de Cuencas*) and related Green Watershed (*Cuenca Verde)* program provide important entry points and possible funding for replicating SLM and SFM practices. There are presently two proposals for replication in the Monteagudo area that were submitted.

111. In **Paraguay** the likelihood of socio-political sustainability is lower due to the project's late start, the frequent turnovers of government staff and staff turnovers that undermined continuity and institutional memory. The project's extension has enabled the completion of demonstration projects, yet it is unlikely the national project team will have the time to systematize, transfer or up scale practices that will continue to be implemented for the remaining project period. Likewise, it is too soon to expect replication processes as most demonstration projects were still being implemented or had very recently terminated at the time of the evaluation. Replication in Paraguay will depend to a large extent on the support that is given by other donor-supported projects for green commodities and climate change adaptation that also involve GEF; other sources such as micro-loan financing have not been explored and perhaps may provide an option once the economic feasibility of the practice has been demonstrated. A positive sustainable policy result was the incorporation of SLM/SFM guidelines within Paraguay's updated NAP to combat desertification.

112. There are better conditions for socio-political sustainability in **Argentina**, despite the challenges of shaping Chaco policies under a federal system that allows each province to have its own laws. The national project component was aligned to the Soil Conservation Directorate's core work program for the Chaco, and the NEA's technical and management capabilities were comparatively more developed A Chaco discussion group was created within the Soil Conservation Directorate that continues to meet. The project approach and practices are compatible with recently approved legislation for native forests (*Ley 26.331 de Bosques Nativos*) and the Community Forest (*Bosque y Comunidad*) program that plans to spend US$ 58 million to implement the new law with funding by the World Bank. Argentina's NAP to Combat Desertification has more recognition as a policy document and may have a better likelihood of being applied.

113. There are no definitive trends in social sustainability, which varies between pilot sites and practices. Demonstration projects for honey production in **Argentina** are socially sustainable because they strengthen the land tenure security of isolated rural families that are still vulnerable to displacement, as is the case in parts of Santiago del Estero. The project's support has helped grassroots social organizations such as UPSANG in **Argentina** expand activities and membership**,** and acquire new skills**.** On the other hand, the social impact and sustainability of project interventions were lower when local organizations were weak; such was the case of the Chancaní (Argentina) honey producers who are not organized and haven't any relation with the local authority; nor do they have an agreement with the national park authorities to use the honey extraction facility inside the Chancaní reserve after the project finishes. These omissions sometimes signaled a limited understanding of the social or organizational dynamics that migh have been provided horizontally by other clients.

114. Social sustainability is also conditioned by cultural variables, as seen in the handicrafts project with the traditional Ayoreo village of Ijnapoi that was unable – and unwilling – to adopt the organized production mode that was needed to meet an export order from Germany that would have had an important economic impact. On a positive note, project support for irrigation and vegetable gardening in the village of Betania led to the creation of a

Guaraní village cooperative and revolving loan fund that is gradually expanding. The social sustainability of SLM/SFM practices in **Bolivia** is likely to be high in Monteagudo, which has a well-organized watershed producers association; and Charagua where agroforestry-pasture management practices have been adopted by traditional authorities and the Parapetiguazú technical institute, and may influence the new local government's development agenda. The support given to a women's association in Yacuiba for organic gardening has clearly strengthened the group's motivation and response.

Evaluation rating for socio-political sustainability is "Moderately Likely"

4.4.2 Financial Resources

115. The availability of financial resources to sustain and expand SLM/SFM is uncertain and at present has not been secured on a scale that would enable a regional impact. Government funding for the continuity of national teams was not available in **Bolivia** and was not certain in **Paraguay** at the time of the evaluation. At the pilot sites there were contributions from the municipal government of Villamontes for a pre-investment study to replicate sustainable grazing practices; likewise there are possibilities for municipal co-funding in Monteagudo if proposed replications are approved under the national watershed plan. Financial sustainability appears most likely in **Argentina,** where the Soil Conservation Directorate has extended the operations of the SRAP office, which is largely composed of core SCD staff whose salaries are covered by the institutional budget. At present there are no indications of post-project funding from local or provincial governments in the three countries, with the exception of CEDEVA in **Argentina** (which has funding by the Formosa provincial government) and the Mennonite municipalities of Loma Plata and Filadelfia in **Paraguay** that have development activities with surrounding communities and intend to continue supporting sustainable land and forest management. The lack of budgetary commitments from national governments for an operational SRAP framework suggests that the regional initiatives are likely to decline unless continued support is provided through parallel projects.

116. There is a moderate to high likelihood of financial sustainability with some of the demonstration projects and TVPs that were piloted. Several of them – honey production, integrated agroforestry-pasture management, improved goat rearing, rainwater harvesting and fish farming – are financially sustainable [37] and likely to continue without further external funding. Project recipients have confirmed that solar-powered electric fences are less expensive than traditional post and wire fences, and require less wood. The production of honey from forested areas is likely to be profitable and could open export opportunities with fair trade markets if it is certified as organic.

117. Further replication of SFM/SLM practices will depend on national policy initiatives and large-scale projects that are mostly donor-funded. Opportunities in **Bolivia** center on the implementation of the National Watershed Plan (*Plan Nacional de Cuencas*), which has received considerable funding under the 2016 General Socio-Economic Development Plan (PDGES) and offers a potential vehicle for disseminating SLM/SFM practices. Two proposals were already submitted for the Monteagudo area. **Argentina's** *Bosque y Comunidad* program aims to implement national legislation for native forests with a budget exceeding US$ 50 million. The program includes a sustainable resource management component that could provide an entry point for replicating SFM practices. Financial sustainability in **Paraguay** will depend on the support provided by the Green Commodities and Climate Change Adaptation

projects that will operate the Chaco region. UNDP plans to implement a project under the Commodities Integrated Approach Program (IAP) with GEF for sustainable beef production in the Chaco that could offer opportunities to apply integrated agroforestry-pasture management practices. In most cases there are no project or institutional agreements that would ensure that these opportunities materialize.

Evaluation rating for financial sustainability is "Moderately Likely"

4.4.3 Institutional Framework

118. Institutional sustainability is analyzed in a national context, given the lack of an operating regional framework. The establishment of a regional SRAP office is not foreseen, nor is the continuity of national offices planned in Bolivia or Paraguay. The main drivers of institutional sustainability are the Chaco partners that implemented the demonstration projects and TVPs. These include the executing NGOs, recipient communities and community-based organizations, and local governments (such the munincipal governments of Loma Plata and Filadelfia in Paraguay that actively supported the implementation of demonstration projects within their jurisdictions). There is little awareness of project practices or their results at central government and policy levels - particularly in **Bolivia** and **Paraguay** where demonstration activities were mostly NGO-implemented; in such cases, institutional sustainability will depend on the strength and vision of local partners. There are no general findings in this respect since organizational capacities varied considerably among pilot project recipients. The progress achieved in goat rearing and pasture improvement by CEDEVA in Formosa, **Argentina** is likely to be continued over time. On the other hand, the strategic FEGACHACO cattle ranchers association in **Bolivia** does not have the capacity to replicate piloted practices despite its important role in the region. There are indications of continued training on integrated agroforestry-pasture systems for cattle and beekeeping at Charagua's Parapetiguazú technical training center. The UPEAs are an important aspect of institutional sustainability that require further guidance and support to become permanent demonstration units.

119. In **Argentina**, project activities were aligned to the work program of the Soil Conservation Directorate. This may contribute to their replication, as would the implementation of native forest legislation and the donor-supported *Bosque y Comunidad* program. The organizational capacities of producer associations such as UPSANG in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** or the Sauces and Zapallar watershed association in Monteagudo, **Bolivia** are also drivers of sustainability. The introduction of the household roof water harvesting module in **Argentina** led to the informal constitution of a local construction team that helped to install the system in other houses. Among local governments, the development capacity of the Mennonite municipalities of Loma Plata and Filadelfia in **Paraguay** and **Bolivia's** indigenous municipality of Charagua are well placed to promote sustainability. In Charagua, hay and *algarroba* flour are already being sold to the local government for cattle feed and school breakfasts.

Evaluation rating for institutional sustainability is "Moderately Unlikely"

4.4.4 Environmental Sustainability

120. The strongest sustainability aspect is definitely environmental. The demonstrated practices and technologies are environmentally friendly and mitigate the impact of

productive activities on land and biodiversity. At this early stage there are already indications of environmental sustainability that need to be documented. Unfortunately, the planned measurement of carbon sequestration at pilot sites was not conducted because only two years had passed since baseline measurements were taken.

121. The design of protected area and biological corridor management plans are important to sustain the conservation of biodiversity and water resources. Demonstration projects and TVPs have introduced insulated micro-catchments; drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting techniques that enable more cost-effective water usage in an arid environment. Honey production stands out as a strategically important practice that reinforces the protection of native forests and flora that are sources of pollen. The partition of pasture areas with solar-powered fences for the rotation of cattle and natural biomass regeneration, combined with the introduction of native high-quality grasses such as *gaton panic*, *algarroba* trees and cactus varieties, have raised the carrying capacity of pilot sites and have proven to resist droughts that decimated surrounding herds. The goat rearing techniques developed by CEDEVA help to reduce the environmental stress of free-range herding.

Evaluation rating for environmental sustainability is "Highly Likely"

4.4.5 Catalytic Role, Replication and Up-scaling

122. Replication, up scaling and mainstreaming are intrinsically related to project sustainability and the evaluation's findings are integrated within the above analysis. The project has not fulfilled its catalytic potential in terms of triggering wide-scale replication and up scaling of SLM/SFM practices. This was affected by time limitations, as efforts were focused on the implementation of demonstration projects until the end of the project term (and continue in **Paraguay**). As a result, the project has not had time to systematize and document best practices and results – aside from a video documentary - nor transfer these to government policy levels for up scaling and mainstreaming (foreseen by outcomes 1.2, 2.3 and 3.1). There are plans to internally complete a draft regional systematization document that was prepared by an external consultant and considered deficient, by the project's administrative closure. On a positive note, **Argentina** was the only country to include a budget line for replication in the country project budget. In view of the project's objective and outcomes, the allocation of budget funds to support the replication of successfully demonstrated practices should have been part of its design for the three countries.

123. Replication has been limited thus far, largely because the project has not had the expected impact on national policies and programmes (in part due to the delayed implementation of demonstration projects under the second component). The most encouraging example thus far is the funding of expanded bee-keeping activities in Santiago del Estero province by the *Bosque y Comunidad* program that implements **Argentina's** native forest legislation; there are also possibilities that roofwater-harvesting may be incorporated within this province's rural housing program. In **Bolivia,** two additional SLM initiatives are expected to be implemented in the Sauces and Zapallar watershed of Monteagudo**, Bolivia** with funding from the National Watershed Plan (*Plan Nacional de Cuencas*). Otherwise the evaluation did not find concrete examples of central or local government budget allocations to replicate pilot practices, although municipal government partners at Loma Plata and Filadelfia in **Paraguay** have stated their intention to do so.

124. Most of the momentum towards replication appears to be driven by NGOs, training and research institutions, and community associations that participated in the implementation of

pilot activities: **Argentina's** CEDEVA has incorporated improved goat breeding practices that were supported by the project within core extension activities. In **Bolivia**, Charagua's Parapetiguazú technical institute plans to replicate agroforestry-pasture management practices in the nearby rural communities of Itatique and Machupo. Likewise, the NGO Nativa plans to replicate water and pasture management practices that were piloted with cattle ranchers in the Villamontes pilot site, although this will depend on the availability of external funding. SLM/SFM replication in **Paraguay** will depend on the support that can be mobilized from parallel projects such as the Green Commodities, Climate Change Adaptation and planned IAP projects. At present however there are no agreements in place to ensure that this will happen.

Evaluation Rating for Catalytic Role and Replication is "Moderately Unsatisfactory"

4.5 Efficiency

125. Efficiency was one of the project's weaker aspects points. Implementation was asymmetrical at various levels: At the country level there was low delivery during the first years and a very late start in **Paraguay.** Several demonstration projects were interrupted at critical stages of implementation as a result of administrative delays in the release of funds. Towards the end of the project there was insufficient time available to promote the transfer and "mainstreaming" of best practices or policies as was initially planned. The systematization of project experiences and validated practices was expected to assist the dissemination and up scaling of SLM/SFM, yet the regional systematization report was submitted in draft four months later than expected and three months after the project was operationally terminated in Argentina and Bolivia.

126. The project commenced activities one year after it had been approved and has been extended twice. There were misunderstandings over the actual starting date. The regional project team thought the project had started in August 2011 with the inception workshop, when in reality the first funds were spent in December 2010 on a post-approval meeting. This issue was eventually clarified and led to the project's first extension.

127. More than a reflection of team performance – project staff and the Regional Coordinator in particular devoted considerable effort to move implementation forward – the efficiency problems were the result of (i) over-ambitious project design with unrealistic timelines for key deliverables; (ii) the difficulties of aligning implementation processes between countries with different policies and legislation, institutional arrangements and political calendars; and (iii) complex institutional/administrative arrangements that were time-consuming to manage. The project scale and complexity generated inherent coordination and logistical challenges at different levels; under such circumstances efficiency was not likely to be one of the project's strength. It is possible that a larger regional PCU with additional support staff would have helped delivery by backstopping country implementation, while providing senior management

"Sometimes they forget that they are service agencies and one ends up serving the agencies instead."

- A senior project executive (in reference to the implementing agencies)

"This was one of the most complex projects in its configuration."

- A UNDP Focal Point

"Sometimes it seemed that we were working with 12 countries instead of 12 provinces, because of our federal system."

- A National Project Coordinator

with more space to work at "upstream" government and policy levels.

128. Delivery was initially low in the three countries with implementation disrupted by national elections in **Argentina** and especially **Paraguay**, where the project only became operational in 2014 and has required extensions. Staff turnover has also affected efficiency: The regional PCU had four Regional Directors (a position nominated by the MAYDS) over a six-year period. **Paraguay** has had five Ministers of Environment and four NPCs during the project period. Country delivery improved from 2015 onwards after the Chancaní exchange workshop, where national participants discussed the project's progress and agreed to focus efforts on implementing demonstration projects in the pilot sites.

129. The project's administrative arrangements were based on the parallel guidelines of the participating agencies. This raised the project´s coordination and reporting needs, possibly distracting attention from more substantive implementation issues. There were early discussions between the participating agencies on streamlining reporting requirements by integrating formats, and a Procedures Manual was designed and approved by the Directive Committee. However, differing agency guidelines and schedules increased the administrative workloads of the national and (in particular) regional project teams. [38] The recurrence of financial and other reporting is illustrated in Figure 9 below, several of the reports seem duplicative and could perhaps have been integrated or otherwise simplified. These arrangements also created internal problems - for example, the UNDP Country Office focal points were supposed to include their feedback to the annual PIR reports yet this was difficult to coordinate in practice. The PCU was responsible for integrating country financial data and PIR drafts of three countries into the consolidated versions that were submitted. This was supported by the preparation of draft PIRs at annual meetings of the PCU and national executing agency; likewise, expenditures related to UN Environment/OAS were prepared by GS/OAS, certified at OAS Headquarters and submitted to UN Environment.

130. The division of responsibilities between the international agencies was complex and sometimes hard to coordinate. The Regional Project Director was paid by the Argentine government and the Regional Coordinator by OAS. NPCs were paid by UNDP (Paraguay), OAS (Bolivia) and the government (Argentina) while national project assistants received their salaries from UNDP. Project funds managed by UNDP were incorporated into the respective Country Office budgets, whereas OAS funds were managed regionally from the OAS-GS office in Buenos Aires with oversight by central headquarters. UNDP and OAS were simultaneously responsible for "regional" and "national" budget lines within the same projects that required different administrative processes. Under the rainwater harvesting demonstration component, UNDP was responsible for funding the purchase of cisterns while OAS –GS disbursed funds for the acquisition of solar panels.

131. According to interviewed project staff, both UNDP and OAS-GS were responsive to the project´s needs. As noted, the OAS/GS representative advanced internal funds to cover funding gaps when there were delays in financial transfers from UN Environment headquarters in Nairobi. However, the institutional complexity of the project ultimately influenced its administrative efficiency more than the performance of a particular agency. Occasional delays in the transfer of funds from UN Environment to OAS/GS reduced the availability of funds to move demonstration projects forward in the pilot areas. Some delays were encountered in the disbursement of funds for the procurement of materials, as funding requests submitted by country SRAP offices required revisions by the PCU. Several

[38] An exception was UNDP- Paraguay's practice of basing its progress reports on PIR information, saving the project team of preparing a separate report.

respondents have noted that some of the administrative mechanisms applied by the project were not well-suited to service the needs of dispersed field activities.

132. There were delays at different levels that were more influenced by coordination difficulties and complex institutional arrangements than by the performance of a particular agency. [39] Some of the administrative delays were detrimental to the implementation of demonstration projects in the pilot areas. Examples included (i) demonstration honey projects in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** that were held up for several months due to the processing and revision of procurement requests, missing the first harvest; (ii) the slow (and flawed) construction of honey extraction facilities in Cordoba, **Argentina** due to slow disbursements by the provincial authority; (iii) the late submittal and slow processing of a procurement request for farming tools for demonstration projects in Yacuiba and Monteagudo, **Bolivia**; (iv) extended delays in the procurement of construction materials for cisterns in Santiago del Estero, cattle fences, and goat vaccines in Formosa, **Argentina**. The implementation of field activities by provincial authorities in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** was slow and inefficient until 2014, after which external technical staff were recruited and performance improved. Project funds deposited in Santiago del Estero' provincial government budget were frozen for several months during a general audit, in response to allegations of mismanagement that were unrelated to the project.

133. There were other contributing factors as well. Disbursement and procurement requests were sometimes submitted late or had to be returned for revisions. OAS/GS was responsible for supporting regional components of the project that often did not have the momentum of country-driven activities and were slower in their execution. The OAS/GS representative was responsive to project needs and advanced funds on three occasions from the internal budget (involving $112,000, $290,000, and $270,000) as a time-saving measure to cover financial gaps caused by delayed transfers from Nairobi. The administrative workload of the PCU was raised by the combination of parrallel reporting requirements to the international agencies (Figure 12), and periodic coordination difficulties with country project offices and executing partners in the pilot areas.

Figure 12. Project Reporting Schedule

Type of Report & Frequency	Responsible Party	Requesting Agency	Observations
Monthly Activities Report	Regional Coordinator	OAS	
Monthly Activities Reports	NPCs	OAS	
Monthly Activities Reports	Administrative Assistants	UNDP	
Trimester Activities Report (March, September)	Regional Coordinator	UN Environment OAS	Required input from national teams.
Half-yearly Progress Report: December	Regional Coordinator	UN Environment OAS	Required input from national teams.
Annual PIR Report: June	Regional Coordinator	UN Environment	Required input from national teams & co-implementing agencies

Source: Project Coordination Unit

[39] In this respect, UNDP Country offiices benefitted from having country representation and decentralized financial approval mechanisms.

134. The cost-effectiveness of the project is debatable. The only tangible results were generated by demonstration projects and TVPs that absorbed almost half of the project budget. SLM and SFM targets were substantially downscaled for **Bolivia** and **Paraguay** through revisions that adjusted the expected impact areas and populations to more achievable levels.[40] Several demonstration projects were critically under-budgeted, i.e. Charagua pilot site in **Bolivia**, and would have generated greater impact with adequate resource allocations. In **Paraguay**, implementing NGOs designed demonstration projects without field consultations because travel funds were not available at that stage; as a result, several projects required budgetary and work plan adjustments after approval.

135. The transaction costs of servicing demonstration projects and TVPs in various locations were not calculated but are likely to have been high. Present levels of SLM/SFM replication and up scaling are below initial expectations despite the time and resources spent on demonstration projects and TVPs. In this regard, the experience of the GEF Small Grants Programme would have been useful and possibly provided a more cost-effective option for managing the project's demonstration component. At the regional level, the absence of an operational government-driven SRAP meant that projects efforts at the regional and policy levels often lacked context and therefore were unlikely to yield the expected results. On a positive note, the regional PCU lowered field travel costs by reducing per-diem allowances that were initially based on international agency rates.

Evaluation Rating for Efficiency is "Moderately Unsatisfactory"[41]

4.6 Factors Affecting Performance

4.6.1 Preparation and Readiness

136. The levels of preparation and readiness varied between countries, institutions and pilot sites as well as between national/regional dimensions. This was among the most important factors that influenced project performance and results (with efficiency and financial management). Existing organizational capacities were a determining factor in the ability of beneficiaries in the pilot sites to make good use of project support. In particular the organizational strength and commitment of the NGOs, producers associations and institutions that implemented the demonstration projects and TVPs were critical determinants of project success. There is a high correlation between the successful demonstration of SLM/SFM practices in pilot sites and the capacity/commitment of local implementing partners. In this respect, the spectrum ranged from the capacity and vision demonstrated by committed partner organizations such as UPSANG in Santiago del Estero and CEDEVA in Formosa, **Argentina,** the Los Sauces-Zapallar producers association of Monteagudo, **Bolivia** and the Mennonite municipal governments in **Paraguay's** Chaco, to the comparative lack of organizational preparation and readiness by the Ayoreo community of Ijnapoi in **Paraguay** or the honey producers of Chancaní in **Argentina.** The province of Chaco, **Argentina** was eventually dropped as a pilot site from the project due to the low responsiveness and initiative of the provincial government partners. Hence the choice of implementing partners was critical, and was the subject of considerable discussion in the three countries.

[40] The revisions were incorporated at a late stage and listed in the 2016 PIR report.
[41] This rating takes into account the delivery performance of various agencies/institutions with implementation and execution responsabilities.

137. There were consultations with government land degradation focal points and Chaco stakeholders during the design process that were supported by PPG funding. The NEAs and project stakeholders were well selected for the most part in spite of capacity differences and were the logical candidates for assuming their project roles. Sometimes there were cultural barriers, as in the case of the Ijnapoi village in **Paraguay** that retains a traditional approach to weaving that is spontaneous, very *ad hoc* and culturally incompatible with the production modes needed by the handicrafts demonstration project. Among the NEAs, **Argentina's** Soil Conservation Directorate was best prepared technically and institutionally to assume the project and in fact provided (and paid for) the Regional Director and most of the national team from its staff; it was also the only NEA that included a budget line for replication. **Bolivia's** Vice Ministry of Water Resources was too far removed geographically from the project's activities and did not internally assign support staff to assist the national team that was based in Yacuiba; as a result, opportunities were missed to develop partnerships with the national Administration of Lands and Forests (ABT), the Plural-national Fund for the Mother Earth (*Fondo Pluricional de la Madre Tierra*) or the *Gestion y Desarrollo Forestal* program. Likewise, the Vice-Ministry's participation in regional project events was minimal. Although the Vice Minister supported the national project team from the capital city and participated in decisions, overall levels of national preparation and readiness for executing this project were low, despite the effective work of the national team and improved delivery during the 2015-2016 period. The response of regional partners institutions – the Gran Chaco provincial government, municipal governments, the cattle ranchers association – did not generate the momentum that was needed to promote up scaling and replication at the expected levels. **Paraguay** offered the most dramatic case of lack of institutional preparedness; the project was basically inoperative for more than two years and has seen four NPCs, five Ministers of Environment and several changes of government over its lifetime.

138. Preparation and readiness were influenced by the complexity and scale of the project's design. The challenges of managing parallel implementation processes in 3 countries with more than 75 ongoing field initiatives were very demanding. The institutional arrangements were very complex and the resulting administrative-financial guidelines sometimes lacked the responsiveness and flexibility that is needed to service dispersed small-scale initiatives with marked seasonal or biological cycles in an efficient manner. A similar finding applied to the provincial government partners that managed project funds and were in some cases, which in some cases were extremely slow in disbursing project funds. The lack of administrative preparedness in these cases led to delayed disbursements and procurements that disrupted the implementation of several pilot projects.

> *"We need to be sincere about timing. These projects are very important but they don't follow real timelines. "*
>
> *- A UNDP Focal Point*

139. The project's design was well thought and followed a logical progression of interventions. The ToC analysis indicates a high degree of linkages between outputs and outcomes, both within and between components. The inclusion of an exit strategy and sustainability mechanism (under the third component) is a good design practice that deserves recognition. However, inadequate timelines and limited resources were allocated for ambitious deliverables that included harmonizing national legal and policy frameworks, up scaling and "mainstreaming" (and funding) SLM/SFM practices at regional, national and local levels, reducing land degradation rates and increasing carbon sequestration, and establishing regional monitoring networks and information systems. Expectations that the project would have an impact on CO2 sequestration over a three-year period were unrealistic and at odds with biomass regeneration cycles. There were diseconomies of scale in the sense

that the project was not prepared to fully deliver on the expectations that it generated, with the time and resources at hand. Most of the SLM/SFM practices that were demonstrated require longer horizons to have a measurable environmental impact or enhance carbon sequestration; for this reason, the second C02 measurement was not taken. However, it is unlikely that any project team would have been fully prepared to assume this undertaking and deliver all of the planned results within the approved period.

