

Terminal evaluation  
of the project  
“Integrated management  
of marine and coastal  
areas of high value for  
biodiversity in  
continental Ecuador”

**Project Evaluation Series  
09/2021**

**Terminal evaluation of the project  
“Integrated management of marine and  
coastal areas of high value for biodiversity  
in continental Ecuador”**

**GCP/ECU/084/GFF**

**GEF: 4770**

Citation:

FAO. 2021. *Terminal evaluation of the project "Integrated management of marine and coastal areas of high value for biodiversity in continental Ecuador"*. Project Evaluation Series, 09/2021. Rome.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

ISBN 978-92-5-134860-4

© FAO, 2021



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organisation, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation is not the work of the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [language] version shall be the authoritative edition.

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the World Intellectual Property Organization Mediation Rules <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration shall be carried out pursuant to the arbitration regulation of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

**Sales, rights and licensing.** FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).

Cover photo credits: ©FAO/Camilo Pareja; ©FAO/Luis Costa; ©FAO/S. Larrain; ©FAO/R. Grisolia

## **Abstract**

In order to safeguard the high value of biodiversity in coastal areas and mangroves in Ecuador, this project, with GEF support, aimed to develop an integrated management approach for the use and conservation of these ecosystems by establishing conservation areas, strengthening the mangrove concessions and integrating the conservation of biodiversity in fishery management within the conservation areas. It also aimed to improve and maintain the livelihoods of the coastal communities that depend on the fisheries close to the coast, particularly crab fishers in the Gulf of Guayaquil and the estuary of Cayapas-Mataje.

Despite several changes in the country's political situation and a complex implementation structure, the project continues to be relevant, and it generally achieved its objectives. It is worth highlighting how important the evaluation found it was for biodiversity conservation projects to have a component about productive alternatives just as robust as the conservation approach.



# Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Abbreviations and acronyms</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Purpose of the evaluation.....	1
1.2 Users foreseen.....	1
1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation.....	2
1.4 Method.....	2
1.5 Limitations.....	3
1.6 Structure of the report .....	4
<b>2. Background and context of the project</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 Theory of change .....	8
<b>3. Evaluation questions: key findings</b> .....	<b>11</b>
3.1 Relevance and coherence .....	11
3.2 Effectiveness.....	15
3.3 Efficiency and other factors that affect the outcomes.....	23
3.4 Normative values.....	44
3.5 Social and environmental safeguards .....	48
3.6 Sustainability.....	48
3.7 Progress towards impact.....	54
<b>4. Lessons learned</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>5. Conclusions and recommendations</b> .....	<b>61</b>
5.1 Conclusions.....	61
5.2 Recommendations.....	62
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>Appendix 1. GEF criteria ratings table</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix 2. Ratings table</b> .....	<b>69</b>
<b>Appendix 3. People interviewed</b> .....	<b>71</b>
<b>Appendix 4. GEF co-financing table</b> .....	<b>75</b>
<b>Annexes</b> .....	<b>76</b>

## Figures

Figure 1. Obstacles identified by the project and expected outcomes and outputs to tackle them .....	7
Figure 2. Project theory of change based on the PRODOC and the mid-term review .....	10
Figure 3. Annual comparison between the budget detailed in the PRODOC, the budget planned in the annual operating plan and the budget executed .....	24
Figure 4. Comparison of the budget detailed in the PRODOC with the revised budget due to the change in the project management model.....	27
Figure 5. Co-financing pledged and materialized.....	28
Figure 6. Stakeholders involved in the project by outcome.....	46
Figure 7. Theory of change of the modified framework of outcomes .....	57

## Tables

Table 1. Foreseen users and uses of the evaluation.....	1
Table 2. Main M&E reports and activities and their level of fulfilment.....	40

## **Acknowledgements**

The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) would like to thank all those who contributed to the completion of this evaluation. The evaluation was led by Anne-Clémence Owen from OED, and the evaluation team was composed of Teresita Romero Torres (Team Leader) and David Parra Puente.

The evaluation took place with the invaluable help of FAO employees in Ecuador whose vision, knowledge, advice and comments made the evaluation possible.

The evaluation benefited from the contributions of many interested parties, including officials from the national government, regional and municipal officials, in addition to representatives from civil organizations (with a particular emphasis on fishery organizations) and from the academic and private sector. Their contributions were decisive for the work of the team, who would like to express their sincere gratitude.