140. The underestimation of existing regional capabilities to support the project – through the Tri-National Commission, the Council, the SRAP or other mechanisms – was a fundamental oversight that weakened the project's momentum at this level. As mentioned earlier, the lack of an existing, operational SRAP framework pushed the project role from one of technical support and facilitation towards direct support and "gap-filling". In design and practice, there were no distinctions between the project and the sub-regional action program: The country project offices *were* the SRAP offices despite the fact that most project staff were contracted by the agencies and paid from the project budget. This situation reflected a lack of readiness on the part of the governments to undertake a regional initiative. Although **Bolivia** was a signatory to the 2007 Declaration, its Parliament has yet to ratify the SRAP so that it becomes national policy. Hence Bolivia – one of three countries - is still not an official party to the sub-regional action program that the project was designed to assist.

141. The PCU was understaffed in this respect and would have benefited with the recruitment of 2-3 project assistants. In spite of this, the compact regional team brought experience and management capabilities to the project: One of the Regional Directors is an internationally recognized soil conservation expert who played an important role in UNCCD negotiations. The Regional Coordinator had earlier technical and managerial experience with internationally funded projects in Bolivia, and was very proactive in responding to the continuous administrative demands with frequent field travel.

142. The start-up of the project activities was slow, yet the time was used to develop guidelines for the demonstration and technology validation projects. Some of the interviewed implementers felt that the guidelines for designing and presenting demonstration projects were clear; funds were not available for travel and field consultations. However, the evaluation considers that the demonstration and technology validation projects were well designed for the most part, and implementing partners well selected.

143. One aspect of readiness that was lacking in some cases was an understanding of the social or cultural dynamics of the Chaco and considering them when working with beneficiaries of demonstration projects that have lacked organizational background. The honey producers of Chancaní in **Argentina** were not organized, lacked legal status and did not have an agreement with the neighboring national park or provincial Environment Secretariat to use the honey extraction facility that was installed on the park's premises after the project finished. There was a clear lack of "cultural fit" with the handicrafts project that was implemented with a traditional Ayoreo community in Paraguay, which appeared unwilling and unable to adopt the work practices that were required by the project. A honey production project in a Guraraní community of Paraguay's Chaco was disrupted when traditional tensions between different clans surfaced over the shared extraction facility.[42] These projects would have benefited - or perhaps would not have been pursued – if there had been a better social or cultural assessment during the design stage (either internally or as a contracted service).

[42] According to the national project coordinator, this conflict was subsequently resolved and production resumed, leading to a successfull first harvest.

144. Other demonstration projects were more culturally and socially aligned to the local context. When this happened, they stimulated local initiative and strengthened local organizations as observed in Monteagudo, **Bolivia**, Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** and the Guarani village of Betania in **Paraguay.** At this late stage, some of the project sites that were selected to become permanent demonstration units (UPEAs) are not prepared to assume this role and will require continued guidance to become viable. The organic vegetable farming project in Yacuiba, **Bolivia** was selected to become an UPEA yet is located in a floodplain receives occasional flash floods.

Evaluation rating for preparation and readiness is "Moderately Unsatisfactory"

4.6.2 Project Implementation and Management

145. Evaluation findings emphasize the influence that the projects geographic scale, institutional-framework and administrative arrangements have had on performance and impact. Aligning country processes or building national outputs into regional outcomes often was not possible. The readiness of implementing agencies, NEAs and other partners to assume the project was inconsistent and varied considerably. As co-implementing agency, UNDP benefited from its Country Office network and decentralized administrative practices. Among the NEAs, **Argentina's** Soil Conservation Directorate brought technical and institutional capacities to the project that are reflected in comparatively higher delivery rates, whereas the project underwent extensive delays in becoming operational in Paraguay due to successive changes of government and high staff turnover. **Bolivia's** Vice Ministry of Water Resources was geographically removed from the project area and lacks representation in the Chaco; as a result its direct engagement in project execution was limited. The complex project arrangements are reflected the organigram presented in Figure 5.

146. The project document generated high expectations, and several of the expected outcomes were over-dimensioned in relation to the approved timelines and budgets. The involvement of three international agencies with separate guidelines and reporting formats raised the project's administrative workload considerably and distracted attention from more substantive issues. Likewise, the demands of servicing 75 pilot initiatives across the tri-national area continued throughout most of the project period and absorbed the attention of the regional PCU and national teams. This undercut the project's ability to transfer validated practices to government program and policy levels for their replication on a broader scale.

147. The technical implementation approach was well thought and addressed recognized barriers to SLM/SFM. The project promoted sustainable resource management within productive sectors in a region that is high both in biodiversity and poverty. This has enabled the project to engage a wide range of partners that include Chaco farmers and cattle ranchers, producers associations and community-based organizations, local government and universities. As noted in the ToC analysis, the implementation strategy followed a logical sequence that progressed from on-site demonstration projects and technological validation to the systematizations of results and best practices for dissemination, replication and up scaling at country and regional levels. This would culminate in the mainstreaming of SLM and SFM in the region and lead to a harmonized regional development vision and updated SRAP. National outputs fed into regional outputs and outcomes, articulating Chaco actors from the three countries through a GIS, database and early warning system for extreme climatic events, as well as the periodic measurements of land degradation and carbon sequestration levels. Pilot demonstrations were accompanied by capacity building activities that enhanced conditions for their implementation and sustainability.

148. The implementation strategy was followed for the most part by the regional Project Coordination Unit, which competently managed a very complex and demanding project. The challenges of aligning implementation processes in three countries - and coordinating with two implementation agencies and regional executing agency - have required continuous adaptive management, as reflected in the re-programming of activities and adjustments to delays. The initial decision to locate country SRAP offices in the Chaco region was discontinued in **Argentina** and **Paraguay,** where the project teams were relocated to the NEAs to facilitate coordination. **Bolivia's** project office remained in the region, which offered the fundamental advantage of being closer to activities on the ground but also limited interactions with the NEA. In spite of a very slow activation process in **Paraguay**, the present national team has made an effort to move pilot demonstration activities forward in the pilot sites. The demonstration projects and TVPs were well designed in most cases and implemented by competent regional entities. The UPEAs do not appear to be fully operational and several will need further technical guidance in order to achieve the intended function.

149. The project implementation strategy was viable and could have led to greater impact at the sub-regional and policy levels. However, much of this potential was weakened by diseconomies of scale and other factors that lowered overall effectiveness. The project's design and expected deliverables were comprehensive and based on an integrated vision. However, they were over-dimensioned in relation to time and resources that were available. The bar was set at a very high level: Designing and supervising pilot initiatives in three countries; harmonizing national policies to build a common regional vision; up scaling and mainstreaming best practices within national governments; creating regional information networks; and establishing sustainability mechanisms were unlikely to be fully achieved over a five year period – even within a single country. The tight implementation schedules and numerous deliverables were all the more difficult to synchronize between countries that have different institutional, policy and legal frameworks as well as political cycles. **Argentina** and **Paraguay** both held national elections that led to major shifts in policy and personnel that were disruptive to the project.

150. The project's co-implementation and administrative arrangements were complex and difficult to coordinate, leading to delays (at times critical) in the release of funds. Country UNDP offices and the regional OAS-GS office were responsible for managing different budget lines (often within the same demonstration project) in coordination with the UN Environment's regional Panama office. Although e-communications were frequent between the three agencies, direct interaction was centered on annual meetings of the Directive Committee; according to interviewed project staff and demonstration project recipients, there were few direct monitoring visits on the part of the agencies. The overlapping of different guidelines and reporting formats was unnecessarily cumbersome and increased the workloads of the PCU, national teams and executing partners.

151. The implementation strategy was significantly weakened by the overestimation of regional support and partnership capabilities. The project was conceived to support an ongoing sub-regional initiative for the Gran Chaco that was politically supported by three countries, formalized in a strategic Action Program, and driven by a Tri-National Commission and Council. In practice, none of these were operational and the project has lacked the regional framework on which to advance. This weakened the linkages between the project´s regional and country-based initiatives. As noted by one participant, the project was "de facto" implemented through three separate national projects, and a fourth one for regional activities. The lessons of this experience suggest that the project might have been more efficient, and ultimately more effective, had a more integrative regional framework been

applied and adminstrative arrangements simplified with the participation of fewer international agencies.

Evaluation rating for implementation and management is "Satisfactory"

4.6.3 Stakeholder Participation, Cooperation and Partnerships

152. The project design benefited from a project preparation phase (financed with a PPG grant) that enabled consultations with relevant government stakeholders and UNCCD focal points of the three countries. The PPG was important to build consensus on the project components and institutional arrangements. The consultations were supported by a technical workshop at which implementation strategies, budgets and implementation modalities were discussed and agreed upon.

153. The project's scale and institutional framework required participation, coordination and partnerships at different levels – regionally, nationally, within pilot areas - to ensure effective implementation. For this purpose, the project document specified that "during the entire period of project implementation, work relations and collaboration will be maintained with all concerned stakeholders (Government agencies, private sector, NGOs and community organizations). The project will adopt a participatory approach encouraging all relevant stakeholders to have a role in project decision making processes, implementation and M&E. Stakeholders will take part in project management and implementation at various levels. " [43] For this purpose, the "project management structures" – the Tri-national Commission, Executive Committee and local coordination mechanisms – would ensure participation of key stakeholders in project planning, implementation and M&E. The Tri-national Commission, consisting of political and technical representatives of the three countries, was to serve as the project Steering Committee.

> *"It was a surprise to be part of this project. Despite the late start, it has been a good learning process about building consensus"*
>
> *- A municipal government focal point*

154. Evaluation findings indicate that there were high levels of participation in the implementation of demonstration and technological validation projects. That this was able to happen across a broad spectrum of projects is a credit to the regional PCU and national teams, as well as the NGOs and agencies contracted to implement these initiatives Criteria for the design and approval of demonstration projects were discussed between the PCU and national teams and agreed on at a regional workshop. Pilot sites were selected in consultation with the NEAs. Although the design of the demonstration projects did not include field travel to consult with the proposed beneficiaries, as was reported in **Paraguay**, most of the demonstration projects and TVPs have addressed recognized needs and in several cases reinforced existing initiatives, as occurred with CEDEVA in **Argentina,** Nativa and the Sauces-Zapallar producers association in **Bolivia,** and the National University of Asunción's farmer extension program in **Paraguay's**.

155. There were few examples of co-design with intended beneficiaries – farmers, ranchers and rural residents of the Gran Chaco. Exceptions were found in the demonstration projects involving the Los Sauces-Zapallar producers association in Monteagudo, **Bolivia** and UPSANG in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** (which had prior experience in honey production). However, the implementing NGOs proposed the projects to the communities and left their

[43] Project document, pg. 52

approval to the local authorities and councils. In the Guaraní village of Betania, **Paraguay** an interviewed farmer explained that the community had reservations due to unsatisfactory experiences with earlier projects, yet ultimately agreed to participate. The community of Yalve Sanga in **Paraguay** invited the NPC and contracted NGO to explain the honey production proposal, which was subsequently discussed by the indigenous council and accepted. The municipal governments of Filadelfia and Loma Plata participated directly in the screening and selection of NGOs to implement demonstration projects in nearby pilot sites. Local beneficiaries did not participate directly in monitoring activities, although they were consulted during monitoring visits.

156. One of project's strengths has been its ability to catalyze collaboration and partnership between different socio-economic groups. On-site demonstrations in Monteagudo, **Bolivia** were conducted with larger and more prosperous farmers who had the land and willingness to experiment, and who subsequently shared their results with smallholders from the area. In Charagua, the state petroleum corporation YPFB provided financial support for demonstration activities while indigenous communities loaned their communal tractors.

157. The demonstration of SLM/SFM practices in pilot sites was instrumental in catalyzing partnerships between public sector agencies, municipal governments and NGOs that otherwise would not have happened. Santiago del Estero's provincial Forest Department collaborated for the first time with the Dept. of Agriculture in **Argentina**. The project enabled Formosa's CEDEVA to expand institutional relations to and Santiago del Estero provinces, which could benefit its future work. Santiago del Estero's UPSANG learned *algarroba* flour production from Formosa's CEDEVA during one of the project exchanges and has since opened a bakery that produces *algarroba* cookies for the local school. A recognized environmental NGO prepared a management plans for the protected biological corridor that will be declared by the indigenous municipal government of Charagua, **Bolivia.** In **Paraguay**, the evaluator was told that the project was the Environment Secretariat's first experience in contracting NGOs for project implementation. Several demonstration projects included signed memorandums of understanding (*Cartas de Acuerdo*) between the project and local government authorities that committed their participation and continued support beyond the project's finish.

158. Coordination became more challenging at "upstream" levels between implementing and regional executing agencies, the regional Project Coordination Unit, the NEAs and national teams. Within the project, the vertical coordination connecting the PCU to the national teams and demonstration projects was generally efficient although additional regional support staff would have helped performance. Horizontal mechanisms mechanisms were comparatively more difficult to operationalize. To its credit, the project organized an international encounter for the exchange of experiences in each country that brought together project teams and beneficiaries from the three countries; these encounters were highly appreciated by the interviewed participants, although they haven't led to longer-term partnership or collaboration between different pilot sites or beneficiary groups.The exchange meetings also supported project monitoring and adaptive management - the group review of the project's advances at a 2014 workshop in Chancani, **Argentina** triggered changes to the implementation strategy that have improved national delivery.

159. However, communication and coordination were more difficult to manage at higher institutional levels. The anticipated role of Tri-National Commission as Project Steering Committee never materialized, and the project was unable to convene the Tri-National Commission during the entire project period. The direct involvement of NEAs in the execution of project activities and particularly those in the pilot sites was infrequent and

generally below expectations; representation and responsibilities were delegated to externally-recruited national teams. The exception was **Argentina's** Soil Conservation Directorate, which staffed the national SRAP office with its own personnel, and hosted the regional PCU and SRAP offices on its premises.

160. In their capacity as GEF co-implementing and regional executing agencies, UNDP and OAS jointly implemented project components through separate budget lines, and collaborated in the implementation of demonstration projects, i.e. rainwater harvesting and drip agriculture. Some of these projects required synchronized disbursements (for example, installing cisterns and solar panels to pump the collected water) that were difficult to align in practice. Although the intent of joint collaboration was meritorious, the arrangements were awkward; hence administrative delays on the part of one agency affected delivery by the other. As noted by one participant, joint collaboration was not the intent in preparing project budgets; instead, each country had its own budget, projects were executed independently, and part of each was under UNDP management, while another part under OAS/GS. The project´s national focus and implementation scheme hampered coordination at the regional level."

161. The Directive Committee (*Comité Directivo*) was the main coordination vehicle linking UN Environment, OAS, UNDP, the NEA focal points and project team. The CD met on a yearly basis to discuss the status of the project, coordinate actions and resolve issues that affected implementation. The meetings were documented and their minutes indicate that agreements were reached on issues ranging from the project's extension to the approval of budget revisions, annual operational plans, recruitments and the formulation of a Procedures Manual.

162. The CD meetings were undoubtedly useful and necessary tools for institutional coordination, particularly when complemented by regular electronic communications in the interim periods. The emerging issue is one of frequency more than substance: The CD should have convened or communicated more often to resolve recurrent administrative problems and streamline monitoring and reporting requirements. The evaluator agrees that more frequent interaction – for example, meeting twice a year, holding quarterly e-meetings, or coinciding on field visits - would have given the CD a more proactive role in responding to issues that weakened implementation and results, i.e. the review of administrative guidelines to limit delayed disbursements, synchronization of disbursements between co-implementing agencies, the need for more outreach to government policy levels, the time restrictions and late attention given to the third component.

Evaluation rating for stakeholder participation and partnership is "Satisfactory"

4.6.4 Communication and Public Awareness

163. A commendable aspect of the project's design was the emphasis given to transferring and up scaling SLM/SFM practices under the third component – the "exit strategy" – through regional and national events for dissemination and awareness raising. Public awareness and socialization of these practices were consistently promoted in the pilot sites. Unfortunately, there was less progress in the communication and dissemination of project results and best practices to "upstream" government policy levels. One of the reasons was timing: During most of the project duration the regional PCU and national teams were absorbed by the demands of activating and servicing 30 demonstration projects with 160 practices in 11 pilot areas under the second component. Due to slow start-ups and administrative delays various

projects were still not finished during the evaluator's visit. As a result there has been insufficient time to document and systematize results, promote the replication of best practices and inform government policy levels.

164. This has had a direct influence on SLM/SFM replication and up scaling, which was below the levels envisioned in the project document, and lack of formalized cooperation agreements with other programs, government agencies or regional organizations for the replication of SLM/SFM practices. National and regional meetings were planned under the third component to present results, best practices and stakeholders to senior government and technical representatives. This was expected to contribute to the shared regional vision for the development of the Chaco that would strengthen the SRAP. A final regional conference was planned in Buenos Aires in October 2016 with the attendance of focal point Ministers from the three countries; the Ministers were not able to attend and the meeting was re-dimensioned into a national event that was ultimately cut short by external events. The meeting with the Ministers was postponed and has been re-scheduled to coincide with the project's administrative closure (confirmation pending). A national event was held in **Argentina** but could not be completed to external circumstances. National events are foreseen in **Bolivia** and **Paraguay** but have yet to be confirmed. In the end, the main communications tool for awareness-raising was the production of a documentary video that effectively conveys the SLM/SFM practices that were piloted, yet has not been disseminated on the intended scale.

165. Some of the demonstration projects included communications and awareness raising in their activities. Public schools in Charagua, **Bolivia** received videos and printed materials on environmental conservation from the project and have organized tree-planting activities as well. The TVP and information systems support given to the National University of Asunción (Chaco campus) in **Paraguay** gave momentum to its new farmer outreach program, designing the web page and database of sustainable practices. Although internal, the regional exchange workshops were an important mechanism for communicating and sharing of experiences between project partners and beneficiaries from different pilot areas.

Evaluation rating for communication and public awareness is "Moderately Satisfactory"

4.6.5 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

166. The project was conceived to support an ongoing regional initiative that had the manifest support of the three governments. Various tri-national agreements have been signed in relation to the Gran Chaco SRAP. The 2007 Declaration between national UNCCD focal points and the Global Mechanism established the regional cooperation framework for the Gran Chaco, creating the Tri-National Commission and Council. The project aimed to build on this framework by actively supporting country ownership – both nationally and towards the SRAP – through its focus on demonstration projects within the pilot areas that were designated in each country, and by assigning the role of Project Steering Committee to the Tri-National Commission consisting of political and technical representatives from the three countries. Likewise, project activities were supportive of National Action Plans to Combat Desertification that are developed in the framework of UNCCD.

167. Despite the incentives and opportunities offered by the project, country ownership has been inconsistent and generally below expectations. In addition to underscoring differences in institutional capacities and policy priorities among NEAs, low country ownership was also reflected in the absence of an operational regional framework to assist the project's

initiatives in general, and the regional outputs and outcomes in particular. To an extent, the project design was built on the erroneous assumption that there was an existing regional dynamic, which was not the case. The project was unable to convene the Tri-National Commission during the entire implementation period. Whereas **Bolivia** signed the Declaration but has not ratified the SRAP, nor are there plans for this to happen given the government's critical position towards payment-for-ecosystem schemes and carbon sequestration initiatives that are central to the Action Plan. **Paraguay's** Environment Secretariat showed very little initiative in moving the project forward during the first three years of implementation, during which there were successive turnovers of NPCs and government focal points. Although the situation has since stabilized and the project was able to reactivate implementation in 2015 with a new team (and Minister), the externally recruited team works largely on its own with little participation by the Secretariat. This is similar to the situation in **Bolivia**, where low country ownership on the part of the NEA was aggravated by geographic distance; Bolivia was the only country to maintain a national project office in the Chaco region. [44]

> *"The project expects to overcome the most important barriers by building upon the collective commitment of the three Governments to work together around the existing framework of the SRAP…"*
>
> *- Project document, pg. 2*

168. Country ownership was strongest in Argentina. The Soil Conservation Directorate played a lead role in the 2007 SRAP Declaration and the project's design. The Soils Directorate hosted both the regional PCU and national team in its own offices, assigned core personnel to the national team and paid their salaries, and was able to align the project's national work plans with its own strategic vision and initiatives. Argentina was the only country in which the national project budget included a budget line for replication. The evaluation considers that the Soils Directorate has taken advantage of the cooperation provided, and made good use of the project's support despite a change of government that has brought major policy shifts.

169. Country ownership was further undermined by what may be described as a case of mistaken or displaced identity. In practice, the project offices that were opened in each country became the SRAP offices (as stated in the project document) and thereafter assumed the latter function in lieu of a tangible government commitment. In the evaluator's opinion, this was a strategic oversight that pushed the project from what should have been a supportive role towards a direct support/gap-filling mode, with the unforeseen effect of further discouraging government ownership. It is unfortunate that this issue was not flagged at the design, appraisal or inception stage beyond recognizing the assumption that "…The Governments of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay demonstrate the will to overcome possible national and/or sector specific interests and work toward common objectives" as a potential risk. [45]

170. The uneven levels of country ownership towards the project among national governments were contrasted by high levels of local ownership towards the demonstration projects and TVPs that were implemented in the pilot areas. This speaks well for the relevance of these projects and selection of implementers. At the mid level, the evaluator

[44] Bolivia's Vice-Ministry of Watersheds and Water Resources has two sub-offices in the southern region. In this respect, both the project and SRAP would have benefitted significantly from a tangible Vice-Ministry presence in the Chaco.

[45] Project document Results Framework, pg. 105

noted a sense of project ownership during interviews the with organizations and institutions such UPSANG in Santiago del Estero and CEDEVA in Formosa, **Argentina**; the Sauces-Zapallar producers association of **Monteagudo** Bolivia; the demonstration farmers of Bethania, and the municipal environmental focal points of Filadelfia and Loma Santa in **Paraguay**. Provincial government agencies and local governments tended to show less ownership and were detached from the project, whereas ownership increased in the case of community organizations and some NGOs.

Evaluation rating for country ownership and driven-ness is "Moderately Satisfactory"

4.6.6 Financial Planning and Management

171. General financial delivery was satisfactory. Cumulative expenditures had reached US$ 3,223,333.09 by June 2017 (one month before the project's administrative closure), representing 97.3% of the GEF grant corresponding to UN Environment and OAS; the balance was earmarked for the Terminal Evaluation and other final costs.[46] Planned government co-financing contributions were largely met, although only Argentina fully assumed the costs of the country project teams after the first year as foreseen in the project document (while the others continued to be funded by the GEF grant). Despite the project's scale and administrative difficulties, the PCU was able to execute most of the outputs and manage an extension within the original budget, although several demonstration projects were under-funded, i.e. **Bolivia's** Charagua pilot site. Annual budget revisions were made to re-program unspent funds and transfer resources between budget lines. The regional PCU made efforts to manage budget resources efficiently, as reflected in the decision to reduce field DSA rates from the UN scale (thus enabling more travel to the pilot areas).

172. In spite of the general tendency, there were different trends in budget delivery among countries and agencies. Budget delivery was highest in **Argentina** where 88% of allocated funds had been expended as of August 2016, followed by **Bolivia** (81%), and lowest in **Paraguay** where only 61% of allocated funds had been spent. Although there were delays in the start-up of country activities and pilot projects (particularly in Paraguay), UNDP benefited from in-country representation and comparatively decentralized administrative guidelines. GEF funds supervised by UN Environment were transferred to OAS/GS in its capacity as regional executing agency, through its Buenos Aires office (for this reason, budget delivery data is not available for UN Environment). The OAS/GS office received all requests from the PCU and entered the electronic requisition, which is approved at OAS Headquarters in Washington. In this respect, financial management needed to consider the time and coordination required from the technical units and country SRAP offices to the PCU, and from the PCU to the OAS Bs. The evaluator was informed of three incidents of delayed transfer of funds from UN Environment to OAS that affected the implementation of project activities; fortunately, the negative consequences of these delays were partially offset by the provision of interim financing from the OAS/GS internal budget (subsequently reimbursed).