## Abbreviations and acronyms

MPA	Marine protected area(s)
AMESUC	Agreements for Mangrove Ecosystem Sustainable Use and Custody
COA	Organic Environmental Code Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
DAG	Decentralised Autonomous Government(s)
Hivos	Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries
IPIAP	Public Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture Research
MPA	Marine protected area
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
REDAUMSLEA	Economic Integration Network of Associations of Mangrove Users from the cantons of San Lorenzo and Eloy Alfaro
REMACAM	Cayapas-Mataje Mangroves Ecological Reserve
SGMC	Subsecretariat of Marine and Coastal Management

## Executive summary

1. The final evaluation of the project “Integrated management of marine and coastal areas of high value for biodiversity in continental Ecuador” aims to describe its repercussions, the sustainability of its outcomes and the degree of achievement of these in the long-term. In addition, it indicates the future actions needed to guarantee the sustainability of the project outcomes, extend its impact in subsequent phases, mainstream and upscale its outputs and practices, and share the information obtained with the authorities and institutions that have competences relating to integrated coastal management and the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, to therefore ensure the continuity of the processes that this project initiated.
2. The evaluation analyses the project execution period – from 16 February 2016 to December 2020 – using the results of the mid-term review as an essential source of information. The limitations the evaluation faced include the cancellation of field visits as a result of the global health crisis and – to a lesser extent – the lack of information to corroborate the fulfilment of some targets. An attempt was made to overcome the travel restrictions by increasing the number of remote interviews with local stakeholders who participated in the activities on the ground and who belong to different sectors, to facilitate the verification of information. Specifically, 78 people were interviewed from the provinces of Esmeraldas, Manabí, Santa Elena, Guayas and El Oro and from the city of Quito. Similarly, the project theory of change was reconstructed based on the project document (PRODOC), and the theory of change (TOC) was also prepared based on the modified framework of outcomes, to analyse the effects of the changes in the project. The evaluation methodology integrated the Global Environment Facility (GEF) criteria and requirements.
3. The findings of this final evaluation indicate that the project covered important needs of the stakeholders involved. Specifically, those of the local actors, who consider the management and zoning of beaches a priority. In addition, the fishery organizations that managed to renew or obtain their Agreements for Mangrove Ecosystem Sustainable Use and Custody (AMESUC) highlight the extensive support that the project provided to offer greater certainty and sustainability to their fishery operations. Similarly, some of the productive projects that have begun to be implemented offered economic alternatives to some fishery organizations that aim to reduce pressure on the mangroves.
4. Although the project aligned with the respective government programme and strategic documents, its relevance was affected by structural changes in government and the economic crisis that has prevailed since it began, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to the discontinuation of the Subsecretariat of Marine and Coastal Management (SGMC) of the Ministry of Environment and Water, that the National Director in charge of managing the project reported to; the decision against creating protected areas; and the suspension of the government budget geared towards providing the economic means for the conservation and sustainable use of mangroves. Given the transition process that the government is going through, the relevance of the project in relation to the marine and coastal policy of Ecuador is uncertain at this time. At local level, the project aligned with the priorities of the local governments in terms of their responsibility for the administration of beaches.
5. The project aligned with the GEF-5 objectives detailed in the PRODOC. Specifically, it aligned with the second objective of the focal area of biodiversity (BD-2), which addresses the sustainable use of production in terrestrial and marine sectors and landscapes, and in the improvement of the sustainability of protected area systems. It has also followed the current financing cycle (GEF-7), and aligned with BD-2, as regards the reduction of the direct drivers of biodiversity loss, and with the blue economy approach of the strategy relating to international waters. In addition, the

project aligned with the 2018–2021 Country Programming Framework (CPF) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Ecuador, the priorities of which include the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources.