[46] GEF Cash Advance Statement (May 2017)

Figure 13. Cumulative Budget Delivery by Agency and Country: August 2016

AGENCY		ARGENTINA	BOLIVIA	PARAGUAY	REGIONAL PCU	CUMULATIVE TOTAL (%)
EXECUTED FUNDS *(disbursed funds only)*	UNDP	USD 1,660,489 (96% of approved budget)	USD 859,710 (86%)	USD 578,902 (62%)		USD 3,099,101 (85%)
	OAS	USD 523,771 (70%)	USD 264,521 67%	USD 281,565 (59%)	USD 1,326,686 (81%)	USD 2,396,543 (74%)
	TOTAL	USD 2,184,260 (88%)	USD 1,124,231 (81%)	USD 860,467 (61%)	USD 1,326,686 (81%)	**USD 5,495,644 (80%)**

Source: Project Coordination Unit

> *"Managing the budget involved a continuous juggling act. We spent about 60% of our time resolving communication problems with and between agencies. The project was never integrated, and instead moved from component to component."*
>
> *- A former National Project Coordinator*

173. Fluid coordination was obstructed to a large extent by complex institutional and financial arrangements. The Regional PCU in particular had difficulties coordinating budget expenditures with the UNDP Country Offices that managed a portion of the GEF budget for national activities. There were discrepancies as evidenced in the purchase of a project vehicle for the Environment Secretariat in **Paraguay** towards the end of the project's termination that was not coordinated with the PCU; this generated tensions with the other teams that did not purchase vehicles and instead relied on rentals for extensive field travels).[47] There were also problems in coordinating the timely disbursement of funds to the demonstration projects, with critical consequences for honey production project in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** and vegetable farming in Yacuiba, **Bolivia.** As mentioned earlier, these delays were influenced by the late submission of requests by the national executing agency and extended processing by the country SRAP offices, PCU and agencies that sometimes required revisions to the original requests). [48]

174. Although delivery improved over time and had reached satisfactory levels (with the exception of Paraguay), the evaluation considers that financial management was the weakest aspect of the project with effects on efficiency and results. This assessment is based on:

The application of parallel administrative and financial management guidelines on the part of the international agencies with little if any integration or streamlining of procedures, formats and calendars. This raised the administrative workload of the PCU in particular despite the availability of administrative support staff.

- Project budget lines were divided between co-implementing agencies, to the point of mingling UNDP and OAS budget lines within the same demonstration projects (i.e. rainwater harvesting in **Argentina** among others) and national teams. Such

[47] According to Paraguay´s national project coordinator, the purchase of the vehicle was a national project decision that did not require clearance by the PCU. However, the evaluator feels that such decisions should have been coordinated to ensure a more balanced allocation of equipment between country teams that were pursuing common goals.

arrangements have made it more difficult to synchronize disbursement and procurement processes that were managed by different co-implementing agencies.

- Some administrative guidelines were not optimal for projects of this nature and did not provide the responsiveness or enable the adaptive management needed to move dispersed, small-scale pilot activities forward.
- There were occaisional delays in the transfer of funds from UN Environment to OAS/GS, delayed procurement requests and extended processing periods on the part of the country project offices, PCU and international agencies. [49]This combination of factors contributed to the recurrent administrative problems and delays that are described in this report.

175. The data presented above indicates that UNDP had delivered 85% of its programmed expenditures compared to 74% by OAS as of August 2016 (this being the most recent information available at the time of the evaluation). As noted earlier, this difference was conditioned by systemic and institutional factors more than individual performance. The OAS-GS focal point was supportive of project needs, to the point of advancing funds from the internal budget to sustain activities when transfers from UN Environment were delayed. OAS administrative guidelines ensured the management of external funds with the same scrutiny and responsibility that are applied with its own internal resources. Some of the guidelines that were not considered well-suited to the needs of the project that had to service 75 dispersed pilot initiatives involving different partners. Electronic bank transfers were not common and checks were generally issued instead. Expenditures above US$ 1,000 required the approval of the OAS Secretary General in Washington. While some respondents felt that these practices affected administrative efficiency, they were based on corporate guidelines that in some cases were introduced at a late stage of the project and therefore had limited effect on overall performance. The administrative challenges faced by the project were reinforced by the scale and complexity of its institutional arrangements, rather than the performance of any particular agency. There were also delays on the part of the country teams in receiving information from the field and transmitting budgetary requests for demonstration projects and TVPs, and processing by the PCU was sometimes slow or required revisions to the documentation.

176. Several demonstration projects were affected by delayed disbursements and slow procurement processes that are described in the section on project efficiency. [50] The honey production projects in Santiago del Estero, **Argentina** missed the first harvesting cycle due to a very slow procurement process that involved various entities. Rainwater harvesting projects in the same province faced extended delays in purchasing construction materials for cisterns. Goat breeding projects in Santiago del Estero and Formosa were held up because of the delayed procurement of vaccines and veterinary products. An organic farming project in Yacuiba, **Bolivia** that was selected to be an UPEA missed the annual planting cycle because the implementing women's association was unable to purchase seeds and other inputs.

177. There were supposed to be external financial audits of the project every year. OAS had annual external audits, while the three participating UNDP Country Offices complied partially by conducting two audits during the project periodand the UNDP Country Office in Argentina had audits for 2012-2015 and a 'spot check' on 2016. Although there were various delays, no cases of financial mismanagement were reported. Both UNDP and OAS treated the project as

[49] In this respect, the support services offered by UNDP benefited from direct country representation and decentralized financial management guidelines.

a small item within the broader organizational audits; hence the reported data focuses on aggregated expenditures with little insight into the financial management or efficiency issues that critically affected project delivery. The regional PCU and national teams were not audited nor were they contacted by the auditors. Project funds were managed transparently in accordance with GEF and UN Environment guidelines, and no irregularities have been reported. [51] However, the evaluator considers that a broader approach – for example, considering financial management practices and their timeliness and consulting with administrative staff (incorporating some elements of a performance audit) – would have been more useful in addressing recurrent delays that affected implementation.

178. The evaluation notes that quarterly financial expenditure reports were generally made available on time and were adequately completed (once the intricacies of the different guidelines were understood). The project's administrative closure is scheduled in June 2017, yet the evaluator has not received a final project report (currently in process of preparation), the terminal expenditure report, or final expenditure/co-financing data (despite requests to the UN Environment FMO).

Evaluation rating for financial planning and management is "Moderately Unsatisfactory"[52]

4.6.7 Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping

179. General findings on this aspect are elusive for a project that involved three international agencies and supported initiatives in a number of pilot locations with different institutional partners. The project was implemented by UN Environment and co-implemented by UNDP, with OAS/GS serving as regional executing agency for UN Environment´s portion of the project. Agency responsibilities were divided according to the scale of activity (regional, national) and budget line in the case of demonstration projects and TVPs. The rationale for designating three international agencies and allocating responsibilities in this manner was not made clear to the evaluator (nor was it for the project team or agency representatives who were consulted), aside from the fact that UN Environment does not have country representation and therefore needed a partner with national presence.

180. Given the challenges of supporting a project of this scale and complexity, the guidance and technical backstopping provided by the implementing and co-implementing agencies did not have the responsiveness or frequency needed to overcome the administrative and coordination challenges that weakened project performance. In retrospect, this should have been considered prior to the project's commencement by exploring options to streamline and to the extent possible, integrate administrative and reporting guidelines to facilitate project management. Although the three implementing agencies exercised their supervisory functions in a satisfactory manner, there were 'diseconomies of scale' in the juxtaposition of guidelines, reports and formats that were complex and time-consuming.

181. The perceptions of regional and national respondents suggest that there was limited field presence or technical guidance from any of the agencies, although the UNDP Country Offices were better placed to visit project activities more often. The interaction between UN Environment and the co-implementing agencies was largely centered on the annual meetings

[51] The main conflict that was noted by the evaluator was the internal disagreement over UNDP Paraguay's unaliteral decision to use project funds to purchase a pickup truck that arrived a couple of months before the project's termination.

of the Directive Committee, when a project of this scale and complexity required a more intensive, hands-on approach. Indeed, the Directive Committee was expected to meet more frequently according to the project document.

182. The UNDP Focal Points and UN Environment Task Managers complied with the annual project visits that were foreseen in the project document. However, more frequent field visits by agency representatives would have been desirable. Only one of the exchange encounters was attended by UNDP (none in the case of UN Environment or OAS-GS). [53] In this respect, the oversight and field presence of agency representatives was partially influenced by availability as both the UN Environment Task Manager and OAS focal point, managed project portfolios for the region. An unfortunate oversight on the part of UN Environment was the failure to adjust the project objective's impact indicators to reflect the downscaling of country SLM/SFM targets; as a result, the project's objective and outcome indicators were inconsistent, and the scale of impact envisioned by project objective was not reached. In assessing supervision and backstopping performance, it important to consider that NEAs and most of the entities contracted to implement demonstration or TVPs were already technically competent in their areas of work. Instead, guidance and backstopping were really needed to resolve the administrative and financial management problems that are mentioned in this report. In this respect, the timely (and commendable) intervention of the UN Environment Task Manager and country UNDP Focal point was critical in re-activating the project in **Paraguay**.

183. In summary, essential supervision and backstopping requirements were met by the international agencies. However, greater engagement and interaction on the part of these agencies might have contributed to the timely resolution of recurrent administrative and disbursement issues that have affected performance.

Evaluation rating for supervision and backstopping is "Moderately Satisfactory"

4.6.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

M&E Design

184. One of the merits of project design and performance was the importance given to project monitoring, both by the regional PCU and the implementing agencies. One of the non-technical project components was devoted to monitoring, including a detailed and budgeted M&E plan:

Table 14. M&E Plan and Budget

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Budget	Time Frame
Inception Workshop	• Project Coordinator • UNEP • UNDP	US$ 13,000	Within 2 months of project start- up
Inception Report	Project Coordinator UNEP/UNDP	None	1 month after project inception meeting
Measurement of baseline data and indicators	• Project Coordinator • Local SRAP Offices and PTAs • Studies/consultants to be hired by the PCU	US$ 20,000	Within 2 months of project start- up

[53] Having said this, it is important to recognize that both UN Environment and UNDP were instrumental in re-activating the project in **Paraguay** through a joint mission in 2014.

Measurement of project indicators (objective and progress and performance indicators, tracking tools)	• Project Coordinator • Local SRAP Offices and PTA • Studies/consultants to be hired by the PCU and local implementing agencies	US$ 60,000	Objective indicators: start, mid and end of project Progress/perform. Indicators: annually
APR and PIR	Project Coordinator UNEP UNDP-GEF/CO	None	Annually
Project progress reports and other reports	Project team	None	As per Appendix 8 of project document
Project Steering Committee meetings[6]	Project Coordinator Tri-national Commission UNEP UNDP-GEF/CO	None	Following Inception Workshop and subsequently once a year
Project Directive Committee meetings	Project Coordinator	US$ 50,000	At least twice a year
Mid Term External Evaluation	Project Coordinator UNEP UNDP-GEF External consultant(s)	US$ 30,000	At mid-point of project implementation
Final External Evaluation	Project Coordinator UNEP UNDP-GEF External consultant(s)	US$ 30,000	At end of project implementation
Audit	Project team UNEP UNDP-CO	US$ 30,000	Annually
Project Final Report	Project team	None	2 months of project completion date
Publication of Lessons Learnt and other docs	Project team	US$ 48,750	Annually
Visits to field sites	UNEP	Paid from IA	Annually

Source: Project document, pp. 55-6

185. A project consultant formulated monitoring "tracking tools" for each of three countries in addition to consolidated tools for the entire project; these were presented at a workshop in 2014. The tracking tools consist of characterizations of the various project contexts – agroecological, socioeconomic, land degradation - and their targeted impacts, in addition to outcome monitoring indicators that are based on GEF's Land Degradation Focal Area (LDFA) objectives and outcomes. The country and consolidated tracking tools are detailed and well selected for monitoring purposes; however the data needed to measure them would in many cases require specialized surveys for the 11 pilot sites that were outside the project's time and cost possibiliities.

M&E Plan Implementation

186. The M&E Plan was followed for the most part, and the demands of the 75 demonstration projects and TVPs required continuous monitoring by the PCU and Regional Coordinator in particular. Annual project audit requirements were not fully met by UNDP, which conducted two audits during the project period (whereas OAS complied with summarized data in its annual organizational audits). The audits that were conducted were internal to the aforementioned agencies and did not involve the project team; nor did they signal the administrative and financial management problems that hindered implementation.

There was periodic field monitoring by the country teams, however the quality of monitoring appears to have been inconsistent; the evaluator found that several projects were affected by problems that should have been detected through prior monitoring.[54] Once familiarity with the formats was achieved, project reports were generally prepared correctly and on a timely basis; the evaluator found the Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) to be well documented and based on consultations with national teams, with the added benefit of dual English/Spanish texts. The evaluation found no evidence of the GEF tracking tool being completed. While the reasons for this included the late implementation of many projects and perceived high cost of conducting periodic on-site measurements in the demonstration areas, this could have been anticipated at the design stage and included in the monitoring budget (perhaps expanding the participation of universities). The available monitoring data is more closely linked to the indicators and targets contained in the project document's logical framework and PIRs.

187. A Mid-Term Review (MTR) was conducted in 2013 that provided important recommendations for the streamlining of project execution that provided inputs for the subsequent Action Plan that was developed by the project team and approved by the Directive Committee. The review identified i) significant delays, including a lack of development of various outputs and implementation of demonstration projects, technology validation projects and biodiversity and carbon components; and ii) the budget's sub-execution, related to the aforementioned delays, as the main issues affecting project performance. The MTR´s fundamental recommendations centered on prioritizing the immediate implementation of demonstration projects at pilot sites in the three countries as an immediate priority, followed by the completion of the biodiversity and carbon outputs to ensure global environmental benefits. It also recommended re-focusing attention on pilot demonstration activities supporting local producers (agriculture, livestock) and water management. The MTR recommendations led to discussions among the PCU and country teams and agreement on a plan of action that contributed to higher delivery rates during the remaining project period. The MTR directed the project´s attention to the importance of systematizing lessons and redirecting the exit strategy emphasizing the dissemination of lessons and transboundary exchanges, which subsequently received more support from the project. The decision to extend the project until December 2016 was based on the recommendation of MTR.

Evaluation rating for monitoring and evaluation is "Satisfactory"

5. Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

188. ***Conclusion 1*: Overall project performance was moderately satisfactory according to the evaluation findings. Most outputs and outcomes were reached or partially reached. However, the project objective was not achieved.** A critical core of priority biodiversity areas was strengthened through sustainable resource management practices at pilot sites, and by designing management plans for biological corridors that link protected areas. In various pilot sites the demonstrated practices are being sustained and are

[54] These affected demonstration projects for handicrafts and honey production in Paraguay, honey production in Argentina (Chancaní) and agroforestry-pasture management in Bolivia (Yacuiba). Some of these issues have been followed-up on by the country teams since the evaluator's visit.

likely to expand, although continued NEA assistance is necessary to have broader impact. Less progress was achieved towards the adoption of a shared regional vision and development policy, or the mainstreaming of SLM/SFM policies and tools at national and regional levels. Measurements of increased CO2 sequestration - another expected outcome – were not taken because insufficient time had lapsed from the initial baseline. In general, the expected levels of impact on land degradation in the Gran Chaco region, as stated in the project objective, were not reached. However, the project does leave a validated body of sustainable natural resource management practices that are replicable and stand to benefit future programs and project initiatives in the region.

189. ***Conclusion 2:*** **The project successfully demonstrated sustainable land and forest management practices that assist key productive sectors and have had (or are expected to have) positive environmental and socio-economic impacts. Several practices have a high replication potential and can be applied on a regional scale if there is a commitment from governments and donors.** The main project achievement was the demonstration and validation of SLM/SFM practices in 11 pilot areas across the tri-national Chaco that absorbed over half the project budget. These practices were implemented in a participatory manner with farmers and ranchers, community organizations and cooperatives, NGOs, research institutions and universities. In addition to enabling sustainable livelihoods through the harvesting of organic honey, water management and integrated agroforestry-pasture systems, among others, several of the demonstrated practices have enhanced biodiversity conservation and land tenure security for rural smallholders. Most of the demonstrated practices have a moderate-to-high sustainability potential and some are already in process of replication.

190. ***Conclusion 3:*** **Delivery was generally higher for national outputs in comparison with regional deliverables.** Country-based initiatives were closer to national needs and tended to receive more attention from NEAs than the regional initiatives. The absence of an operating tri-national framework or action program (outside of the project) limited the development of an integrated regional vision with "mainstreamed" SLM/SFM policies. The project's main regional achievement has been the development of the regional GIS and database that will be hosted by Argentina's Land Degradation Observatory; followed by the design of methodologies to monitor land degradation and CO2 emissions that were tested in the three countries but have not been formally adopted.

191. ***Conclusion 4:*** T**he project was comprehensive in design and applied an integrated, multi-tiered implementation approach that linked regional, national and local contexts.** The analysis of causal pathways indicates a high level of linkages between outputs and outcomes from different components. The implementation approach combined vertical and horizontal dynamics that included the strengthening of institutional and policy frameworks; demonstration of SLM and SFM practices in pilot sites for subsequent replication and up scaling; mainstreaming best practices at regional and national levels; and building a shared vision and development strategy for the Gran Chaco within the framework of the Sub-regional Action Program (SRAP). Monitoring was an important aspect of the project and the main focus of the fourth project component; the evaluator considers this to be a good design practice that encouraged internal monitoring by the PCU.

192. ***Conclusion 5:*** **The project was over-dimensioned in terms of the expectations and deliverables programmed over a five-year period.** Project deliverables included harmonizing Chaco policies and legislation between three countries; mainstreaming SLM/SFM policies and practices at regional, national and local levels; reducing land degradation rates; increasing carbon sequestration; and promoting the large-scale replication

of best practices within a five-year period. Project timelines were insufficient to demonstrate the full environmental impact of SLM/SFM practices or associated carbon absorption benefits, and less so given the various delays that were faced. Some outputs were clearly unrealistic in relation to their time and resource allocations or were outside the project's attributions, i.e., adjusting national policy and legal frameworks, and mainstreaming policies and practices among government institutions. To its credit, the regional PCU took the time to adjust several indicators and targets to more realistic (and achievable) levels. This was a good example of adaptive management that has benefited the project in terms of assessing its achievements (unfortunately, the objective level indicators were not revised accordingly by oversight). Although the two-year duration of most pilot initiatives was often too short to generate measurable impact, the project was able to test and validate SLM/SFM practices that are now established in several sites. Measurable carbon sequestration benefits are likely to accrue in the medium-term if these practices are sustained over time.

193. ***Conclusion 6:*** **The preparedness of GEF implementing and executing agencies, NEAs and other partners were inconsistent and had direct bearing on effectiveness.** This was reflected at different levels: Among the international agencies, UNDP was positioned to support national activities through its country office network and decentralized financial management practices. OAS-GS was consistently supportive of project execution and instrumental in providing interim financing when budget transfers from Nairobi. However, the project´s administrative management needs were considerable and little effort was made to integrate or otherwise streamline the reporting requirements/formats of the agencies that were applied to the project. The preparedness of NEAs varied considerably as reflected in the higher technical capacity and ownership of Argentina's Soil Conservation Directorate, the comparatively less intensive involvement of Bolivia´s Vice-Ministry of Watersheds and Water Resources, and the difficulties in activating the project within Paraguay's Environment Secretariat.

194. The management performance of the regional Project Coordination Unit was satisfactory, despite occasional processing delays and coordination difficulties with country teams (particularly in Bolivia and Paraguay). In this respect, the PCU competently managed a very complex and demanding project with limited staff and a succession of four Regional Directors. The challenges of aligning implementation processes in three countries, servicing 75 pilot initiatives, coordinating a wide range of institutional partners, and liaising with three implementing agencies has required sustained efforts and continuous adaptive management on the part of the regional team.

195. ***Conclusion 7:*** **To a large extent, institutional capacity levels determined the ability of Chaco stakeholders to make good use of project resources and generate results.** There was a high correlation between the successful demonstration of SLM/SFM practices, and the capacity and commitment of project partners. The spectrum ranged from the strong baseline capacities and commitment of CEDEVA and UPSANG in Argentina, the Sauces-Zapallar farmers association in Monteagudo, Bolivia and the municipal government of Loma Plata in Paraguay (among others), to the lack of readiness on the part of the Ayoreo community of Ijnapoi in Paraguay, local beneficiaries of Chancaní or Córdoba's provincial Forestry Directorate in Argentina. This situation created opportunities to build mentoring and collaborative relations between Chaco stakeholders that were not pursued beyond the holding of annual meetings for the exchange of experiences.

196. ***Conclusion 8:*** **Efficiency and financial management were the weakest aspects of project performance. This was reinforced by complex institutional arrangements and administrative guidelines, and the dispersion of small-scale pilot activities with high**

service needs. Overall budget delivery improved over time and reached satisfactory levels towards the end of the project in Argentina and Bolivia. However, project implementation in the three countries was affected by complex institutional arrangements and overlapping agency guidelines that ultimately raised coordination and reporting needs. There were periodic delays in obtaining information from the country project offices. UN Environment did not have country presence and implementation/execution responsibilities were shared with OAS-GS and UNDP, which managed separate expenditures and budget lines (sometimes within the same demonstration pilot projects). On three occasions the replenishment of funds by UN Environment (Nairobi) to OAS-GS was delayed; in some cases this affected the implementation of activities in pilot areas. The project has required extensions to finish activities in Bolivia and Argentina, whereas implementation continues in Paraguay where the project needed two years to become operational. The administrative and logistical demands generated by 75 pilot initiatives across the tri-national region ultimately absorbed most of the project's efforts and distracted attention from other deliverables that were essential to achieve expected outcomes.

197. ***Conclusion 9***: **Many of the demonstrated practices are inherently sustainable and have a high replication potential. However, continued support is needed to expand the scale of adoption and reduce land degradation in the Gran Chaco region.** The project has established an important base of sustainable land and forest management practices that can be readily built on. The large-scale adoption of SLM and SFM in the Gran Chaco was initially foreseen in the project's design, and provisions were included for the dissemination and transfer of validated practices to government authorities and other stakeholders. However, the implementation of pilot demonstration projects continued into the final stages and there was insufficient time left for their socialization or up-scaling. The challenge is now to move the adoption of SLM and SLM practices at a broader scale. The regional mechanisms to accomplish this are not in place, and further progress will necessarily have to be country-driven with continued support by NEAs. The evaluation has identified parallel programs that are strategically positioned to replicate SLM/SFM in the Gran Chaco. These include the implementation of native forest legislation in Argentina, Bolivia's national watershed plan and an upcoming green commodities project in Paraguay. However, formal agreements are not in place and the NEAs need to follow up on these opportunities before institutional memory declines.

Figure 15. Project Performance Ratings

CRITERION	SUMMARY ASSESSMENT	RATING
A. Strategic Relevance	The project design and implementation were supportive of global MEAs (UNCCD and UNCBD in particular), the regional SRAP Declaration, country-based forest legislation and NAPs for Desertification Control, and the strategic objectives of both GEF IV and UN Environment as reflected in the 2010-2014 MTS.	**6 (HS)**
B. Achievement of Outputs	Output delivery improved over time and most of the national outputs were delivered in a satisfactory manner, including those completed in Paraguay following the approval of a project extension. There was less progress towards the achievement of regional outputs, in part due to the lack of a functional program framework for the project to build on. There was also less progress under the third component due to insufficient time.	**Regional outputs: MS** **Argentina: S** **Bolivia: S** **Paraguay: S** **General Rating: 5 (S)**
C. Effectiveness		

1. Achievement of Direct Outcomes	Most of the outcomes were partially reached. A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity was strengthened through SFM/SLM activities. Technical instruments were developed and demonstrated in pilot sites. However, the scale of adoption and replication did not reach the threshold needed to generate expected impacts on land degradation in the Chaco region or carbon sequestration. The project was unable to develop a regional vision and development strategy for the Chaco, largely due to the lack of an operational SRAP or tri-national framework to work through.	**3 (MU)**
2. Likelihood of Impact	There is a high likelihood of impact for some of the demonstration activities in pilot areas, i.e. honey production, integrated agroforestry- pasture systems, water conservation systems. Further impact is moderately likely through parallel government and donor programs for watershed management (Bolivia), conservation of native forests (Argentina), and climate change adaptation and green commodities (Paraguay). However, there are no formal agreements or MoUs in place to ensure impacts on a broader scale. Policy-level impacts have not occurred and are unlikely at this stage.	**4 (ML)**
3. Achievement of Project Goal and Planned Objective	The main objective of reversing land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco region was not achieved, despite progress documented in the pilot sites.	**2 (U)**
D. Sustainability and Replication:	**General Rating: 3 (MU)** *Note:* UN Environment guidelines require that the lowest sustainability rating be used as the general rating for this category.	
1. Socio-political	The project has had little incidence at central government policy levels with the partial exception of Argentina, and was unable to "mainstream" SLM/SFM to the extent planned, in part due to implementation delays and unrealistic timelines. Nor is there an operational SRAP framework in place. Social sustainability of project results is more likely within the pilot sites in the case of honey production, integrated agroforestry-pasture systems and water management (rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, water troughs for cattle).	**Regional: U** **Argentina: ML** **Bolivia: ML** **Paraguay: ML** **Rating: 4 (ML)**
2. Financial Resources	Provisions for continued financial support are lacking in the absence of the "sustainability mechanism" that was envisioned under the third component. Financial sustainability will depend on the availability of funds from other donors or projects. The financial sustainability of SLM/SFM practices within the pilot sites is likely in the case of honey production, integrated agroforestry-pasture systems and water management (rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, water troughs for cattle). Replications in pilot sites and adjacent areas are being funded by programs supporting the implementation of native forest legislation in Argentina as well as Bolivia's national watershed plan, with possibilities for expanded support. There are no provisions for financial sustainability at the regional level.	**Regional: U** **Argentina: L** **Bolivia: ML** **Paraguay: ML** **4 (ML)**
3. Institutional Framework	Institutional sustainability is low at regional and national levels, with the exception of Argentina where the national SRAP office has continued to operate beyond the project term. A functional SRAP framework is not in place, nor do the Tri-National Committee and Council appear to be operational. There are indications of sustainable institutional arrangements within pilot sites that involve research centers and universities (CEDEVA, Univ. of Asunción), NGOs (NATIVA, CIAT), some provincial/municipal governments (i.e. Santiago del Estero's Forest Directorate, the municipalities of Loma Plata and Filadelfia in Paraguay), and community-based organizations (i.e. UPSANG in Santiago del Estero) that intend to	**Regional: U** **Argentina: HL** **Bolivia: MU** **Paraguay: MU** **Rating: 3 (MU)**

	continue applying or disseminating sustainable practices.	
4. Environmental	All of the demonstrated and validated practices offer tangible environmental benefits in the medium term.	**6 (HL)**
5. Catalytic Role & Replication	Several practices have a high replication potential, and a catalytic effect was noted in some cases. However, most demonstration projects and TVPs were recently completed and several are still under implementation. As a result there has been insufficient time to measure changes to baseline situations, systematize results or up-scale/mainstream SLM/SFM practices. There were few replications outside the pilot sites; future replications will depend on support from other initiatives such as the *Bosque y Comunidad* program in Argentina, Bolivia's National Watershed Plan and the upcoming green commodities and adaptation fund projects in Paraguay. The UPEAs also need to be strengthened in order to assist replication efforts. The project has had local catalytic effects in Monteagudo, and Charagua, Bolivia where further SLM/SFM replications are likely.	**Argentina: MS** **Bolivia: MU** **Paraguay: MU** **Rating: 3 (MU)**
E. Efficiency	This was one of the project's weaker aspects. There were recurrent delays at various levels that affected timely disbursement and procurement, undermining the implementation of various demonstration projects and TVPs. The combination of slow project start-up and recurrent delays ultimately reduced the time available to document, transfer and up-scale validated practices. Inefficiency was reinforced by changes of government and staff turnovers in Argentina and Paraguay, complex institutional arrangements, and slow administrative processes that sometimes did not offer the flexibility or adaptive management needed to service dispersed, small-scale initiatives with diverse partners. Country implementation was initially slow yet improved in Bolivia and Argentina, whereas the project only became operational in Paraguay in 2014. Satisfactory delivery levels were achieved towards the end of the project term, largely due to approved extensions.	**3 (MU)**
F. Factors Affecting Performance		
1. Preparation & Readiness	Project performance was weakened by the absence of an operational inter-governmental SRAP. Bolivia has not officially approved the SRAP and is unlikely to do so. In lieu of regional partnership arrangements, the project's role gravitated from facilitation towards direct support and "gap-filling". At a national level, Argentina's Soil Conservation Directorate demonstrated high levels of preparedness to assume the project, whereas the Bolivia's NEA has had less involvement in the project. Preparation and readiness were lowest in Paraguay, where the project was not operational during the first two years. The readiness of the implementing agencies to manage this complex project also varied; UNDP was better prepared to respond to the project's needs with country presence and decentralized financial management.	**Regional: U** **Argentina: S** **Bolivia: MS** **Paraguay: U** **General Rating: 3 (MU)**
2. Project Implementation & Management	The implementation strategy was well designed and followed a logical sequence with a high degree of output-outcome linkages, as noted in the ToC analysis. However, institutional arrangements were complex and covered a broad range of dispersed pilot activities in the three countries. With limited staff, the Regional Project Coordination Unit was able to manage the project's considerable technical, administrative and logistical demands in a satisfactory manner. The PCU and country teams (following an initial phase of slow delivery, particularly in the case of Paraguay) have devoted considerable effort to the implementation of project activities and in particular the pilot initiatives of the second component. As a result and despite occasional delays or late submittals of funding requests, project delivery reached satisfactory levels towards the end of the project. However, the combination of asymmetrical implementation dynamics between countries, inadequate timelines and disbursement delays ultimately reduced the time available to systematize,	**5 (S)**

	disseminate and mainstream SLM/SFM practices at regional and national levels.	
3. Stakeholder Participation & Public Awareness	There were high levels of stakeholder participation in the approval and implementation of demonstration projects (with less participation in their design). Public awareness was a central aspect of the third component that could not be fully implemented due to time constraints. National meetings were scheduled in each country yet have only taken place in Argentina thus far; meetings are scheduled in Bolivia and Paraguay yet are presently unconfirmed. The PCU is still trying to re-schedule a regional meeting to present project results, with the participation of the focal ministers of the three countries.	**Argentina: S** **Bolivia: S** **Paraguay: S** **General Rating: 5 (S)**
4. Communications and Public Awareness	The project's design gave emphasis to the transfer and up-scaling of SLM/SFM practices under the third component –through regional/national events for dissemination and awareness raising. Public awareness and socialization were consistently promoted in the pilot sites around the demonstration projects. Unfortunately, there was less progress in the communication and dissemination of project results and best practices to "upstream" government policy levels.	**4 (MS)**
5. Country Ownership & Driven-ness	The project offered ample opportunities for country ownership and driven-ness. Country ownership among NEAs was highest in Argentina, where the Soil Conservation Directorate appropriated the project and funded the country team, and lowest in Paraguay for most of the project (with recent improvements). The Tri-National Committee did not assume the role of Project Steering Committee and did not convene during the project period. National ownership and driven-ness tended to be stronger in pilot areas in relation to the demonstration projects.	**Argentina: HS** **Bolivia: MS** **Paraguay: MU** **General Rating: 4 (MS)**
6. Financial Planning & Management	This was among the project's weaker aspects. Financial planning and management performance were affected by the project´s institutional arrangements, with (i) overlapping responsibilities and reporting requirements, (ii) and/procedures that in some cases were centralized or slow moving, (iii) recurrent disbursement and procurement processing delays at various levels, and (iv) the inherent challenges of servicing dispersed pilot activities on a regional scale. Coordination between country project offices in Bolivia and Paraguay and the PCU was difficult at times. These factors undermined the implementation of several demonstration projects as well as overall efficiency.	**3 (MU)**
7. UN Environment Supervision & Backstopping	UN Environment managed the project through a Task Manager based at its regional office. There were few field visits and limited participation in project events on the part of UN Environment. An important exception was the Task Manager's mission to Paraguay to re-activate the project in collaboration with UNDP. UN Environment's responsibilities were largely delegated to OAS-GS (Buenos Aires office) that served as regional executing agency. On three occasions there were extended delays in the transfer of funds from UN Environment-Nairobi to OAS-GS that affected disbursements. Most of the coordination by UN Environment was conducted through the annual meetings of the Directive Committee, and review of project progress/expenditure reports. There was little need for technical backstopping on SLM or SFM practices on the part of the NEAs or executing partners. However, UN Environment could have assumed a more proactive role in resolving recurrent administrative problems or streamlining management and reporting requirements between the three agencies.	**4 (MS)**
8. Monitoring and Evaluation		

a. M & E Design	A commendable aspect of project design was the importance given to M&E, with emphasis on internal monitoring by the PCU. M&E was the main focus of one of the project's components. In retrospect, the scheduling of annual field visits by the implementing agency focal points was insufficient to address the project's scale and complexity.	**6 (HS)**
b. Budgeting	A budgeted M&E Plan was incorporated to the project's design. One of the project components was devoted to monitoring, with adequate funding.	**6 (HS)**
c. M & E Plan Implementation	The M&E Plan was implemented to a high degree. One of the project components was dedicated to monitoring with adequate budget provisions. The 75 demonstration projects and TVPs were monitored on a regular basis by the country teams, PCU and Regional Coordinator, although some implementation problems were not detected in a timely manner, i.e. honey production Argentina and Paraguay, organic agriculture in Bolivia, indigenous crafts in Paraguay. The Mid-Term Review was important in re-focusing attention towards the pilot sites and indirectly contributed to improved delivery. Annual project audit requirements were not fully met by UNDP, which held two audits during the project period. All audits were internal organizational audits conducted for international agencies and did not involve the project team or NEAs. Audit data is aggregated and indicates annual expenditures without further analysis or reference to administrative or financial issues. A stronger field presence on the part of the three international agencies would have been desirable for a project of this scale and complexity, and might have helped towards mitigating recurrent administrative issues that weakened the implementation of some demonstration projects.	**5 (S)**
AVERAGE SCORE AND GENERAL PROJECT RATING:		**4.1 MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**

***Rating Scale**: 6: Highly satisfactory, 5: Satisfactory, 4: Moderately Satisfactory, 3: Moderately Unsatisfactory, 2: Unsatisfactory, 1: Highly Unsatisfactory. The ratings used for the assessment of sustainability are: 6: Highly Likely, 5: Likely, 4: Moderately Likely, 3: Moderately Unlikely, 2: Unlikely, 1: Highly Unlikely. The ratings were conducted according to instructions contained in the ToRs.*

5.2 Lessons Learned

198. ***Lesson 1:*** **The project has established a foundation of demonstrated sustainable practices that that facilitates future replication and is likely to generate impact. It is now time for the countries to move the project forward**. Although the project teams were unable to fully achieve all outcomes or the project's objective, the present situation is a considerable improvement over the pre-project baseline. The responsibility now lies with the NEAs and Gran Chaco partners to generate the momentum that is needed to move these processes forward - both horizontally to an expanding number of Chaco stakeholders, and vertically as a means to influence government policies and legislation for the region.

199. ***Lesson 2:*** **Water resources and honey production are fundamental entry points for sustainable development in the Gran Chaco**. Access to water resources is a fundamental issue throughout the Chaco, and in particular the dry forest regions that experienced severe drought during the project period. This needs to be acknowledged and addressed by any project that intends to work with local populations through participatory approaches. The conservation of water resources was the driving factor for the creation of biological corridors in Charagua and other pilot sites. Several demonstration projects and technology validations – i.e. rainwater harvesting, integrated agroforestry-pasture systems,

plastic-lined catchments, drip agriculture and water boxes - have contributed to improved water management, are highly sustainable and address a fundamental need. The allocation of funds for rainwater harvesting technologies in Argentina had a significant social impact and strengthened recipient community organization.

200. Honey production stands out as a viable sustainable development option that integrates environmental and socio-economic benefits. This carries several benefits: Greater income is likely from improved extraction processes and marketing strategies designed for wholesale and retail commercialization. Transport costs decline when honey is collected from a central location instead of from individual producers. The conservation of the forest becomes essential to sustain the supply of pollen and maintain the honey's organic quality. This in turn carries social benefits by strengthening *campesino* land tenure systems and building local organizational capacities.

201. ***Lesson 3:*** **Performance was influenced by the geographic scale and dispersion of activities, complex institutional arrangements, and unrealistic expectations.** The project's scale and complexity generated significant administrative and logistical demands. Project performance was influenced by (i) unrealistic timelines for fundamental outputs and deliverables; (ii) the difficulties of aligning national implementation processes with different governance and policy contexts; (iii) institutional arrangements that were broad and time-consuming to coordinate; (iv) the needs of 75 pilot projects spread across the tri-national region; and (iv) administrative-financial guidelines that sometimes were not sufficiently responsive to the project's needs.

202. The inclusion of over-ambitious performance targets and indicators is a common design flaw that "raises the bar" of expectations and can work against the project during assessments of project performance and impact. The project was expected to harmonize relevant policy and legal frameworks in three countries, replicate sustainable practices on a large scale, develop a shared regional development vision, mainstream SLM/SFM policies and tools at regional and national levels, and reduce carbon emissions. It was clear from empirical experience that that this level of impact was unlikely to be achieved over a five-year period, an issue that should have been addressed during the project appraisal review. Project design also overestimated the regional context: The project commenced implementation without a functional regional program or institutional framework to build on, and essentially assumed the role of the SRAP in each country. Hence the project identity was divided by the dual roles of supporting the inter-governmental SRAP initiative and actually *being* it. During the implementation period, the PCU was unable to meet with the Tri-National Commission or Council established under the Gran Chaco Declaration, despite several attempts that were not responded (because they are not operational, although the PCU was able to convoke national UNCCD focal points to the Directive Council meetings). The absence of a functional SRAP weakened the project's ability to build a common regional platform or mainstream SLM/SFM policies on a tri-national scale. When the project was approved, Bolivia had not – and still has not – ratified the SRAP. These factors are likely to account for why a follow-up regional proposal has not been presented by the three governments.

203. ***Lesson 4:*** **There are inevitable difficulties in aligning implementation processes between countries with different institutional-policy frameworks and governance cycles.** The project was unable to sustain a linear implementation process involving different national contexts. In practice it was difficult to synchronize activities in the three countries: Implementation was disrupted on several occasions by presidential elections, policy shifts and staff turnovers. The project took two years to become operational in Paraguay. In addition, the delivery of three project components with 75 dispersed pilot initiatives

generated continuous administrative and coordination demands that largely fell on the Project Coordination Unit. This had inevitable repercussions on project delivery and efficiency.

204. ***Lesson 5:*** **Cultural sensitivity is essential in designing projects and working with rural communities in the Gran Chaco**. Several demonstration projects had implementation problems because they failed to understand or adjust to the cultural or social contexts they worked in. These projects would have benefited from more field contact during their design and/or rapid social-cultural assessments by an anthropologist or social scientist. The handicrafts demonstration project implemented in a traditional Ayoreo village provided a *bromelia* plantation (the plant material used for weaving) and an initial order from Germany. This required a full-time, structured production system that was incompatible with the traditional weaving practices driven by spontaneous initiative; hence the project was not functioning when the evaluator visited the village. A nearby project for honey production also had problems after unknowingly reactivating traditional conflicts between two Guaraní bands over the use of the extraction facility (it is also possible that this was a strategy intended to leverage an additional extractor from the project). Honey producers of Chancaní in Cordoba, Argentina did not have any organizational experience; the project has now finished and they still lack an organizational structure, have not had contact with the local government, and lack an agreement for access to the honey extraction center that is located within a national park. In all cases, the underlying social and cultural variables should have been detected during the project's design or field monitoring.

205. ***Lesson 6:*** **The project´s scale and institutional complexity underscore the need to rationalize administrative arrangements and integrate/streamline procedures to the extent possible.** Implementation arrangements were complex and the participation of three international agencies raised the administrative workload. There were "diseconomies of scale" in the juxtaposition of different administrative, financial and reporting guidelines with limited options for their integration or streamlining. This was reinforced by the challenges of coordinating dispersed field activities with provincial and local partners. The lack of foresight in anticipating the administrative complexities of this project represented a flaw in design that (in the case of UN Environment and UNDP) was at odds with the *One UN* or *Delivering as One* policies that have been promoted over the years. Likewise, the inoperability of the project in Paraguay during the first two years (affected by successive changes of government and staff turnover) was below the performance standard expected from NEAs.

206. ***Lesson 7:*** **Greater national and regional ownership was discouraged to an extent by a continued reliance on the project's direct support.** The project opened country offices that were known as SRAP offices, and paid for national staff that assumed SRAP representation. Although the national executing agencies were expected to assume the costs of the national project coordinator after the second year, the country teams in Bolivia and Paraguay continued to be paid with GEF funds until the end of the project. This dependency gradually shifted the project´s focus from a supportive role towards one of direct support and 'gap filling' that further discouraged national and regional ownership of the SRAP.

207. ***Lesson 8:*** **Other project modalities might have been more effective and merited consideration at the design stage**. The challenges of delivering regional outputs and outcomes, combined with asymmetries between countries, raise questions on the comparative advantage of this project modality. It is likely that the project would have made greater progress had it been divided into separate country projects with selected regional outcomes. Another viable alternative could have involved a regional UNDP-RLA project

linking the three countries, implemented through the UNDP Country Offices and overseen by a compact regional unit. Both options would involve two instead of three international agencies, and could have simplified project administration by decentralizing operations with the advantage of direct country representation. The experience of the GEF Small Grants Programme would have offered a proven, cost-effective model for guiding the project's demonstration component. One project participant has suggested that the SRAP might have achieved greater regional presence and integrion through a closer association with the national Chancilleries. There are precedents in this respect that include the bi-national commission for the Bermejo River Basin (COBINABE) that is directly linked to the Chancilleries of Argentina and Bolivia, which served as counterpart to the GEF-UNEP-OAS project for the conservation and sustainable development of the Bermejo basin.

208. ***Lesson 8*: Based on the cumulative lessons of this project and similar initiatives, the following associated practices can improve the implementation of demonstration projects in areas with ethnic and social diversity:**

- Incorporate and promote gender equity more fully in project design and ensure that gender- disaggregated monitoring data is collected.
- Ensure that the design of pilot projects involves greater field contact and/or rapid social-cultural assessments by an anthropologist or social scientist to ensure that they are sensitive to local cultural realities and increase the chances of uptake.
- Measures should be adopted during project design and implementation to promote greater national ownership of such projects.
- Measures need to be put in place to reduce delays in the implementation of demonstration projects and therefore allow more time for upscaling and replication.
- There is need to improve regional deliverables for future projects, given that these were not achieved as effectively as the national deliverables.
- International agencies - particularly those linked to the UN system – that are contracted to
- implement or execute GEF projects need to integrate or streamline administrative/financial procedures, formats and calendars, particularly when multiple agencies are involved.
- Directive or Steering Committee with advisory and oversight functions need to meet more frequently, i.e. two or three times/year, in order to strengthen project governance and adaptive management.
- National project budgets within regional projects must include funds to encourage the replication of activities.

5.3 Recommendations

Project Recommendations:

209. ***Recommendation 1:* National executing agencies must continue to support the consolidation and dissemination of project results in order to replicate sustainable land and forest management practices on a broader scale**. The expected large-scale replication of demonstrated practices will depend on continued assistance by NEAs or new projects for the Gran Chaco. Likewise, the national executing agencies will need to promote learning and knowledge management based on the results of the 160 SFM/SLM practices that were demonstrated. The project finished operations – and closed country offices - in Bolivia

and Argentina, and will be closing soon in Paraguay. To ensure further adoption and enable a measurable regional impact on land degradation, it is essential that NEAs:

- Continue to socialize project results and hold national/regional dissemination events with NEA partners, Chaco stakeholders and interested donors or projects, as a means to encourage larger scale adoption and influence government policy levels.
- Assist the designated UPEAs technically and institutionally in assuming their role as centers for demonstration and dissemination.
- Organizing national and regional events that were planned, are still pending and are essential (at a very late stage) to make institutional contacts for continued dissemination and adoption.
- Broker agreements with programs and projects that offer "entry points" for continued replication. These include the *Bosque y Comunidad* program and native forest legislation in Argentina, the national watershed plan and related programs in Bolivia, and upcoming projects for green commodities and integrated sustainable development in Paraguay. Likewise, the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) offers a potential vehicle for extending best practices to other areas of the Gran Chaco in each country.

210. ***Recommendation 2***: **NEAs and executing partners need to continue providing technical assistance and backstopping support to the various pilot initiatives that were implemented through the project. The two year period allocated for the implementation of demonstration projects was often insufficient to generate the expected results and follow-up is needed to consolidate results.** The projects were successfully implemented with boxes and extraction equipment installed; the first harvests were expected shortly after the evaluation visit. However, there will be need for further guidance on the organizational and marketing aspects if the project is to have the expected economic impact and be sustained over time. Marketing guidance is needed for the honey demonstration projects in order to become fully operational and fulfill their considerable impact potential. It is also recommended that NEAs and other Chaco partners facilitate the international certification of organic honey, an investment that would open direct export opportunities and higher prices through fair trade networks.

211. The international agencies have a mandate to assist countries that goes beyond a 5 year project and will follow up on the technical elements that were developed to support decision making for conservation and sustainable growth. The management response to the recommendations will be followed up by UN Environment on a biannual basis in collaboration with UNDP and GS/OAS.

211. ***Recommendation 3***: **Further GEF support for the Gran Chaco's Sub-regional Action Program should be contingent on the demonstration of tangible government commitments at policy and budgetary levels.** The project has established a base that potentially offers the SRAP greater momentum on a regional scale. However, the main limiting factor continues to be government commitment. At the moment, only Argentina appears to demonstrate this commitment. There are parallel initiatives and projects in the three countries (some supported by GEF and UNEP) that could assist the dissemination of sustainable practices. Although a follow-up project for the Gran Chaco has not been proposed (either regionally or nationally), further continuity is needed to build on the progress achieved. GEF and UN Environment need to ensure that there is an operational government-driven regional program in place – or at least that the national components are functioning - before further support is considered. Future assistance should be focused on assisting ongoing national/regional initiatives and not substituting them.

GEF and Agency Recommendations:

212. ***Recommendation 4:*** **The GEF and UN Environment evaluation offices should conduct a thematic desk review of evaluated regional GEF projects that have been implemented in Latin America.** The objectives of this study would be to (i) analyze recurring issues that influence regional project performance and impact, (ii) recommend adjustments to the regional project approaches so as to address these issues, and (iii) offer inputs for the improved design of future regional GEF projects. There have been several regional GEF projects in the region over the past decade that have essentially similar approaches: In the southern cone region GEF has implemented the Bermejo Basin, Lake Titicaca, River Plate Basin and Gran Chaco projects over the past decade. All of these projects have shared an ecosystems-based approach with structural and methodological similarities. Similarly, their evaluations highlight a recurrence of common issues that have affected performance both positively and negatively. A comprehensive, in-depth desk review with selected stakeholder interviews could provide deeper insight and suggest remedial actions of interest to GEF, UN Environment, OAS, UNDP and other partner agencies. Such a study would look into design and operational issues that influence the performance of ecosystems-based regional GEF initiatives, and propose alternative approaches or modalities for consideration.

213. ***Recommendation 5:*** **GEF and UN Environment should ensure that the Terms of Reference for project audits are expanded to include an assessment of administrative and financial management practices by the project teams and implementing/executing agencies. This would be closer to a performance audit, and could help GEF agencies target problems at an early stage and apply corrective measures.** The audits conducted by UNDP and OAS provide summarized financial data that are part of the broader corporate audits that cover a wide spectrum of projects and activities. The audit information that is presented lacks any analysis or interpretation, and provides little insight into financial management or delivery issues. Neither the regional PCU, NEAs nor country teams were contacted during (or aware of) the audits, nor were the PCU's financial records or other documents considered. Future audits need to look more closely at actual financial and administrative operations in order to assess their efficiency and effect on expenditure, and propose remedial actions.

214. ***Recommendation 6:*** **GEF needs to assess the suitability of agency/institutional arrangements and resulting administrative guidelines at the project appraisal stage.** The division of implementation and execution responsibilities among three international agencies with different guidelines raised the administrative workloads for regional and country project teams significantly, distracting attention from more substantive issues. Some of the administrative guidelines that were applied were not considered optimally suited for a project that had to service a large number of dispersed, small-scale initiatives over a wide geographic area. These aspects need to be considered when appraising prospective GEF implementing or executing agencies.

215. ***Recommendation 7:*** **Future project appraisals by UN Environment should ensure that outputs, outcomes and performance indicators are realistic and achievable with the proposed timeframes.** Project timelines are often difficult to reconcile with actual processes on the ground. Several outcomes and outputs were clearly unlikely to be achieved within the five-year period, and less so on a tri-national scale. In some cases this was due to late or partial delivery of key outputs that prevented the project from achieving the *intermediate states* that precede impact. In other cases, outcome indicators were excessively ambitious in relation to the time or resources that were available. Indicators often assume that project deliverables will be applied by project partners – i.e. mainstreaming SLM/SFM

policies within governments, harmonizing national policy frameworks – when these require institutional or budgetary decisions that are outside the project's influence. For these reasons, it is important that project appraisals ensure that outputs and outcomes are achievable within approved timeframes and budgets, as achievable within the project's attributions.

Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/UNEP project "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem"

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW
Project General Information[55]

Table 1. Project summary

UNEP PIMS ID: UNDP PIMS ID:		IMIS number:	GFL-2328-2713-4B47
UNEP Sub-programme:		UNEP EA:	
UNEP approval date: UNDP approval date:	01 September 2010 (UNEP) 04 April 2011 (UNDP)		
GEF project ID:	2505	Project Type:	FSP
GEF OP #:		Focal Area(s):	LD-BD-CCM
GEF approval date:	29 September 2009	GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	
Expected Start Date:		Actual start date:	
Planned completion date:	August 2015	Actual completion date:	Under implementation
Planned project budget at approval:		Total expenditures reported as of [June 2014]:	
GEF Allocation:	USD 3,249,800 UNEP USD 3,659,291 UNDP	GEF grant expenditures reported as of [date]:	
PPG GEF cost:	USD 500,000	PPG co-financing:	USD 645,300
Expected FSP co-financing:	USD 18,370,852	Secured FSP co-financing (June 2015):	
First Disbursement:	08 September 2010 (UNEP)	Date of financial closure:	Open
No. of revisions:		Date of last revision:	
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	February 2013		
Mid-term review/ evaluation (planned date):	January 2013	Mid-term review/ evaluation (actual date):	
Terminal Evaluation (actual date):			

[55] Sources: UNEP and UNDP project documents, project identification form, project implementation review 2015.

Project rationale

1. The Gran Chaco Americano ecoregion covers approximately 1,000,000 km^2 extending to Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. The biome is comprised of different ecosystems including savannahs, wetlands and dry forests[56] and it hosts one of the largest remaining tracts of dry forests in the world and the second largest forested ecosystem outside the Amazon in South America. This area also hosts a considerable diversity of fauna and flora, including endemic species, making it an important area for biodiversity conservation. Despite its global significance, the Gran Chaco ecoregion is however faced with considerable socioeconomic and environmental challenges. The main threats have been identified as deforestation for timber, charcoal production and agricultural conversion; degradation of grasslands due to inadequate grazing management practices; fires; overdependence on forest exploitation and livestock production for livelihoods; and unsustainable management of water resources.

2. In Argentina, the Chaco is one of the largest biomes covering more than 62 million hectares and harbours considerable diversity of species, including an important number of endemics. Land use in the Argentinian Chao is mainly focused on agriculture, extensive livestock ranching and forestry, with 78% of the land owned by 4.5% of the population. A total of 11% of the Argentinian population lives in the Chaco area. Livestock ranching is mainly focused on goats and the system relies heavily on natural resource base, exceeding its carrying capacity. Agriculture, mainly cultivation of soybean, has expanded in the area partly due to new cultivation technologies and transgenic seeds adapted to dry areas. Forestry is focused on small-scale production of firewood and charcoal. According to a national inventory, the agricultural and livestock sectors in Argentina are the second most important source of greenhouse gas emissions. The deforestation rate in the Argentinian Chaco was estimated at 0.86% around 2009. Fires are a continuous problem that degrades remaining dry forests, erosion affects more than 57% of the ecosystem and forest fragmentation diminishes the health of ecosystems and its biodiversity.

3. In Bolivia, the Chaco covers 12% of the land surface and is one of the most arid ecosystems in the country. However, like the Argentinian Chaco, also the Bolivian Chaco hosts considerable biodiversity, including endemic species. Approximately 4.5% of Bolivia's population lives in the area, nearly 80% of the population is considered impoverished and the region is home to several indigenous groups. Majority of the population in the Chaco area relies on agriculture, utilizing traditional methods for ranching and farming, including direct grazing on native trees and shrubs by cattle. This generally results in degradation of vegetation and land from overgrazing. Farming covers extensive areas but is not intensive. The use of more mechanized production methods is increasing with soybean being one of the crops that is increasing in coverage. Selective logging of hardwood species and the use of non-timber forest products is common. Also fishing and hunting are important activities that supplement diets and incomes of the local populations but the activities are generally not managed and therefore unsustainable. The Bolivian Chaco has also been impacted by infrastructure development, such as petroleum production, construction of roads, dams and irrigation and drinking water intakes. The rate of forest cover loss of the Bolivian Chaco was estimated at 16% of the surface area due to land-use change around 2009, contributing to soil erosion. Also fires impact the Bolivian Chaco ecosystem. Deforestation of the Chaco ecosystem is a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, together with livestock production.

4. In Paraguay, the Chaco covers approximately 60% of the area. The area is rich in biodiversity but a considerable number of species are threatened. Population in the area is relatively low, with indigenous communities making up a large part of the population. More than 60% of the population lives under the poverty line. The main economic activities in the Paraguay Chaco are agriculture and ranching, with 30% of the country's livestock located in the Chaco region. The majority of the small farmers have plots below 20 hectares in size and covering only 7% of the arable land, whilst an estimated 77% of the arable land is included in plantations of more than 1000 hectares. The rate of

[56] Sources: UNEP project document

deforestation in the Paraguayan Chaco is high mostly contributed to clearing for agriculture and cultivation of pastures for livestock.

5. Since 1996, several agreements have been signed by Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay for regional cooperation to promote the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco. This includes the Framework Cooperation Agreement of the Sub-Regional Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of the Gran Chaco Americano (SRAP). The objective of the Framework Agreement is to "improve the socio-economic conditions of the Gran Chaco inhabitants, preserving and restoring the ecosystem through common actions for a sustainable use of natural resources, through a participative model envisaging the needs, expectations and demands of the different social stakeholders involved". A Tri-national Council and Commission were established in order to facilitate the implementation of the SRAP through supporting a more focused coordination with national and international programs operating in the Gran Chaco area, creating conditions for better involvement of the local stakeholders and the civil society in decision making and promoting actions to reduce poverty.

6. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) joint project "*Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem*" (hereafter called the Gran Chaco project) was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project was designed to reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through supporting sustainable land management in the productive landscape. The project was also planned, with the assistance of UNEP, to contribute to the development and implementation of Sub-Regional Action Programs (SAP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to facilitate the management of shared territories, native forests and hydrological resources in dry lands. In order to establish a solid foundation for sustainable forest and land management in the Gran Chaco, the project sought to establish a Regional Framework for conservation of the natural resources of the Gran Chaco. The Tri-national Council and Commission were to then ensure synergies between the National Action Programs to Combat Desertification (NAPs) and the Regional Framework, whilst facilitating the implementation of the SRAP.

7. This project was designed to complement the efforts of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay under the SRAP to overcome the most important barriers to the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco ecosystem by building upon the collective commitment of the three Governments to work together around the existing framework of the SRAP through i) mainstreaming sustainable forest management (SFM) and sustainable land management (SLM) principles into policy and legal frameworks; ii) capacity building at regional, provincial/departmental and local levels; iii) developing tools and instruments to mainstream SFM and SLM concerns into regional land use planning and decision making processes; and iv) on-the-ground investments and increased stakeholder participation to implement sustainable management practices to reduce land degradation and combat desertification contributing to poverty alleviation. The project was designed also to be fully consistent with the National Action Programs to Combat Desertification (NAP) of the three countries so as to create conditions for the sustainable development of the local population living in the area.

Project objectives and components

8. The objective of the Gran Chaco project was to *reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through supporting sustainable land management in the productive landscape*. The overall environmental benefits from the project were described in the project documents (UNEP and UNDP) to be reduced rates of deforestation, increased regeneration of native vegetation and strengthening of conservation areas and biological corridors, contributing to recovery of ecosystem functions and services, namely soil fertility, availability of water resources, CO_2 balance, habitats and plant and animal species, ecosystem carrying capacities and consequently recovery of ecosystem resilience. Further, the achievement of these environmental benefits was to contribute to reduced poverty and improved livelihoods. The project documents include a logical framework for the regional component, as well as separate logical frameworks for each of the three countries. Table 2 presents project outcomes and outputs as defined in the project document narratives.

Table 2. Project outcomes and outputs as defined in the UNEP and UNDP project documents

Component 1. Institutional strengthening (GEF US$ 1,871,514)	
Outcomes	Outputs
1.1 Institutional capacities have been strengthened at regional, national and local levels to formulate and apply normative frameworks and practices available for SFM and SLM (with increased budgetary allocations or investments), taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables.	Regional Outputs • A proposal for a regional Gran Chaco strategic vision and policy integrating SFM/SLM, BD and CC issues developed. • Regional collaboration and coordination mechanisms strengthened. Country outputs • SRAP local offices implemented in Argentina (Santiago del Estero), Bolivia (?) and Paraguay (Asunción). • Strengthening of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms that ensure the participation of the main stakeholder groups in decision making processes, especially indigenous peoples and peasants. • SLM, SFM, BD and CC policy and legal frameworks completed and harmonized in each country. • Capacity building programs targeting SLM and SFM technical and financial instruments developed and implemented.
1.2. SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices have been developed and mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels, taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables.	Regional Outputs • Gran Chaco GIS and database developed and functioning. • A set of common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments. • Coordination strategy among the early warning systems for extreme climatic events and wild fires established. • Sustainable traditional and new SLM and SFM technologies identified and systematized, including indigenous knowledge. • Sustainable management manual for the Chaco. Country Outputs • Information systems strengthened. • Economically and environmentally sound unit compatible with SLM and SFM defined for the different sub-regions. • Environmental services identified and valued. • Strategies and action plans for development and implementation of land zoning plans. • Land use change monitoring methodologies and instruments by means of permanent field plots to measure desertification processes, erosion, salinization, regeneration of the native vegetation among other criteria. • Strategies for economic incentives and benefit-sharing for conservation and alternative uses of forests and sustainable use of biodiversity developed.
Component 2. Field application of SFM and SLM protocols (GEF US$ 3,842,428)	
2.1 A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity is strengthened through SFM and SLM activities.	Country Outputs • Technical studies and proposals for establishment of new conservation areas. • Protected areas strengthened through management plans. • Economic incentives for biodiversity conservation

	and sustainable use in private lands developed.
2.2 CO_2 is captured and emissions avoided through SFM and SLM practices.	• CO_2 balance model and carbon stocks measured and monitored.
2.3 By the end of the project, the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied reach a critical threshold which, in the absence of major institutional barriers, allows the further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining.	Regional Outputs • Criteria for design, implementation and M&E of technology validation projects and demonstration projects. • Technology validation projects and demonstration projects evaluated and results systematized. Country Outputs • Technology validation and research projects designed and implemented. • Demonstration projects in pilot sites designed and implemented. • Support programs to cover transition costs to SLM and SFM practices implemented in the demonstration sites.
Component 3. Exit strategy (GEF US$ 663,490)	
3.1 The end of the project leaves in place a mechanism to ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco.	Regional Outputs • Regional and national events for dissemination of results/lessons learnt and exchange of experiences. • Integration and adoption of regional vision, policy, SFM/SLM best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the SRAP Chaco. Country Outputs • Replication and up-scaling of best practices through awareness-raising and dissemination of findings across the Chaco region. • Integration and adoption of best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the NAPs to combat desertification and public policies for the development of the Gran Chaco in each one of the three countries.
Component 4. Project management (GEF US$ 609,909)	
Component 5. Monitoring and evaluation (GEF US$ 281,750)	

9. The purpose of the demonstration projects was to showcase that the alternative sustainable management practices to be promoted are feasible and cost-effective and that a greater benefit will be attained with their adoption compared to the conventional practices. They were implemented in Argentina (Chancani in the Department of Pocho, Province of Cordoba; Santos Lugares and Garza, Province of Santiago del Estero; Riacho Teuguito Biosphere Reserve, Province of Formosa; and Teuco-Bermejito, Province of Chaco), in Bolivia (Charagua; Yacuiba; Monteagudo; and Villamontes) and in Paraguay (three sites in the Central Chaco, Department of Boqueron). According to the project documents, the demonstration projects were to include a series of interventions covering sustainable forest, agricultural, livestock and water management, rehabilitation of degraded areas, diversification of production, training and awareness raising. The demonstration projects were to promote the adoption of best practices already proven to be successful in preventing and reversing land degradation in the region, including crop residue management, minimum and zero tillage, green manure, crop rotation, pasture and stock density management, native forest management, silvo-pastoral management, forest enrichment and regeneration, afforestation and water management.

Executing Arrangements

10. The full-sized GEF funded project was jointly implemented by UNEP and UNDP, UNEP being the lead implementing agency. The responsibilities over project activities were to be distributed according to comparative advantages of the respective agencies but so that the agencies were to work in close collaboration. UNEP was to be in charge with implementation of the regional component, including project management and monitoring and evaluation, and at the country level of the development of SFM and SLM tools and instruments. UNDP was to be in charge of implementing the country based activities, including institutional strengthening at the country level and implementation of the demonstrations.

Table 3. Distribution of project responsibilities between UNEP and UNDP

Project Components / Outcomes	Implementing Agency	
Component 1. Institutional strengthening		
Outcome 1.1 Institutional capacities	UNEP	UNDP
Outcome 1.2 SFM/SLM tools and instruments	UNEP	
Component 2. Field application of SFM and SLM protocols		
Outcome 2.1 Priority areas for biodiversity		UNDP
Outcome 2.2 CO_2 captured and emissions avoided	UNEP	
Outcome 2.3 SFM and SLM practices		UNDP
Component 3. Project exit strategy		
Outcome 3.1 Sustainability mechanisms	UNEP	
Component 4. Project management		
Project management	UNEP	
Component 5. Monitoring and evaluation		
Monitoring and evaluation	UNEP	

11. The project management structure was comprised of the Tri-national Commission, Executive Committee and local coordination mechanisms.

12. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was to be comprised of the Tri-National Commission established under the Framework Cooperation Agreement between Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, made up of by representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the UNCCD Focal Points of each country and representatives of UNEP and UNDP. The PSC was to meet at least once a year to oversee project implementation and monitor project progress, to provide strategic and policy guidance and to review and approve annual workplans and budgets.

13. The local coordination mechanism (Federal Environment Council of Argentina (COFEMA), Association of Municipalities of the Bolivian Chaco (MANCHABOL) and SRAP Technical Steering Committee) was to ensure adequate planning and implementation of activities in line with the project objectives and local development and stakeholder priorities, as well as complementarity with on-going and planned programs and projects. According to the project document, both the regional and country inter-institutional coordination mechanisms were to be closely linked, ensuring that stakeholder concerns are up-streamed into higher project management levels (Executive Committee and Tri-national Commission).

14. The project was to be co-executed by the Secretariat for Environment and Sustainable Development (SAyDS) of Argentina, the Vice-ministry of Watersheds and Water Resources (VMCRH) of Bolivia and the Environment Secretariat (SEAM) of Paraguay as UNCCD Focal Points. The SAyDS was to

assume the role of lead executing agency and the project's Regional Director was to be appointed by the executing agencies. According to the project documents, the executing agencies were to meet twice a year and to have responsibilities including jointly selecting, with UNEP and UNDP, the staff for the PCU, planning and monitoring the technical aspects of the project, participating in project activities and maintaining close communication and consultations with project stakeholders.

15. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) was to be established within the SAyDS. The PCU was to work under the overall supervision of the Regional Project Director and to be responsible for day-to-day project coordination and management.

Project Cost and Financing

16. The total project cost at design was US$ 25,970,852, from which US$ 6,909,091was GEF funds (US$ 3,249,800 through UNEP and US$ 3,659,291 through UNDP), and US$ 18,370,853 was co-financing. By June 2014 the actual project expenditure at UNEP was US$ 1,131,736. By June 2014, the total realized co-financing was US$ 4,200,000.

17. Table 4. Cost of the project (source: project documents)

Cost of the Project	US$	Percentage
Cost to the GEF Trust Fund	7,600,000	29.3%
Co-financing		
Cash		
National Government	5,542,000	21.3%
Sub-total	5,542,000	21.3%
In-kind		
National Government	12,828,852	49.4%
Sub-total	12,828,852	49.4%
Co-finance Total	18,370,853	
Total	25,970,852	100%

18. Table 5. Distribution of GEF funds to UNEP and UNDP (source: project documents)

Implementing Agency	GEF Funds (US$)	Percentage of share
UNEP	3,249,800	47%
UNDP	3,659,291	53%

Table 6. Total project co-financing (source: project documents)

Co-financing source	Cash	%	In-Kind	%	Total	%
SAyDS Argentina	3,400,000	18.51	7,000,000	38.10	10,400,000	56,6
VMCRH Bolivia	1,400,000	7,62	3,100,000	16.87	4,500,000	24.5
SEAM Paraguay	742,000	40.4	2,728,852	14.85	3,470,852	18.9
Total co-financing:	5,542,000	30	12,828,852	70	18,370,852	100

Implementation Issues

19. The project document identified the following risks that could affect successful implementation of the project (i) Lack of coordination at national, province/department and municipal levels; excessive bureaucracy to allow for smooth project implementation, (ii) human resources constraints, lack of qualification and frequent mobilization of personnel in public institutions. Lack of knowledge on local customs and traditions, (iii) financial constraints, lack of sufficient allocation of resources on a timely fashion and excessive bureaucracy to be complied with for disbursement, (iv) lack of stakeholder willingness to participate and shift to sustainable management practices, low education and capacity levels to adopt sustainable management within a reasonable period within life of project, (v) unfavourable weather conditions may delay implementation of project activities and slow down

adoption of sustainable management practices by affecting, i.e. access to communities and project sites, temporary displacement of stakeholders in affected areas, and changes in priorities of institutions, producers and other stakeholders.

20. The project underwent a mid-term review (MTR) in September 2014, which reported considerable delays in project initiation and implementation resulting in outputs not being delivered according to the workplan. The main recommendation the MTR provided in order to address the delays was to prioritize the delivery of demonstration projects in all three countries as the first stage and to complete the delivery of the biodiversity and carbon – outputs as a subsequent stage. In the Project Implementation Review (PIR) 2015 the project has rated its overall success as moderately satisfactory, going up from the moderately unsatisfactory rating of the previous years of implementation.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

21. In line with the UNEP[57] and UNDP[58] Evaluation Policies the terminal evaluation of the UNEP and UNDP joint project *Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem* is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, UNDP and the GEF. Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation.

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

(a) To what extent has the project strengthened institutional capacities at regional, national and local levels so that lack of capacity is no longer a barrier to the adoption of SFM and SLM? Is the capacity enhancement sustainable?

(b) Do the developed SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices adequately incorporate considerations of climate change and biodiversity conservation? Are they mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels and will their application and implementation be sustainable?

(c) Has the project increased the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied? How likely is it that due to the increased number of produces and area, further adoption of SFM and SLM practices becomes self-sustaining? Has the project established adequate mechanisms that ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco?

(d) Was the approach adopted by the project adequate and best possible to support sustainable forest management in the Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem? What was the strength of the project and what could it have done better?

Overall Approach and Methods

23. The terminal evaluation of the project *Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem* will be conducted by an independent consultant under the overall responsibility and management of the UNEP Evaluation Office in consultation with the UNEP and UNDP Task Managers, UNDP Evaluation function and UNEP GEF Coordination Office.

24. It will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders (including UNEP, UNDP, and the executing partners) are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. The evaluation will promote information exchange throughout the evaluation implementation in order to increase the project stakeholders' ownership of the evaluation findings.

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

(a) A **desk review** of (but not limited to):

[57] http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx

[58] http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia UNEP and UNDP programme documents (UNEP MTS 2010-2013 and 2014-2017 with the respective Programmes of Work, UNDP Strategic Plans for 2010-2013 and 2014-2017), the relevant UNDAF documents for Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay; documents of the STRAP Framework Agreement; National level policy instruments such as Argentina's National Programme for Climate Scenarios, Bolivia's National Climate change Adaptation Mechanism and Paraguay's 2008-2012 Climate Change Plan;
- UNEP and UNDP project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); annual work plans and budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project document, the logical framework and its budget and possible revisions;
- Project reports such as PIRs, six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence etc.;
- Documentation on project outputs;
- Mid-term review of the project;
- Evaluations/reviews / other documentation of similar projects, such as projects implemented within the framework of the SRAP and other regional and national initiatives implemented in the Chaco and other similar projects funded by the GEF with which the Gran Chaco project was to have coordinated actions.

(b) **Interviews (individual or in group) with** (but not limited to):

- UNEP Task Manager and Fund Management Officer;
- UNDP Regional Technical Advisor and UNDP County Office staff;
- The Regional Project Director and other Members of the Project Coordination team;
- Members of the Project Steering Committee;
- Relevant staff at the project executing agencies SAyDS, VMCRH and SEAM;
- Members of the communities of the project demonstration sites, including representatives of indigenous groups, women's groups, producers, peasants, small and large landowners;
- Project's regional stakeholders, including members of the STRAP Tri-national Council and the Tri-national Commission, members of the Tri-national Indigenous Commission of the Chaco;
- Project's national stakeholders, including relevant government agencies in the three countries, CCD National Focal Points, NGOs, Universities and other science organizations, and private sector such as producers' associations;
- Key project staff implementing similar initiatives in the region, including staff of other UN agencies such as FAO.

(c) The evaluation consultant will visit Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay including meeting the government representatives and other relevant stakeholders in the capitals and visiting all project demonstration sites; Argentina – (i) Chancani in the Department of Pocho, Province of Cordoba, (ii) Santos Lugares and Garza, Province of Santiago del Estero, (iii) Riacho Teuguito Biosphere Reserve, Province of Formosa, (iv) Teuco-Bermejito, Province of Chaco; Bolivia (i) Charagua, (ii) Yacuiba, (iii) Monteagudo, (iv) Villamontes; Paraguay (i) three sites in the Central Chaco, Department of Boqueron.

(d) The evaluation can conduct surveys or apply other tools to collect evidence to support the evaluation. A detailed description of the evaluation methods will be provided in the Evaluation Inception Report.

Key Evaluation principles

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

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

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

29. **Baselines and counterfactuals**. In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, the evaluator should consider the difference between *what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. It also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the evaluator, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the evaluator to make informed judgements about project performance.

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

31. A ToC is best presented as a narrative accompanied by a diagram. A diagram is often useful to show an overview of the causal pathways, the cause-to-effect relationship between different results / changes, and where the drivers and assumption intervene along the results pathways. It is also a great tool for discussing the ToC with project stakeholders. The narrative, however, will explain how or why one result is expected to lead to another, and should also present the roles of the main stakeholders in the change processes and how they can be affected by the changes resulting from the project intervention.

32. The evaluation will reconstruct the ToC of the project at design and at evaluation, based on a review of project documentation and stakeholder interviews. Verifying, amending and updating the problem analysis at the origin of the project will be an essential first step in reconstructing the ToC. The evaluator is expected to discuss the problem analysis and reconstructed ToC with key stakeholders during evaluation missions and/or interviews in order to ascertain his/her understanding of the project context, the impact pathways, the roles of various stakeholders and the validity of drivers and assumptions described in the ToC. Annex 9 proposes an approach for reconstructing the ToC of a project at design and at evaluation.

33. **The "Why?" Question.** As this is a terminal evaluation, particular attention should be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the "*Why?*" question should be at the front of the consultant's mind all through the evaluation exercise. This means that the consultant needs to go beyond the assessment of "*what*" the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "*why*" the performance was as it was. This would include reviewing the Theory of Change of the project and the processes affecting attainment of project results (criteria under category F – see below). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project. In fact,

the usefulness of the evaluation will be determined to a large extent by the capacity of the consultant to explain "*why things happened*" as they happened and are likely to evolve in this or that direction, which goes well beyond the mere review of "*where things stand*" at the time of evaluation.

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

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

Evaluation criteria

Strategic relevance

36. The evaluation will assess whether the project's objectives and implementation strategies were consistent with global, regional and national environmental issues and needs. The evaluation will assess the project's consistency with the NAPs to combat desertification of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, as well as the SRAP Framework.

37. The evaluation will assess whether the project was in-line with the GEF Land Degradation, Biodiversity and Climate Change focal areas' strategic priorities and operational programme(s). The evaluation will also assess the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's and UNDP's mandates and its alignment with UNEP's and UNDP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval and verify the alignment of the project with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and Programmes of Work (PoW)[59], and with UNDP's Strategic Plan. The evaluation will briefly discuss the comparative advantage of the two agencies in the project.

38. The evaluation should also provide a brief narrative of the following:

1. *Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP)*[60]. The outcomes and achievements of the project should be briefly discussed in relation to the objectives of the UNEP BSP.
2. *Gender balance*. Ascertain to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation. Are the project intended results contributing to the realization of international Gender Equality (GE) norms and agreements as reflected in the UNEP's Gender Policy and Strategy, as well as to regional, national and local strategies to advance gender equity?
3. *Human rights based approach (HRBA) and inclusion of indigenous people's issues, needs and concerns*. Ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding

[59] UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes [known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs)] of the sub-programmes. Programmes of Work are biennial planning documents that set out, for each sub-programme (SP), the desired outcomes (known as Expected Accomplishments) and outputs. Programme Framework documents are prepared for each sub-programme and present the overall sub-programme's Theory of Change.

[60] http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf

on HRBA. Ascertain if the project is in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and pursued the concept of free, prior and informed consent.

4. *South-South Cooperation.* This is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries. Briefly describe any aspects of the project that could be considered as examples of South-South Cooperation.
5. *Safeguards*. Whether the project has adequately considered environmental, social and economic risks and established whether they were vigilantly monitored. Was the safeguard management instrument completed and were GEF environmental, social and economic safeguards (ESES) requirements complied with?

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

Achievement of Outputs

40. The evaluation will assess, for each component, the projects' success in producing the programmed outputs (products and services delivered by the project itself) and milestones as per the project document and any modifications/revisions later on during project implementation, both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness.

41. While the assessment of achievement of outputs should cover all programmed outputs at design and those outputs added by possible project revisions, it is often impossible to assess all project outputs with the same level of detail. The reconstructed ToC can be used to determine what project outputs are most essential for achieving the project outcomes, and also to establish the minimum characteristics and quality requirements for the project outputs so that they can provide their expected contribution to the project outcomes. The assessment of the achievement of outputs can then focus on the most critical outputs, and verify whether these meet the requisite characteristics and quality.

42. The evaluation should briefly explain the reasons behind the success (or shortcomings) of the project in producing its different outputs and meeting expected quality standards, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F (which covers the processes affecting attainment of project results). Were key stakeholders appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs to promote their ownership and use?

Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results

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

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

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

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

(a) Evaluation of the **achievement of outcomes as defined in the reconstructed ToC**. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result of project outputs.

(b) Assessment of the **likelihood of impact** using a Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) approach[61]. The evaluation will assess to what extent the project has to date contributed, and is likely in the future to further contribute, to the intermediate states, and the likelihood that those changes in turn to lead to positive changes in the natural resource base, benefits derived from the environment and human well-being. The evaluation will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead to unintended negative effects (project documentation relating to Environmental, Social and Economic. Safeguards). In order for the evaluation to meet UNDP requirements for impact assessment, the evaluation will also specifically assess whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, or 3) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements. The reconstructed ToC will be used as a basis of the assessment and the evaluation will provide a rating for these three criteria.

(c) Evaluation of the **achievement of the formal project overall objective, overall purpose, goals and component outcomes** using the project's own results statements as presented in the Project Document[62]. This sub-section will refer back where applicable to the preceding sub-sections (a) and (b) to avoid repetition in the report. To measure achievement, the evaluation will use as much as appropriate the indicators for achievement proposed in the Logical Framework (Logframe) of the project, adding other relevant indicators as appropriate. Briefly explain what factors affected the project's success in achieving its objectives, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F. Most commonly, the overall objective is a higher level result to which the project is intended to contribute. The section will describe the actual or likely **contribution** of the project to the objective.

(d) The evaluation should, where possible, disaggregate outcomes and impacts for the key project stakeholders. It should also assess the extent to which human rights and gender equity were integrated in the Theory of Change and results framework of the intervention and to what degree participating institutions/organizations changed their policies or practices thereby leading to the fulfilment of human rights and gender equity principles (e.g. new services, greater responsiveness, resource re-allocation, etc.).

Sustainability and replication

47. Sustainability is understood as the probability of continued long-term project-derived results and impacts after the external project funding and assistance ends. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of benefits. Some of these factors might be direct results of the project while others will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not under control of the project but that may condition the sustainability of benefits. The evaluation will ascertain that the project has put in place an appropriate exit strategy and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability.

48. The evaluation consultant can use the ToC to see whether sustainability has been built into the impact pathways and whether the necessary drivers and assumptions (external factors and conditions) affecting sustainability have been adequately considered in the project's intervention logic. The evaluator should assess how likely the sustainability of direct outcomes is, and what the relative importance is of the direct outcomes to sustain higher level changes. Indeed, as outcomes relate most often to individual and institutional capacity building, they are often by themselves expected to ensure sustainability. For instance, a set of new regulations could be at the basis of a lasting change in how a natural resource is being managed. In addition to looking at the direct outcomes, the evaluation consultant will further assess sustainability of changes at intermediate state and impact levels by

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

[62] Or any subsequent **formally approved** revision of the project document or logical framework.

verifying the presence of drivers and validity of assumptions that affect sustainability of higher level results, considering their relative importance. Many drivers and assumptions required for progressing along the causal pathways from outputs to impact are also required for sustaining positive changes. Those external factors affecting sustainability are categorized in socio-political factors, financial factors, institutional factors and environmental factors:

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

(b) *Financial resources.* To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources[63] will be or will become available to use capacities built by the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?

(c) *Institutional framework.* To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behaviour and environmental resources, goods or services?

(d) *Environmental sustainability.* Are there any environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits? Are there any foreseeable negative environmental impacts that may occur as the project results are being up-scaled?

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

(a) *catalysed behavioural changes* in terms of use and application, by the relevant stakeholders, of capacities developed;

(b) provided *incentives* (social, economic, market based, competencies etc.) to contribute to catalysing changes in stakeholder behaviour;

(c) contributed to *institutional changes*, for instance institutional uptake of project-demonstrated technologies, practices or management approaches;

(d) contributed to *policy changes* (on paper and in implementation of policy);

(e) contributed to sustained follow-on financing (*catalytic financing*) from governments, private sector, donors etc.;

(f) created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions ("*champions*") to catalyse change (without which the project would not have achieved all of its results).

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

50. *Replication* is defined as the repetition of project approaches or application of project lessons in different geographic locations, while *up-scaling* is defined as the repetition of project approaches or application of project lessons in the same area, but on a much larger scale. Both replication and up-scaling should be undertaken by other actors and be funded by other sources than the project itself.

51. ToC analysis can help with the assessment of replication and up-scaling potential of an intervention in a similar way it can help with the assessment of sustainability, except that here, the evaluator should focus on those direct outcomes, drivers and assumptions that are most necessary for replication and up-scaling of project results. The evaluation consultant can thus use the ToC to see whether replication and up-scaling have been built into the causal pathways and whether the necessary drivers and assumptions (external factors and conditions) promoting replication and up-scaling have been adequately considered in the project's intervention logic. To assess the likelihood of replication and up-scaling, the evaluator will assess the relative importance of direct outcomes, drivers and assumptions for enabling replication and up-scaling, and verify to what extent the most influential ones have been achieved or are present. The reliability of this assessment can be enhanced by looking for early evidence of replication or up-scaling during the project lifetime.

Efficiency

52. The evaluation will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. It will describe any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project as far as possible in achieving its results within its secured budget and time. It will also analyse how delays, if any, have affected project execution, costs and effectiveness. Wherever possible, costs and time over results ratios of the project will be compared with that of other similar interventions. The evaluation will also assess the extent to which human rights and gender equity were allocated specific and adequate budget in relation to the results achieved.

53. The evaluation will give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects to increase project efficiency. The evaluation will assess the extent collaboration has been sought and realised with the various other initiatives implemented in the Chaco ecosystem, including other GEF funded projects and projects implemented under the SRAP Framework.

Factors and processes affecting project performance

54. **Preparation and readiness**. This criterion focuses on the quality of project design and preparation. Were project stakeholders[64] adequately identified and were they sufficiently involved in project development and ground truthing e.g. of proposed timeframe and budget? Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe? Are potentially negative environmental, economic and social impacts of projects identified? Were the capacities of executing agencies properly considered when the project was designed? Was the project document clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project implementation? Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities) and enabling legislation assured? Were adequate project management arrangements in place? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design? What factors influenced the quality-at-entry of the project design, choice of partners, allocation of financial resources etc.? Were any design weaknesses mentioned in the Project Review Committee minutes at the time of project approval adequately addressed?

55. The ToC can be used to assess several aspects of project design, and, as a result, for assessing how well stakeholders were likely involved during project design processes. The UNEP Programme Manual recommends that all projects are designed on the basis of a thorough situation analysis with the development of a problem tree. This problem tree should then be used by the designers to develop

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

the ToC of the project, by inverting problems into positive changes and conditions, and determining which changes and conditions the project will focus on. The necessary changes and conditions that are not part of the project's focus should then be considered as external factors affecting impact (either drivers or assumptions).

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

(g) Ascertain to what extent the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document have been followed and were effective in delivering project milestones, outputs and outcomes. Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?
(h) Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of project management and how well the management was able to adapt to changes during the life of the project.
(i) Assess the role and performance of the teams and working groups established and the project execution arrangements at all levels.
(j) Assess the extent to which project management responded to the direction and guidance provided by the UNEP and UNDP Task Managers and project steering bodies;
(k) Identify operational and political / institutional problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how the project tried to overcome these problems.

57. The ToC can help understand the exact role of the project management team in delivering the project outputs and pushing change along the different causal pathways. The evaluation consultant can further assess whether the project team has put sufficient effort in promoting the drivers presented in the reconstructed ToC. Also, a comparison of the ToC at design and the reconstructed ToC can help assess adaptive management by the project to respond to a changing context and react to invalid assumptions.

58. **Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships.** The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation with external stakeholders and partners. The term stakeholder should be considered in the broadest sense, encompassing both project partners and target users of project products. The ToC and stakeholder analysis should assist the evaluators in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathways from activities to achievement of outputs, outcomes and intermediate states towards impact. The assessment will look at three related and often overlapping processes: (1) information dissemination to and between stakeholders, (2) consultation with and between stakeholders, and (3) active engagement of stakeholders in project decision making and activities. The evaluation will specifically assess:

(a) The approach(es) and mechanisms used to identify and engage stakeholders in project design and at critical stages of project implementation. What were the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches with respect to the project's objectives and the stakeholders' motivations and capacities?
(b) How was the overall collaboration between the different functional units involved in the project? What coordination mechanisms were in place? Were the incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP adequate?
(c) Was the level of involvement of UNEP's Regional, Liaison and Out-posted Offices in project design, planning, decision-making and implementation of activities appropriate?
(d) Has the project made full use of opportunities for collaboration with other projects and programmes including opportunities not mentioned in the project document? Have complementarities been sought, synergies been optimized and duplications avoided?
(e) What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during design and

implementation of the project? This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report.

(f) To what extent has the project been able to take up opportunities for joint activities, pooling of resources and mutual learning with other organisations and networks? In particular, how useful are partnership mechanisms and initiatives to build stronger coherence and collaboration between participating organisations?

(g) How did the relationship between the project and the collaborating partners (institutions and individual experts) develop? Which benefits stemmed from their involvement for project performance, for UNEP, UNDP and for the stakeholders and partners themselves? Do the results of the project (strategic programmes and plans, monitoring and management systems, sub-regional agreements etc.) promote participation of stakeholders, including users, in environmental decision making?

59. The evaluation consultant can refer to the ToC to verify whether it includes an approach for sharing information and cooperation with partners, national/local project stakeholders and across UNEP and UNDP. Also, the ToC, stakeholder analysis and partner analysis should assist the evaluator in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathways from activities to achievement of outputs, outcomes and intermediate states towards impact, and should help to answer many of the questions asked above.

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

61. **Country ownership and driven-ness.** The evaluation will assess the degree and effectiveness of involvement of government / public sector agencies in the project, in particular those involved in project execution and those participating in the Project Board:

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

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

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

(a) Verify the application of proper standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) and timeliness of financial planning, management and reporting to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners;

(b) Assess other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. to the extent that these might have influenced project performance;

(c) Present the extent to which co-financing has materialised as expected at project approval. Report country co-financing to the project overall, and to support project activities at the national level in particular. The evaluation will provide a breakdown of final actual costs and co-financing for the different project components (see tables in Annex 4).

(d) Describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective. Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of

approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector.

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

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

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

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

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

(a) *M&E Design*. The evaluator should use the following questions to help assess the M&E design aspects:
- Arrangements for monitoring: Did the project have a sound M&E plan to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives? Have the responsibilities for M&E activities been clearly defined between UNEP and UNDP and the executing agencies? Were the data sources and data collection instruments appropriate? Was the time frame for various M&E activities specified? Was the frequency of various monitoring activities specified and adequate?
- How well was the project logical framework (original and possible updates) designed as a planning and monitoring instrument?
- SMART-ness of indicators: Are there specific indicators in the logframe for each of the project objectives? Are the indicators measurable, attainable (realistic) and relevant to the objectives? Are the indicators time-bound?
- Adequacy of baseline information: To what extent has baseline information on performance indicators been collected and presented in a clear manner? Was the methodology for the baseline data collection explicit and reliable? For instance, was there adequate baseline information on pre-existing accessible information on global and regional environmental status and trends, and on the costs and benefits of different policy options for the different target audiences? Was there sufficient information about the assessment capacity of collaborating institutions and experts etc. to determine their training and technical support needs?
- To what extent did the project engage key stakeholders in the design and implementation of monitoring? Which stakeholders were involved? If any stakeholders were excluded, what was the reason for this? Was sufficient information collected on specific indicators to measure progress on human rights and gender equity (including sex-disaggregated data)?

- Did the project appropriately plan to monitor risks associated with Environmental Economic and Social Safeguards?
- Arrangements for evaluation: Have specific targets been specified for project outputs? Has the desired level of achievement been specified for all indicators of objectives and outcomes? Were there adequate provisions in the legal instruments binding project partners to fully collaborate in evaluations?
- Budgeting and funding for M&E activities: Determine whether support for M&E was budgeted adequately and was funded in a timely fashion during implementation.

(b) *M&E Plan Implementation*. The evaluation will verify that:

- The M&E system was operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period;
- PIR reports were prepared (the realism of the Task Manager's assessments will be reviewed)
- Half-yearly Progress and Financial Reports were complete and accurate;
- Risk monitoring (including safeguard issues) was regularly documented;
- The information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.

67. The ToC of the project can help with assessing the quality of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, and how information gathered by the M&E system was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensuring sustainability, replication and up-scaling. More specifically, the assessment of the ToC at design and the reconstructed ToC can help with the assessment of the quality of the logical framework (original and possible updates) as a planning and monitoring instrument. The quality of the ToC can also be very telling about the adequacy of baseline information, for instance on the problem context, lessons learned from previous experience on what works and doesn't work and the capacity of partners.

68. The evaluator can compare the ToC at design and the reconstructed ToC to verify whether monitoring and mid-term review findings have been used to bring possible adjustments to the project focus, increase attention on key drivers and put in place measures to deal with possible false assumptions, in other words whether the information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.

The Evaluation Consultant

69. This evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluation consultant. The evaluation consultant should have ten years of technical / evaluation experience, including experience in evaluating GEF funded projects and using a theory of change approach. The consultant should have a good understanding of the Gran Chaco ecosystem, sustainable land management, sustainable forest management and sustainable management of water resources. Details about the specific qualifications and responsibilities of the consultant are presented in Annex 1 of these ToRs.

Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

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

71. It is expected that a large portion of the desk review will be conducted during the inception phase. It will be important to acquire a good understanding of the project context, design and process at this stage. The inception report will present a draft, desk-based reconstructed theory of change of the project. It is vital to reconstruct the ToC *before* most of the data collection (review of progress reports, in-depth interviews, surveys etc.) is done, because the ToC will define which direct outcomes,

drivers and assumptions of the project need to be assessed and measured – based on which indicators – to allow adequate data collection for the evaluation of project effectiveness, likelihood of impact and sustainability. The inception report will also include a stakeholder analysis and a review of project design. The evaluation framework will present in further detail the overall evaluation approach. It will specify for each evaluation question under the various criteria what the respective indicators and data sources will be. The evaluation framework should summarize the information available from project documentation against each of the main evaluation parameters. Any gaps in information should be identified and methods for additional data collection, verification and analysis should be specified. Evaluations/reviews of other large assessments can provide ideas about the most appropriate evaluation methods to be used.

72. Effective communication strategies help stakeholders understand the results and use the information for organisational learning and improvement. While the evaluation is expected to result in a comprehensive document, content is not always best shared in a long and detailed report; this is best presented in a synthesised form using any of a variety of creative and innovative methods. The evaluator is encouraged to make use of multimedia formats in the gathering of information, such as video, photos, sound recordings. Together with the full report, the evaluator will be expected to produce a two-page summary of key findings and lessons. A template for this has been provided in Annex 10.

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

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

75. **The main evaluation report** should be brief (no longer than 40 pages – excluding the executive summary and annexes), to the point and written in plain English. The main evaluation report will also be provided in Spanish. The report will follow the annotated table of contents outlined in Annex 2. It must explain the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used (with their limitations). The report will present evidence-based and balanced findings, consequent conclusions, lessons and recommendations, which will be cross-referenced to each other. The report should be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. Any dissident views in response to evaluation findings will be appended in footnote or annex as appropriate. To avoid repetitions in the report, the authors will use numbered paragraphs and make cross-references where possible.

76. **Review of the draft evaluation report**. The evaluation consultant will submit a zero draft report to the UNEP Evaluation Office (EOU) and revise the draft following the comments and suggestions made by the EOU. Once a draft of adequate quality has been accepted, the EOU will share this first draft report with the UNEP and UNDP Task Managers, who will alert the EOU in case the report would contain any blatant factual errors. The UNEP Evaluation Office will then forward the first draft report to the other project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. It is also very important that stakeholders provide feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Comments would be expected within two weeks after the draft report has been shared. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to the UNEP EOU for collation. The EOU will provide the comments to the evaluation consultant for consideration in preparing the final draft report, along with its own views.

77. The evaluation consultant will submit the final draft report no later than two weeks after reception of stakeholder comments. The consultant will prepare a **response to comments**, listing those comments not or only partially accepted by them that could therefore not or only partially be accommodated in the final report (see Annex 11 for UNDP-GEF evaluation audit trail template). The consultant will explain why those comments have not or only partially been accepted, providing evidence as required. This response to comments will be shared by the EOU with the interested stakeholders to ensure full transparency. The audit trail will be annexed to the main evaluation report.

78. **Submission of the final evaluation report.** The final report shall be submitted by e-mail to the evaluation manager at the UNEP Evaluation Office who will share the report with the Director of the UNEP Evaluation Office and the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office will finalize the report and share it with the interested Divisions and Sub-programme Coordinators in UNEP. The final evaluation report will be published on the UNEP Evaluation Office web-site www.unep.org/eou.

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

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

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

Logistical arrangements

82. This terminal evaluation will be undertaken by an independent evaluation consultant contracted by the UNEP Evaluation Office. The consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Evaluation Office and will consult with the EOU on any procedural and methodological matters related to the evaluation. It is, however, the consultant's individual responsibility to obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, plan for her/his travel in coordination with the Evaluation Office, arrange for her/his travel visa, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP and UNDP Task Managers and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings, assistance in demonstration site visits etc.) allowing the consultant to conduct the evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

Schedule of the evaluation

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

Table 7. Tentative schedule for the evaluation

Milestone	**Deadline**
Consultant contracted	September 2016
Inception Report	October 2016
Evaluation Missions	November 2016
Zero draft report	December 2016
Draft Report shared with UNEP and UNDP Task Managers	December 2016
Draft Report shared with other stakeholders	January 2017
Final Report	January 2017

ANNEX II. EVALUATION AGENDA

NUEVA FECHA	VISITA/LUGAR/SITIO PILOTO	ACTIVIDAD/COMENTARIO
21/11	Llegada a Santacruz Salida al SP Charagua	5-6 horas de viaje en vehículo Pernocte en Charagua: Visitas de campo y entrevistas
22/11	Charagua – Villa Montes	3.5 horas de viaje en vehículo. Pernocte en V. Montes. Visitas y entrevistas
23/11	Villa Montes – Yacuiba	1.5 horas de viaje en vehículo. Pernocte en Yacuiba. Visitas de campo y entrevistas a RN y contrapartes
24/11	Yacuiba – Camiri	4 horas de viaje en vehículo. Pernocte en Camiri
25/11	Camiri - Monteagudo	4.5 horas de viaje en vehículo. Pernocte en Monteagudo. Visitas de campo y entrevistas aprovechando el taller de intercambio de experiencias que organiza el proyecto
26/11	Retorno a Santa Cruz	7.5 horas de viaje en vehículo
28/11	Tarija - SCZ- BsAs Vuelo en el día	Feriado
29/11	BsAs	Mañana: presentación de resultados a ministros de los 3 países Tarde: presentación de resultados a autoridades nacionales (puede ser que esto sea el 30)
30/11 o 01/12	Bs As – Stgo del Estero	09:30 Octavio Perez Pardo PF Argentina y DR 10:30: Dolores Duverges: Subsecretaria de Planificación ambiental 12:00 Matias Mottet de PNUD 13:30: Ariel Morales RN del proyecto 14:30 Enrique Bello OEA 17:00 vuelo a SDE
01/12	Stgo – SP. Santos Lugares (3 h de viaje en vehículo) Por la tarde retorno a Stgo	Visita, entrevistas con equipo, dirigentes y beneficiarios Disponibilidad de vehículo
02/12	Oficina del proyecto en SDE	08:30 Entrevista con Victor Rosales Director de Bosques de la Provincia y equipo técnico del proyecto. 12:00 salida a V. Dolores (5h y media de viaje) - pernocte
03/12	V.Dolores – Chancani (1 h de viaje)	Entrevistas a ejecutores del gobierno provincial (Dirección de Bosques de Córdoba) y beneficiarios. Visita al SP y prácticas implementadas. 18:00 viaje a Córdoba para dormir Disponibilidad de vehículo
04	Córdoba – BsAs – ASC	Ver más adelante posibilidad de un Skype con el CEDEVA
05/12	SEAM	Entrevistas a PF, RN, equipo, Ministro según demanda del consultor
06/12	Viaje Asunción- Filadelfia	5 horas de viaje en vehículo Llegamos por la tarde. Entrevistas con contraparte y algún productor
07/12	SP Filadelfia y centro de artesanias	Entrevistas con contrapartes y beneficiarios
08/12	SP Loma Plata	Aproximadamente 1 hora desde Filadelfia en vehículo. Entrevistas con contrapartes y beneficiarios
09/12	Viaje de retorno a Asunción	Viaje en vehículo. En el camino visita a la estación del IPTA y entrevista con el grupo de la Universidad responsable del SP Mcal Estigarribia
10/12 Sábado	Asunción – SCZ- Tarija Vuelo por la mañana temprano	Vamos a depender de las reuniones en Py para que retornemos el 10 o tal vez el 11/12

ANNEX III. LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Argentina	
Ariel Morales	NPC Argentina
Octavio Perez Pardo	Punto Focal UNCCD y Director Regional
Enrique Bello	Director OAS –GS, Buenos Aires Office
Matias Mottet	UNDP Argentina
Dolores Duverges	Under-Secretary of Enviornment
Jose Vittar	Provincial Deputy, Stgo. Estero
Wilson Michelini	Project technical expert Stgo. Estero
Eduardo Campanini	Project technical expert Stgo. Estero
Hugo Segundo Rios	Project technical expert Stgo. Estero
Guido Corvalan	UPSANG President Mocase Stgo. Estero
Gelacio Villaba	UPSANG Naranjito
Andres Villalba	UPSANG Naranjito
Claudio Vega	Grupo Tierra
Domingo Guerra	PVT project beneficiary, Santos Lugares
Victor Rosales	Dirección Bosques y Fauna, Stgo. Estero
Jose Luis Esteban	Project coordinator Chancani
Bolivia	
Carlos Ortuño	Viceminister Cuencas y Recursos Hídricos
Freddy Orellana	NPC
Luis Chávez	Deputy NPC
Rocío Chain	PNUD-Bolivia
Emiliano Caballero	CIAT focal point Charagua
T. Ávila	Municipal planner Charagua
Martin Barba	Guaraní Captain Charagua
Jesús Altunez	Capitan Charagua, dist Parapetiguazu
Romualdo Enrique	Dean Instit Tech Superior Taremaiqua Charagua
Abilio Vaca	Capitan de Produccion, Instit Tech Taremaiquia
Beimar Gallo	Presidente Federacion Ganaderos del Chaco (FEGACHACO)
Daniel Cocam	Rancher Villamontes
Angelino Garay Tejerina	Rancher Villamontes
Gerardo Maraz	Director Livestock Development SMDEL
Ivan Arnoldt	Director NATIVA
Maritza Donaire	NATIVA
Nelson Flores	NATIVA
Ervin Gonzalez	NATIVA
Iver Vallejos	Farmer Monteagudo
Rosendo Rojas	Farmer Montegaudo
Marlene Rioja	Farmer Monteagudo
Ramiro Baldiviezo	Farmer Monteagudo
Martha Cano	Director Centro Mujeres Productoras Yacuiba
Paraguay	
David Elias Fariña	Dir Proteccion y Conservacion Recursos 125ídricos
	SEAM, UNCCD Focal Point
Cesar Romero	Fundacion Yvy Porá, Paraguay
Teobaldo Araujo	Fundacion Yvy Pora, Paraguay
Carlos Monges	NPC Paraguay
Juan Cañete Torres	Manager Global Chaco
Amtero Cabrera	Coordinator Agricultural Science Faculty, Universidad Nacional de

	Asunción, Chaco campus
Rolando de Barros Barreto	Minister de Environment
Felipe Barboza	Desarrollo y Negocios Sustentables SA, Loma Plata Paraguay
Ricardo Fernandez	Desarrollo y Negocios Sustentables SA
Karem Elizeche	NPC NCSA
Daniel Paredes	Betania, Stgo. Del Estero
Rodolfo Hildebrand	Municipal Government Environmental Focal Point, Fildadelfia
Franz Goertzen	Munciipal Govt Env Focal Point, Loma Santa
Robustiano Aleman	Leader Yalve Sanga community
Veronique Gerard	UNDP Paraguay
Carlito Etacore	Leader of Ijnapui community
Programme Coordination Unit	
Octavio Perez Pardo	Regional Project Director
Marco Flores	Regional Project Coordinator
Matias Bossio	Administrative Officer

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ANNEX IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Acuerdo Marco de Cooperación entre la República Argentina, la República de Bolivia y la República del Paraguay: Programa de Acción para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Gran Chaco Americano" (2007)

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Project Document (2009)

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference (2016)

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Project Implementation Review (PIR) Reports 2011-2016

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Semesterly Progress Reports

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Mid-Term Review (2013)

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Annual Audit Reports

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Reports and internal evaluations of SFM/SML Demonstration Projects and Technological Validations.

"Manejo sustentable de bosques en el ecosistema transfronterizo del Gran Chaco Americano: Presentación de Resultados" – video documentary (2016)

GFL/2328-2770-4861 "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem": Systematization of Experiences (draft version)

ANNEX V. PROJECT COSTS AND CO-FINANCING TABLES

Component/sub-component/output	Estimated cost at design	Actual Cost	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
1-5	US$ 3,249,800	US$ 3,223,333.099	0.99

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US$)		Government (US$)		Other* (US$)		Total (US$)	Total Disbursed (US$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Planned	Actual
−Grants	3,249,800	3,223,333.09	2,800,000	5,595,000			6,049,800	6,049,800	8,818,333.09
−Loans									
−Credits									
−Equity investments									
−In-kind support			9,670,852	13,066,324			9,670,852	9,670,852	13,066,324
−Other(*) - -									

Note: This annex is based on data provided by the UN Environment Financial Management Officer (FMO) in September 2017. Final data regarding actual expenditures by UNDP or governments were not provided and will be available after the project's closure. Likewise, disaggregated expenditure information by project component was not provided. The governments of Bolivia and Paraguay did not assume the costs of the country project teams as of the second year, as had been foreseen in the project document, and therefore these amounts need to be discounted from the actual government contributions. The cash component of the co-financing contribution by the Government of Paraguay was not specified in the official letter of agreement (30/3/2009), and hence is assumed to be in-kind until official data is provided.

Results and Lessons Learned

About the Project: Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem" was a five-year initiative implemented in a region that encompasses extensive areas of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. The project had the objective of reversing land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through sustainable land management in the productive landscape. UN Environment implemented the project with the participation of UNDP as co-implementing agency and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS-GS) in the capacity of regional executing agency. The counterpart national executing agencies were the Soil Conservation Directorate of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development' (MAYDS) in Argentina, the Vice Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation in Bolivia, and Paraguay's Secretariat of Environment. This was a GEF Full-Size Project that received two grants of USD 3,249,800 and USD 3,659,291 that were managed by OAS and UNDP in their co-implementing role, in addition to government co-financing of US$ 5.5 million in cash and US$ 12 million in in-kind contributions. The Terminal Evaluation was held between the months of November 2016 and April 2017.

Relevance: The project design and strategy were highly relevant to UN Environment and GEF's strategic priorities. It addressed GEF IV's strategic objective of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in production landscapes, and in particular the Biodiversity Focal Area's SP 3 and 7 that address (i) strengthened terrestrial protected area networks and management of land use; (ii) land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) to protect carbon stocks and reduce GHG emissions; and (iii) sustainable forest management in production landscapes." The project was also relevant to the UN Environment 2010-14 Medium-Term Strategy's (MTS) crosscutting priorities of Ecosystems Management and Climate Change, in addition to the Environmental Governance sub-program [65] and Expected Accomplishment in Ecosystems Management.

Performance: The general findings of the Terminal Evaluation indicate that "Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano Ecosystem" was moderately successful in generating the expected results. Likewise, overall project performance was moderately satisfactory in relation to the established evaluation criteria. The project was moderately effective in delivering its planned outputs and outcomes. Evaluation findings indicate that eighteen (58%) of the project's 31 outputs were fully delivered, 10 (35%) partially delivered and 3 (10%) undelivered. Among the project components, the field application of sustainable land and forest management protocols (component 2) was most effective in terms of output achievement with approximately 80% full delivery; followed by the institutional strengthening component that delivered more than half (53%) of its planned outputs. Output delivery was lowest for the project exit strategy (component 3) that intended to document and disseminate sustainable land and forest management practices for up scaling, replication and mainstreaming at regional and national levels.

Factors Effecting Performance: The project implementation approach was well-articulated and promoted sustainable resource management with key productive sectors in a region that is high in both biodiversity and poverty. This enabled the project to engage a wide range of partners that included Chaco farmers and cattle ranchers, producers associations and community-based organizations, local government and universities. On the other hand, the project's design failed to acknowledge the lack of regional preparedness and absence of a functional tri-national framework.

Preparation and readiness varied considerably between implementing agencies, NEAs and executing partners. Argentina's Soil Conservation Directorate demonstrated high levels of technical and

[65] Defined as "The capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations" (MTS 2010-2014)

institutional preparedness, whereas the project remained inoperative for two years in Paraguay due to successive changes of government and staff turnover. The inclusion of three implementing agencies with different guidelines and reporting formats raised the project's administrative workload. Some of the administrative guidelines and procedures were unsuited for a regional project with dispersed pilot activities (particularly in the case of OAS), and in several cases set delivery back.

The management performance of the regional Project Coordination Unit was satisfactory, considering the administrative and coordination challenges raised by the project's 75 pilot initiatives and extensive institutional arrangements. The PCU devoted considerable effort in responding to continuous administrative demands and closely monitored the implementation of field activities in the 11 pilot sites. This contributed to the satisfactory implementation of the SLM/SFM demonstration component (as did the efforts of national teams and executing partners), yet carried a high opportunity cost by distracting attention (and time) from the socialization, transfer and up scaling of best practices. As a result, SLM and SFM were not adopted or replicated on the expected scale that is described in the project document, although there are still opportunities to do so.

Key Lessons Learned:

- The project has established a foundation of demonstrated sustainable practices that are sustainable that facilitates regional replication and impact. It is now time for the countries to move the project forward.
- Water is the fundamental entry point for sustainable development in the Gran Chaco.
- Honey production stands out as a viable sustainable development option that integrates environmental and socio-economic benefits.
- Performance was affected by the project's geographic scale, range and dispersion of activities, and complex institutional arrangements.
- The project's design overestimated the regional context and in particular the momentum of the SRAP and tri-national bodies established by the 2007 Gran Chaco Declaration.
- There are inevitable difficulties in aligning implementation processes between countries with different institutional/policy frameworks and governance cycles.
- The updating or revision of performance indicators and targets is important both for the appropriation of the project by its main stakeholders, and to adjust expectations to more realistic levels.
- Cultural sensitivity is essential in designing projects and working with rural communities in the Gran Chaco.
- Country and regional ownership were discouraged by the project's direct support and representation of the SRAP
- Other project modalities might have been more effective and merited consideration at the design stage.
- Greater preparation and readiness was needed on the part of implementing and executing agencies, to rationalize administrative arrangements and integrate/streamline procedures to the extent possible.

Outputs	Outcomes	Outcome Rating (A-D)	Intermediate States	Intermediate State Rating (A-D)	Impact (GEB's)	Overall Rating	Likelihood of Impact
Component 1: Institutional Strengthening • A proposal for a regional Gran Chaco strategic vision and policy. • Regional collaboration and coordination mechanisms strengthened. • Gran Chaco GIS and database developed and functioning. • Common regional standards and criteria for SFM/SLM tools and instruments. • Early warning systems for extreme climatic events and wild fires established. • Sustainable SLM and SFM technologies identified and systematized, including indigenous knowledge. • Sustainable management manual for the Chaco. • SRAP local offices implemented in the 3 countries. • Strengthened inter-institutional coordination mechanisms ensure	1.1 Institutional capacities strengthened at regional, national and local levels to formulate/apply normative frameworks and practices available for SFM and SLM (with increased budgetary allocations or investments). 1.2. SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices have been developed and mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels.	D D	SFM and SLM policies, tools and practices are mainstreamed and being applied at regional, national and local levels	D	N/A	DD+	Unlikely (U)

participation of main stakeholder groups • SLM, SFM, BD and CC policy and legal frameworks completed and harmonized in each country. • Capacity building programs targeting SLM/SFM technical and financial instruments implemented • Information systems strengthened. • Economically and environmentally sound unit defined for the different sub-regions. • Environmental services identified and valued. • Strategies and action plans for land zoning plans. • Land use change monitoring methodologies and instruments. • Strategies for economic incentives/benefit sharing for conservation and alternative forest and biodiversity use.							
Component 2: Field Application of SLM/SFM Protocols							

• Criteria for design, implementation and M&E of technology validation projects and demonstration projects. • Technology validation projects and demonstration projects evaluated and results systematized.	2.1 A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity strengthened through SFM and SLM.	B	Demonstration projects and technological validations are consolidated and sustained in pilot sites, and have encouraged the expansion of SLM/SFM practices.	B	Conservation of biodiversity and water resources.	BB+	Highly Likely (HL)
• Technical studies and proposals for establishment of new conservation areas.	2.2 CO2 captured and emissions avoided through SFM and SLM.	D+	Lowered C02 emission targets of 0.5 tons/hec. reached in areas applying SFM/SLM practices	C		DC+	Moderately Likely (ML)
• Protected areas strengthened through management plans. • Economic incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in private lands developed. • CO2 balance model and carbon stocks measured and monitored. • Technology validation and research projects designed and implemented. • Demonstration projects in pilot sites designed and implemented. • Support programs to cover transition costs to SLM and SFM practices implemented in	2.3 The number of producers and area in which SFM and SLM practices are applied reach critical threshold that self-sustains further adoption of SFM and SLM practices.	C	Continued adoption of SFM and SLM practices beyond the initial demonstration projects and without project support.	B	Reduced land degradation.	CB	Likely (L)

the demonstration sites.							
Component 3: Exit Strategy • Regional and national events for dissemination of results/lessons learnt and exchange of experiences. • Integration and adoption of regional vision, policy, SFM/SLM best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the SRAP Chaco. • Replication and up scaling of best practices through awareness raising and dissemination of findings across the Chaco region. • Integration and adoption of best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the NAPs to combat desertification and public policies for the development of the Gran Chaco in each one of the three countries	3.1 A mechanism to ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco	D	Wide-scale adoption in the tri-national Grand Chaco region of SLM/SFM practices with budgeted regional, national and local programs.	C	N/A	DC	Moderately Unlikely (U)

Rating Justifications:

Component 1: The project successfully demonstrated SLM/SFM practices in the pilot areas, yet has had little impact at regional or national policy and program levels. This has undermined the mainstreaming and application of these practices on the scale that was expected. Contributing factors included implementation delays and externalities such as the preparedness and commitment levels. An exception may be Argentina's national program for the implementation of native forest legislation, which has funded the replication of demonstration practices in Santiago del Estero province and

received technical support from the project (for geo-referencing forest areas). SLM and SFM practices are proposed in Paraguay's National Action Plan to Combat Desertification.

Component 2: The project supported the declaration of new protected areas and management plans for existing protected areas that have high biodiversity. The project was able to reach most of the SLM/SFM targets; however, several of these were downscaled to more achievable levels at a late stage of implementation and do not provide the "threshold" needed for the self-sustained expansion of SLM/SFM practices. CO2 measurements were not taken after the initial baseline survey due to the insufficient time that had lapsed for demonstration projects to have an effect on carbon emissions.

Component 3: There is not a sustainability mechanism in place to enable the wide-scale replication and adoption of SLM/SFM practices, either nationally or regionally. To an extent, planned dissemination and up-scaling activities under this component were affected by the late implementation of demonstration projects. There are examples of replications in progress through the implementation of native forest legislation in Argentina (*Bosques y Comunidades* program) and Bolivia's National Watershed Plan, yet formal agreements or other arrangements for larger scale replications are lacking at present. Bolivia has not ratified the SRAP.

Rating Criteria:

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

The "+" sign indicates the potential for impact in the future.

Overall Rating Criteria for Likelihood of Impact

Highly Likely (HL)	*Likely (L)*	*Moderately Likely (ML)*	*Moderately Unlikely (MU)*	*Unlikely (U)*	*Highly Unlikely (HU)*
AA AB BA CA BB+ CB+ DA+ DB+	*BB CB DA DB AC+ BC+*	*AC BC CC+ DC+*	*CC DC AD+ BD+*	*AD BD CD+ DD+*	*CD DD*

Argentina

SITIO PILOTO	Pyto Demostrativo	Practica
SP SANTIAGO del ESTERO	Manejo Integral Sustentable de Ganado Caprino...	1. Corral Modelo. 2. Mejoramiento Genético. 3. Sanidad (animal-humana). 4. Alimentación y Nutrición. 5. Represa Comunitaria. 6. Capacitación en Manejo Caprino.
	Buenas Prácticas de Manejo de Bosques.	1. Reforestación y Enriquecimiento. 2. Manejo de Renovales. 3. Validación Tecnológica. 4. Manejo de Pasturas y Forrajes.
	Promoción de la Actividad Apícola Bajo Monte.	1. Salas de Extracción Comunitarias. 2. Maquinaria y Herramientas para la Sala. 3. Provisión de Equipos y Herramientas. 4. Provisión de Colmenas. 5. Apiarios Demostrativos. 6. Capacitación de Manejo Apícola. 7. Fortalecimiento de la Comercialización.
	Promoción de Uso Sustentable de la Biodiversidad.	1. Panadería de Harina de Algarrobo Comunitario. 2. Capacitación en Harina de Algarrobo. 3. Fortalecimiento de la Comercialización. 4. Artesanías Dulces y Conservas. 5. Artesanías Chaguar. 6. Artesanías Cuero.
	Vivienda rural con servicios ambientales integrados.	1. Cisterna. 2. Captación de Agua. 3. Iluminación de vivienda. 4. Panel Solar. 5. Modulo de Bombeo. 6. Biodigestor.

SITIO PILOTO	Pyto Demostrativo	Practica
SP CORDOBA	Manejo Integral Sustentable de Ganado Caprino...	1. Corral Modelo. 2. Mejoramiento Genético. 3. Sanidad (animal-humana). 4. Alimentación y Nutrición. 5. Represa Comunitaria. 6. Capacitación en Manejo Caprino.
	Buenas Prácticas de Manejo de Bosques.	1. Reforestación y Enriquecimiento. 2. Manejo de Renovales. 3. Validación Tecnológica. 4. Manejo de Pasturas y Forrajes.
	Promoción de la Actividad Apícola Bajo Monte.	1. Salas de Extracción Comunitarias. 2. Maquinaria y Herramientas para la Sala. 3. Provisión de Equipos y Herramientas. 4. Provisión de Colmenas. 5. Apiarios Demostrativos. 6. Capacitación de Manejo Apícola. 7. Fortalecimiento de la Comercialización.
	Promoción de Uso Sustentable de la Biodiversidad.	1. Panadería de Harina de Algarrobo Comunitario. 2. Capacitación en Harina de Algarrobo. 3. Fortalecimiento de la Comercialización. 4. Artesanías Dulces y Conservas. 5. Artesanías Chaguar. 6. Artesanías Cuero.
	Vivienda rural con servicios ambientales integrados.	1. Cisterna. 2. Captación de Agua. 3. Iluminación de vivienda. 4. Panel Solar. 5. Modulo de Bombeo. 6. Biodigestor.

Bolivia

SITIO PILOTO	Pyto Demostrativo	Practica
SP CHARAGUA	Revegetación y sistemas	1. Viveros forestales con sp. Nativas. 2. Diferimiento de monte. 3. Enriquecimiento del monte nativo con algarrobo. 4. Prácticas silvopastoriles.(pasturas con Gaton panic)
	Conservación de forraje.	1. Henificación. 2. Ensilaje.
	Cultivo de maíz.	1. Producción de Semilla de maíz. 2. Maíz para forrajes.
	Apicultura	1. Implementación de apiarios.
	Cosecha y almacenamiento de agua.	1. Aljibes de ferrocemento. 2. Construcción de atajados. 3. Filtro de bioarena.
SP. MONTEAGUDO.	Conservación de fuentes de agua, protección y restauración vegetal.	1. Cercos de protección en fuentes de agua. 2. Implementación de viveros forestales con sp. Nativas. 3. Restauración del bosque perturbado con sp. forestales nativas. 4. Protección de riberas.
	Recuperación y conservación de suelos.	1. Cultivos en contorno. 2. Labranza conservacionista. 3. Rotación con leguminosas. 4. Producción de semillas mejoradas: cumanda, maní; frejol; hortalizas. 5. Fertilización orgánica: Abonos orgánicos (Bocashi, Biofertilizantes). 6. Control ecológico de plagas y enfermedades: Caldo Sulfocálcico; Remedios Orgánicos
	Sistemas silvopastoriles.	1. Diferimiento de

SITIO PILOTO	Pyto Demostrativo	Practica
SP VILLAMONTES	Establecimiento de sistemas silvopastoriles y manejo de forrajes	1. Diferimiento de monte. 2. Prácticas silvopastoriles (pasturas con Gaton panic). 3. Conservación de forrajes: henificación. 4. Banco forrajero mixto (graminea + leguminosa).
	Cosecha y almacenamiento de agua..	1. Filtro de bioarena. 2. Aljibes de ferrocemento. 3. Sistemas de almacenamiento de agua para ganado.
SP YACUIBA	Manejo y conservación de suelos.	1. Cultivos en contorno. 2. Labranza conservacionista. 3. Rotación con leguminosas.
	Restauración del paisaje forestal.	1. Implementación de viveros forestales con sp. Nativas. 2. Diferimiento de monte. 3. Restauración del bosque perturbado con sp. forestales nativas.
	Agricultura orgánica.	1. Producción de semillas mejoradas. 2. Fertilización orgánica. 3. Control ecológico de plagas y enfermedades.

Paraguay

SITIO PILOTO	Pyto Demostrativo	Practica
BOQUERON	Buenas prácticas para el manejo de ganado.	1. Sistemas de manejo Silvopastoril. 2. Sistema de rotación de potreros. 3. Potreros divididos con cerco eléctrico. 4. Leguminosas incorporadas a la pastura.
	Apicultura y uso alternativo de bosques.	
	Uso y manejo de bosques.	1. Sistemas de manejo de bosque y de tierra, mejorando la producción. 2. Recuperar áreas degradadas. 3. Uso de especies nativas, enriquecimiento natural.
ALTO PARAGUAY	Apicultura y uso alternativo de bosques	1. Colmenas implementadas. 2. Sala de extracción y envasado. 3. Plan de negocios para la producción de miel, al menos una estrategia de comercialización implementada.
	Manejo, aprovechamiento y comercialización de plantas medicinales..	1. Instalación de los 20 huertos. 2. Selección y mapeo de cosecha de plantas medicinales en el monte.
	Producción hortícola con sistema de cosecha de agua y sistema de riego alternativo.	1. Un vivero para la producción de humus de lombriz. 2. Producción de pesticidas orgánicos. 3. Sistema de riego y cosecha de agua para la producción hortícola.

SITIO PILOTO	Pyto Demostrativo	Practica
SP 1 **Mcal. Estigarribia**	Manejo adecuado de conservación de suelo y agua	1. Prácticas de manejo de la fertilidad del suelo. 2. Prácticas de conservación de suelos. 3. Prácticas de manejo de agua. 4. Estaciones meteorológicas y otros equipos.
	Fortalecimiento al centro de información de producción sustentable en el Chaco.	1. Plataforma virtual de acceso a información técnico/científica. 2. Acceso a la plataforma web.
	Uso y manejo de bosque.	1. Sistemas de manejo de bosque implementados. 2. Áreas degradadas reforestadas con especies forestales nativas. 3. Parcelas de validación establecidas.
SP2.A Filadelfia	Buenas Prácticas para el manejo del ganado: Producción Caprina	1. Potreros con 3000 metros lineales de cerca para el manejo de cabras /54 ha con manejo de ganado.
	Uso y manejo de bosques: Aves Domésticas.	1. Producción de sistemas de producción de aves domesticas para comunidades indígenas del chaco seco, evaluado, sistematizado y difundido.
	Uso y manejo de bosques: Artesanía.	1. Mujeres entrenadas en mercado y comercialización.

ANNEX IX. PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

Regional stakeholders		
Tri-national Commission, Executive Committee		
National stakeholders		
Argentina	**Bolivia**	**Paraguay**
Government Agencies: SAyDS, SAGPyA, INTA, Provincial and Municipal Agencies	Government Agencies: MRH- VMCRH, MPD-VMPTA, MDRAMA-VMBMA, Forestry Superintendence, SENAMHI, Prefectures of Chuquisaca, Tarija and Santa Cruz INRA, SERNAP	Government Agencies: SEAM, MAG, INDERT, INFONA, INDI
Local stakeholders		
Argentina	**Bolivia**	**Paraguay**
Local Coordination Mechanism: COFEMA	Local Coordination Mechanism: MANCHABOL	Local Coordination Mechanism: SRAP Technical Steering Committee
NGOs: Fundación Vida Silvestre, Raíces, Fundación Ambiente Total, Fundación del Sur, Fundación Hábitat y Desarrollo, Grupo Ambiental para el Desarrollo, Proyecto Bosques Tropicales del Teuco	NGOs: AMBIO CHACO, CIPCA, AGRO XXI, PROMETA, LIDEMA	NGOs: Fundación DesdelChaco, INTTAS, GAT, Mingara, Fundación Yvy Pora, Alter Vida, ASCIM, Iniciativa Amotocodie
Universities: Universities Santiago del Estero, Cordoba and Formosa	Universities: Universities of Tarija and Chuquisaca, Parapetiguazú technical institute	
Private Sector: associations of Santiago del Cordoba Producers´ Formosa, Estero and	Private Sector: Cattle Ranchers Association and the National Industry Chamber	Private Sector: Rural Association, Mennonite Cooperatives
Indigenous Peoples: Bosque Modelo Formoseño, El Mojo, Meguesoxochi, Tala Nacona´t and Ele L´Patac, Asociación Miel de la Tierra, Asociación de productores apícolas Qom del Chaco	Indigenous Peoples: Asamblea del Pueblo Guarani, Consejo de Capitanias Guaranies, Central de Indigenas del Oriente Boliviano	

Source: Project Document

Stakeholders involved in the execution of demonstration projects and technology validation projects at pilot sites:

Pilot Site	Executing Entity
BOLIVIA:	
Charagua	CIAT
Villa Montes	Nativa
Monteagudo	CEPAC
Yacuiba	PROMETA
ARGENTINA:	
Formosa	CEDEVA
Santos Lugares en Santiago del Estero	Dirección de Bosques del Ministerio de producción de la Provincia
Chancani - Córdoba	Dirección de Bosques de la Secretaria de ambiente de la Provincia
PARAGUAY:	
Puerto Casado	Global Chaco
Filadelfia	Ivy Porá
Loma Plata	DNS
Mcal Estigarribia	ADIFCA

ANNEX X. CONSULTANT'S CV

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Hugo W. Navajas

Tarija, Bolivia

(591) 72940065

Hnavajas@yahoo.com

Sex Male| Date of birth May 26, 1955| Nationality Bolivia, United States

Areas of Work: Project Design and Evaluation, Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management, Sustainable Development Planning

Languages: English (native), Spanish (native), Portuguese (fluent)

WORKING EXPERIENCE

December 2016 – April 2017

Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP), Organization of American States (OAS)

Final Evaluation of GEF/OAS/UNEP project "Sustainable Forest Management in the Trans-boundary Gran Chaco Ecosystem", a US$ 20 million initiative implemented in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. The project aimed to reduce land degradation and enhance biodiversity conservation through the demonstration of sustainable forest and land management practices, influencing government policies and resource allocations. Responsibilities: Desk review, field visits to pilot projects, interviews with central/provincial government and non-governmental stakeholders. Drafting of Inception and Final Evaluation Reports.

September – December 2017

Cuba

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluation ofGEF/UNEPproject "Strengthening of the National Biosafety Framework of Cuba for the effective implementation of Cartagena Protocol". The project aimed to consolidate Cuba's national biosafety system through the establishment of consultative mechanisms, information systems, LMO detection capabilities and a national training framework. Responsibilities: Desk review, interviews with government, academic, sector partners. Drafting of Inception and Final Evaluation Reports.

July – September 2017

Islamic Republic of Iran

PROJECT EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Final Evaluation of GEF/UNDP project "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone", a USD 13 million initiative executed by the Department of Environment of the Islamic Government of Iran for the sustainable development of a high biodiversity region encompassing five provinces. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation; field visits to pilot projects for environmental conservation, sustainable development and climate change adaptation; interviews with central, provincial government and non-governmental stakeholders. Supervision of evaluation team. Drafting of Inception and Final Evaluation Reports.

November 2015 - April 2016

Croatia, Kenya, The Gambia

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluations of GEF-funded and UNEP-implemented projects supporting capacity building and integrated information systems for the implementation of multiltateral environmental agreements (MEAs):

- "Gambia – Adoption of Ecosystem Approach for Integrated Implementation of MEAs at National and Divisional Levels"
- "Data Flow System and Indicators to Enhance Integrated Management of Global Environmental Issues in Croatia"
- "Enhanced Regulatory and Information Systems for Integrated Implementation of MEAs" in Kenya

Responsibilities: Desk review of project reports and relevant documentation. Country missions and interviews with the National Implementing Agencies, project teams and stakeholders. Participation as observer at an international UNEP workshop on MEA implementation. Elaboration of an integrated final project evaluation report with findings, lessons and recommendations.

April - August 2015

Latin America, Mozambique

PROJECT EVALUATOR
U.N. Habitat, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID)

Final evaluation of "Identification of Best Practices, Policies and Enabling Legislation in the Local Delivery of Basic Urban Services", a US$ 3.4 million global initiative that was implemented by UN-Habitat in Latin America, Mozambique and Spain with funding by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The project aimed to demonstrate innovative approaches to urban planning and sustainable urban development through the documentation/dissemination of best practices, the implementation of pilot initiatives, the provision of technical assistance to local governments in the LAC region and horizontal cooperation between Spanish and Latin American municipalities. The project also organized national and regional dialogues for setting priorities and building consensus in preparation for the global Habitat III Conference scheduled in 2016. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation. Direct/skype interviews with municipal and NGO partners, project beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Elaboration of Inception and Final Evaluation Reports.

August - November 2014

Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, St. Lucia, Belize, St. Vincent

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Mid-term evaluation of "Implementing Biosafety Frameworks in the Caribbean Sub-region", a US$ 5 million project funded by the Global Environment Facility and implemented by UNEP and the University of West Indies (UWI). The project worked with 13 countries that are CARICOM members in developing national and regional biosafety legal/regulatory frameworks, technical capacities and LMO risk assessment systems. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation. Country visits and interviews with regional/national

project coordinators, government partners and national stakeholders in Trinidad &Tobago, Guyana, St. Lucia, Grenada, Belize and St. Vincent. Elaboration of MTE Report with recommendations to improve implementation performance.

February - May 2014

Costa Rica

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluation of "Implementing the National Biosafety Framework in Costa Rica", a US$ 3 million project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNEP and Costa Rica's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation, interviews with project teams, government, NGO and university partners, and elaboration of Final Evaluation report.

October 2013-January 2014

Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala

PROJECT EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER
U.N. Habitat

Final evaluation of UN Habitat's Joint Programme for the LAC region, encompassing 9 projects implemented in 6 countries (Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador and Guatemala) for a combined budget of US$ 6.8 million with funding from AECID (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation). The projects addressed urban slum improvement, water and sanitation, environmental conservation, democratic governance, race and gender rights, and peace-building/conflict resolution in the context of MDG 7 with financing by the MDG Achievement Fund. The project portfolio was co-implemented with other UN agencies under the joint program modality. Responsibilities: Desk review of program documentation. Elaboration of evaluation questionnaires. Direct and Skype interviews with central/municipal government, NGO and community stakeholders, and UN Habitat managers. Field visits to projects in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Ecuador. Supervision of evaluation team. Preparation of Final Evaluation report.

October 2012-March 2013

Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluation of "Reducing Pesticide Runoff to the Caribbean Sea", a GEF-funded US$ 15 million initiative that was implemented in Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua through the ministries of Environment, in collaboration with cooperative/private producers of banana, plantain and pineapple, CROPLIFE Latin America, national NGOs and other public/private partners. The project supported components for introduction of environmentally sound agricultural practices, integrated pest management (IPM), capacity building and the establishment of a regional pesticide-monitoring network with universities and national research institutions. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation. Interviews with project stakeholders from central and provincial governments, NGOs and participating international organizations. Field visits to targeted cooperatives and private enterprises situated in the Caribbean basin, and interviews with beneficiaries. Elaboration of Inception and Final Evaluation reports.

March-November 2011

Argentina, Bolivia

PROJECT EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER
Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment (UNEP), Organization of American States (OAS)

Final evaluation of the "Implementation of the Strategic Program for the Bermejo River Bi-national Basin", a US$ 11 million initiative encompassing the provinces of Salta, Jujuy, Formosa and Chaco in northern Argentina, and the department of Tarija in southern Bolivia. The program was funded by GEF and implemented by UNEP, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Bi-National Commission for the Bermejo Basin (COBINABE), with components addressing institutional strengthening and capacity building, erosion and flood control, biodiversity conservation and environmental education. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation. Field visits and interviews with central and provincial

government partners, academic sector, NGOs and beneficiary communities. Supervision of evaluation team. Elaboration of Inception and Final Evaluation reports.

June-November 2010

Global

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Final evaluation of the GEF Country Support Programme (CSP), a US$ 11.8 million initiative offered in 128 countries to build national/sub regional capacities for accessing GEF funds and managing the GEF project cycle. Responsibilities: Desk review of program documentation and workshop reports. Direct interviews with project team at UNDP Headquarters and representatives of GEF's Secretariat and Evaluation Office. Design and implementation of e-surveys directed at national GEF focal points, followed by in-depth interviews with selected respondents. Drafting of the final evaluation report.

March - May 2010

Jamaica

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Outcome evaluation of UNDP Jamaica's environment and energy portfolio under the 2007-2011 Country Programme. Responsibilities: Interviews with UNDP senior management and program staff, Government of Jamaica counterparts and implementing partners. Field visits to selected projects and meetings with municipal partners and beneficiaries. Review of relevant documentation and preparation of preliminary findings for Stakeholder Meeting. Elaboration of the evaluation report.

January - March 2010

Guyana

PROGRAM EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Outcome evaluation of UNDP Guyana's environment, energy and poverty reduction portfolio under the 2007-2011 Country Programme. Responsibilities: Interviews with UNDP senior management and program staff, Government of Guyana counterparts and implementing partners. Field visits to selected projects. Review of relevant documentation and preparation of preliminary findings for stakeholder meeting. Supervision of evaluation team. Elaboration of evaluation report.

September - November 2009

Global

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
Government of Belgium, United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluation of the UNEP-Belgium Partnership covering the 2004-2008 period. Under the partnership, the Government of Belgium provided US$ 12 million for support initiatives linked to the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for marine and coastal zone protection, the design of National Action Plans for coastal/river basin conservation and integrated waste management; integration of environmental concerns within Poverty Reduction Strategies; and strengthened national legislation and capacities for implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Responsibilities: Review of program and project documentation. Interviews with program managers at UNEP Headquarters. Design and dissemination of an on-line survey to program recipients in target countries. Field visits to projects in Peru and Bangladesh. Elaboration of final evaluation report.

June - August 2009

Global

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Global Environmental Facility, United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Mid-term evaluation of "Enhancing conservation of the critical network of sites required by Migratory Waterbirds on the African/Eurasian Flyways" (Wings Over Wetlands), a USD 6 million initiative funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNEP in 12 countries of the African and Eurasian regions. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation. Interviews with the Project Coordination Unit, Steering Committee

and institutional partners at Wetlands International, Bird Life International, UNEP, Africa Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA) and the Government of Germany. Design and processing of on-line surveys targeting stakeholder groups in participating regions. Country visits to Peru, Bangladesh, UK, Germany and Netherlands. Elaboration of Mid-Term Evaluation Report.

April - August 2009

Global

PROJECT EVALUATOR
United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluation of the "Biosafety Clearinghouse Project (BCH Phase I)", a US$ 14.9 million global capacity development initiative implemented in 112 countries to support the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Responsibilities: Desk review of project documentation. Consultations with project managers in Geneva and Nairobi. Country visits to Mongolia, Ethiopia, Albania, Guatemala and Uruguay. Interviews with government, NGO, private sector and academic partners. Preparation and processing of on-line surveys to national coordinators and regional advisors. Drafting of Final Evaluation report.

August - November 2008

Ecuador

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Assessment of Development Results (ADR) Study for UNDP-Ecuador, covering the 2002-2007 period. The ADR focused on governance, environment/sustainable development, economic development, HIV/AIDs and other components of the UNDP Country Cooperation Framework. The assignment additionally included an assessment of UNDP Ecuador's energy/ environment portfolio as a component for UNDP's Global Assessment of Energy & Environment report. Responsibilities: Desk review of relevant documents. Interviews with UNDP/UN agency and project staff, central/local government officials, NGOs and other stakeholders. Field visits to projects in Quito, Guayaquil and Galapagos. Co-drafting of ADR Study and drafting of the Ecuador component for the Global Assessment of Energy & Environment.

April - June 2009

Turkey

PROJECT EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER
Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Country evaluation of GEF Small Grants Program in Turkey, under a joint global evaluation of country SGPs conducted by GEF-World Bank and the UNDP Evaluation Office. Responsibilities: Desk review of program documentation. Meetings with GEF-SG staff, GEF national focal points, NGO and donor representatives in Turkey. Field visits to small grant projects. Focus group interviews/workshops with grantees and Steering Committee members. Analysis of findings with UNDP Evaluation Office. Supervision of evaluation team. Drafting of Country Assessment Study.

August 2006-February 2007

United States, Ecuador, Peru, Chile

PROGRAMME EVALUATOR
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Evaluation of the Global Conservation Fund, a US$ 100 million financing facility implemented by Conservation International (CI) that supported the creation and long-term financing of Protected Areas in biodiversity "hot spots." Responsibilities: Meetings with GCF-CI staff in Washington DC and Moore Foundation staff in San Francisco. Review of program documents and processing of survey findings for GCF´s portfolio of 58 projects. Field visits to field projects in Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Analysis of findings and recommendations, and drafting of evaluation report in collaboration with other team members.

May - August 2006

Bangladesh

PROJECT FORMULATION/TEAM LEADER
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Formulation of governance and capacity development components for the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility, a US$ 30 million initiative funded by UNDP, the EU and other donors for the sustainable development of the CHT region, targeting indigenous communities and natural resource management. Responsibilities: Review of background documents, design of formulation methodology, supervision of a five-person team, field missions to the CHT, and formulation of an integrated technical assessment report and program document with modules on community outreach and support, environmental management, disaster preparedness, NGO capacity strengthening and skills development for community management.

February - May 2006

Global

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Final evaluation of the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment (MEA) program, a global initiative for the design and validation of integrated environmental assessment methodologies based on ecosystems services. The program was implemented by UNEP in collaboration with GEF, IUCN, WRI, the World Bank, UNDP and environmental research institutions from different countries. Evaluation activities included review of documentation and consultation of program staff in Nairobi, Kenya, field missions to Chile and Brazil, interviewing of national delegates at the Conference on Biodiversity COP-8 meeting in Curitiba, and the drafting of the final evaluation report in collaboration with Team Leader

August - October 2005

Mongolia

POVERTY REDUCTION ADVISOR/INTERIM TEAM LEADER
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Technical support to the Urban Poverty Pilot Project, an initiative promoting community mobilization, capacity development and civic engagement in the municipal planning and budgeting process. Responsibilities: Evaluation and technical advisory support to NGOs and community-based organizations in the design of training materials on participatory planning, participatory budgeting and citizen report cards. Design of a main-phase project proposal in partnership with UN-Habitat, the World Bank and other donors.

June-August 2005

Regional
(Eastern Europe)

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
United Nations Regional Center – Eastern Europe & CIS Region
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MATRA)

Final evaluation of economic and social governance projects funded by the regional Social Transformation Program of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MATRA) and UNDP, with a total budget exceeding US$ 15 million. Review of documentation and country missions to Slovakia and Romania. Responsibilities: Evaluation of MATRA projects implemented by NGOs and community organizations; and supervision of national consultants in these countries. Drafting of final evaluation report with Team Leader.

April – June 2005

Regional
(Latin America & Caribbean)

PROGRAM EVALUATOR
United Nations Environment (UNEP)

Mid-term evaluation of the Global Environmental Citizenship Program, a US$ 3.5 million GEF-funded regional initiative to raise public/institutional environmental awareness that is implemented by UNEP in seven countries of Latin America through NGOs, municipal associations, community radio networks and ecclesiastic associations. Responsibilities: Review of program documentation. Interviews with implementing team and Steering Committee. Field missions to projects in Mexico and Ecuador. Drafting of Mid-Term Evaluation Report with recommendations for improving performance.

February – April 2005 Regional (Eastern Europe and Central Asia)	PROGRAM EVALUATOR United Nations Regional Center – Eastern Europe & CIS Region Mid-term evaluation of the US$ 21 million Regional Cooperation Framework that supported economic, democratic and environmental governance initiatives in 24 countries across Central/Eastern Europe, the CIS and Central Asia. Responsibilities: Review of program documentation. Consultations with program managers and key partners. Country missions to Slovakia, Macedonia and Ukraine with project visits. Co-drafting of evaluation report.
July - September 2003 Global	PROGRAM EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER United Nations Environment (UNEP) Mid-term evaluation of the Global Project for the Development of National Biosafety Frameworks, a US$ 32 million initiative implemented in 118 countries by UNEP with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Responsibilities: Desk review of program documentation. Forward-looking assessment of strategies, implementation issues and impacts in national biosafety policies, capacity development and sub regional cooperation. Consultations with participating institutions. Field missions to Slovenia, Jordan, Tanzania, South Korea and Chile. Supervision of evaluation team. Drafting of mid-term evaluation report.
May – July 2003 Mongolia	PROJECT EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Final evaluation of the "Mongolian Action Program for the 21st Century" (MAP 21) supporting the design and implementation of sustainable development policies through the National Council for Sustainable Development, line ministries and a technical advisory unit. Responsibilities: Review of project documentation. Assessment of implementation and achievements in policymaking, public participation and environmental management. Consultations with participating institutions, and field visits. Elaboration of final evaluation
September 2002 – February 2003 Brazil, Chile	INTERIM REGIONAL DIRECTOR – LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN International Center for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Support for strategic planning, program development and resource mobilization activities. Responsibilities: Development of cooperation agreement and work program with host Rio de Janeiro state government. Staff supervision, institutional coordination and budget management. Supervised transfer of ICLEI regional office from Santiago, Chile to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
September - November 2001 China	PROJECT EVALUATOR/TEAM LEADER United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Capacity 21 Programme Final evaluation of the PRC's Local Agenda 21 program, a pilot initiative for promoting sustainable development and local participation in development planning that was applied in 16 pilot provinces and municipalities, in coordination with the preparation of the 10th Five Year Plan. Evaluation of program activities in Beijing, Shanxi province and Changzou and Tongchuan municipalities. Responsibilities: Review of project documentation. Interviews/workshops with central, provincial and local government officials, NGOs and project stakeholders. Review of documentation. Supervision of evaluation team.

NOTE: FULL CV AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ANNEX XI. UNDP MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND TRACKING TEMPLATE

Evaluation Title:
Evaluation Completion Date:

Key issues and Recommendations	Management Response*				Tracking**	
	Response	Key Actions	Timeframe	Responsible unit(s)	Status ***	Comments

* Unit(s) assigned to be responsible for the preparation of a management response will fill the columns under the management response section.

** Unit(s) assigned to be responsible for the preparation of a management response will be updating the implementation status. Assigned with an oversight function monitors and verifies the implementation status.

** * **Status of Implementation:** Completed, Partially Completed, Pending

ANNEX XII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

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

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

	UN Environment Evaluation Office Comments	Draft Report Rating	Final Report Rating
Substantive report quality criteria			
A. **Quality of the Executive Summary**: Does the executive summary present the main findings of the report for each evaluation criterion and a good summary of recommendations and lessons learned? (Executive Summary not required for zero draft)	Draft report: The executive summary presents main findings of the report. Final report: Same as above.	S	S
B. **Project context and project description**: Does the report present an up-to-date description of the socio-economic, political, institutional and environmental context of the project, including the issues that the project is trying to address, their root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being? Are any changes since the time of project design highlighted? Is all essential information about the project clearly presented in the report (objectives, target groups, institutional arrangements, budget, changes in design since approval etc.)?	Draft report: All required sections have been captured, but clarifications are required for several sections, including stakeholder identification and financial resources. Final report: Project context has been adequately described.	MS	MS
C. **Strategic relevance**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of strategic relevance of the intervention in terms of relevance of the project to global, regional and national environmental issues and needs, and UNEP strategies and programmes?	Draft report: Relevance should also include assessment of gender equity, adherence to human rights principles including indigenous communities and relevance to Bali Strategic Plan. Final report: Relevance has been well discussed.	MS	S
D. **Achievement of outputs**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of outputs delivered by the intervention (including their quality)?	Draft report: Some clarifications are needed, particularly in regards demonstration projects. Final report: Achievement of outputs has been well discussed.	MS	S
E. **Presentation of Theory of Change**: Is the Theory of Change of the intervention clearly presented? Are causal pathways logical and complete (including drivers, assumptions and key actors)?	Draft report: The ToC describes the intervention logic of the project. The different result levels, drivers and assumptions are not in all cases at their correct levels. Final report: Theory of Change has been adequately presented.	MS	MS
F. **Effectiveness - Attainment of project objectives and results**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the achievement of the relevant outcomes and	Draft report: Likelihood of impact should be assessed in more detail. Final report: Effectiveness has been adequately discussed.	MS	MS

	project objectives?			
G.	**Sustainability and replication**: Does the report present a well-reasoned and evidence-based assessment of sustainability of outcomes and replication / catalytic effects?	Draft report: Sustainability and replication have been well discussed. Some clarifications were requested. Final report: Sustainability and replication have been well discussed.	S	S
H.	**Efficiency**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency? Does the report present any comparison with similar interventions?	Draft report: Efficiency has been well discussed. Final report: Same as above.	S	S
I.	**Factors affecting project performance**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of all factors affecting project performance? In particular, does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used; and an assessment of the quality of the project M&E system and its use for project management?	Draft report: Factors affecting performance have been mainly well discussed. Financial management should be clarified. Final report: Factors affecting performance have been well discussed.	MS	S
J.	**Quality of the conclusions:** Do the conclusions highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, and connect those in a compelling story line?	Draft report: Conclusions are adequately presented. They could have been written as a story line. Final report: Same as above.	S	S
K.	**Quality and utility of the recommendations**: Are recommendations based on explicit evaluation findings? Do recommendations specify the actions necessary to correct existing conditions or improve operations ('who?' 'what?' 'where?' 'when?)'. Can they be implemented?	Draft report: All recommendations are based on evaluation findings. Some recommendations would be better formulated as lessons. All recommendations should be specific and implementable. Final report: Same as above.	MS	MS
L.	**Quality and utility of the lessons**: Are lessons based on explicit evaluation findings? Do they suggest prescriptive action? Do they specify in which contexts they are applicable?	Draft report: All lessons are based on evaluation findings. Some lessons are very specific for the project and would work better if reformulated as recommendations. Final report: Same as above.	MS	MS
Report structure quality criteria				
M.	**Structure and clarity of the report**: Does the report structure follow EOU guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included?	Draft report: The report follows EOU guidelines well. Final report: Same as above.	S	S
N.	**Evaluation methods and information sources**: Are evaluation methods and information sources clearly described? Are data collection methods, the triangulation / verification approach, details of stakeholder consultations provided? Are the limitations of evaluation methods and information sources described?	Draft report: The criteria for site selection should be discussed. Different stakeholder groups interviewed, including gender balance, indigenous communities and vulnerable groups should be identified. Final report: Evaluation methods have been adequately discussed.	MS	MS
O.	**Quality of writing**: Was the report well written? (clear English language and grammar)	Draft report: The report was well written. Final report: Same as above.	HS	HS
P.	**Report formatting**: Does the report follow EOU guidelines using headings, numbered paragraphs etc.	Draft report: Report was adequately formatted. Final report: Same as above.	S	S

OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	MS	S

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

		UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Rating
Evaluation process quality criteria			
Q.	**Preparation:** Was the evaluation budget agreed and approved by the EOU? Was inception report delivered and approved prior to commencing any travel?	Evaluation budget was approved by the EOU. Inception report was delivered prior to travel.	S
R.	**Timeliness:** Was a TE initiated within the period of six months before or after project completion? Was an MTE initiated within a six month period prior to the project's mid-point? Were all deadlines set in the ToR respected?	The TE was initiated in accordance to the requirements. However, the project was extended when the TE was already ongoing.	MS
S.	**Project's support:** Did the project make available all required documents? Was adequate support provided to the evaluator in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	Some delays were experienced in receiving information. Adequate support was provided for the evaluation mission.	MS
T.	**Recommendations:** Was an implementation plan for the evaluation recommendations prepared? Was the implementation plan adequately communicated to the project?	Recommendations were discussed with the project team. Implementation plan was provided at the closure of the evaluation.	HS
U.	**Quality assurance:** Was the evaluation peer-reviewed? Was the quality of the draft report checked by the evaluation manager and peer reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments? Did EOU complete an assessment of the quality of the final report?	The evaluation was peer-reviewed. Quality of draft report was checked prior to dissemination for comments. Quality assessment was completed for the draft and final reports.	S
V.	**Transparency:** Were the draft ToR and evaluation report circulated to all key stakeholders for comments? Was the draft evaluation report sent directly to EOU? Were all comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the EOU and did EOU share all comments with the commentators? Did the evaluator prepare a response to all comments?	ToR was circulated to key stakeholders, draft evaluation report and comments were sent directly to EOU. EOU shared all comments anonymously with the commentators and the evaluator prepared a response to all comments.	HS
W.	**Participatory approach:** Was close communication to the EOU and project maintained throughout the evaluation? Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately communicated?	Communication was maintained between the EOU, consultant and project throughout the evaluation. Key findings and recommendations were discussed in a joint meeting.	S
X.	**Independence:** Was the final selection of the evaluator made by EOU? Were possible conflicts of interest of the selected evaluator appraised?	Final selection of the evaluator was made by the EOU. There were no conflicts of interest.	HS
OVERALL PROCESS RATING			S

Rating system for quality of evaluation reports
A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1

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