6. The level of fulfilment of the project targets is approximately 68 percent. This is due to substantial shortcomings in the modified framework of outcomes that make it impossible to measure its achievements in an adequate manner. For example, various errors were identified in the baseline of some indicators; some outputs have no target; others were included after having materialized by means of other initiatives or projects not contemplated in the PRODOC; delays occurred in the preparation of some of the baselines; and no subsequent measurements were taken to show a change. Another reason is the lack of information to corroborate the fulfilment of some of the targets. It was possible to evaluate 19 of the 35 targets included in the modified framework of outcomes. It was not possible to evaluate the 16 remaining targets due to the inconsistencies of said framework (12) and to the lack of information (4).
7. The main achievements of Component 1 are the conservation of the mangrove coverage by virtue of the AMESUC and the consolidation of the fishery organizations that hold such, which led to positive results in the sustainable management of species of commercial interest, but not necessarily of other elements of the biodiversity of this ecosystem. In addition, it had favourable repercussions on updating existing plans for the management of marine protected areas (MPAs) and on the proposal of plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. However, no integrated coastal management guidelines and plans were made that include the conservation of new sea turtle nesting areas. Of the 12 productive projects, 7 were not implemented due to the need to comply with administrative requirements or to legalize the teams.
8. Within the framework of Component 2, fishery guidelines were prepared for five MPAs of important commercial species (e.g. lobster, octopus, Pacific bearded brotula, black ark clam), but there is no evidence of their implementation. The baselines of these species were also determined, although no subsequent measurement was taken of all of them, to ascertain the impact of the project on the respective populations. However, it is worth highlighting the consolidation of the technical capacity and of the management of the organizations in charge of managing the fisheries targeted.
9. The Component 3 targets show a higher level of fulfilment. It is worth highlighting the contribution made by the project to Book V of the Organic Environmental Code Regulation (COA), which was approved and regulates the marine-coastal area. There is an integrated coastal management regulation model for the municipalities. Other regulatory documents prepared – such as the updated regulation on the AMESUC and the fishery regulation for the MPA – are being reviewed by the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador.
10. As of July/August 2020, 90 percent of the accumulated budget of GEF funds had been executed. In the first two years of the project, the execution of the annual operating plans (AOP) budget was low: 46 percent and 40 percent respectively. This is due to several causes: i) the learning curve of the implementing party and co-executors of the project, realized under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM); ii) the need to consolidate administrative and financial processes; iii) errors in the execution of the project; iv) the delayed positioning of the environmental authority in relation to specific outputs; v) the COVID-19 pandemic; and vi) the insecurity in the municipality of Esmeraldas. Fifty percent of the co-financing pledged has been materialized.

11. The institutional arrangement for the development of the project shows areas for improvement that have affected its implementation and execution. The relationship between the co-executors was troubled from the start, due to the tension generated as a result of errors or omissions in the administrative and financial processes. In addition, the change in the management model – which, among other aspects, meant that FAO Ecuador directly executed part of the budget due to the aforementioned low execution – worsened the working relations even more. The high fiduciary risk of the co-executors and their inexperience (and that of the implementing party) in this operative modality were determining factors that led to this situation. It is worth highlighting that the co-executors and the implementing party performed their work successfully and identified areas of opportunity that significantly affected the development of the project.
12. The monitoring and evaluation plan has a high level of fulfilment. However, the project monitoring shows limitations due to shortcomings in the project implementation reviews (PIR); to the use of an outdated monitoring tool that has no information on prior periods; to the dispersion of the information generated; and to the low supervision of the project on the ground.
13. The project updated and generated biological and fishery information on octopus, Pacific bearded brotula, lobster, black ark clam and red crab fisheries, as well as information on endangered species such as the hawksbill sea turtle and the American crocodile, therefore increasing knowledge about said species. This data was systematized on the project website and the information about the black ark clam and the red crab was incorporated into the database of the Public Institute for Aquaculture and Fisheries Research (IPIAP) of Ecuador. The fishery organizations exchanged experiences to acquire good management practices.
14. The participation of relevant stakeholders in the preparation of plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas facilitated a common understanding on existing problems and, in most cases, a consensus on their zoning. In addition, it extended the use of the information generated to other government initiatives and created partnerships with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to replicate the development of management plans in other municipalities, and created a proposal to support the implementation of the management plan for the municipality of Santa Elena. In addition, it facilitated the integration of the Economic Integration Network of Associations of Mangrove Users from the cantons of San Lorenzo and Eloy Alfaro (REDAUMSLEA) in the province of Esmeraldas. However, there was a certain level of dissatisfaction in some fishery organizations due to disagreements about the fishery guidelines proposed and the problems that some productive projects present. The experience on the ground of *Conservación Internacional Ecuador* (CI-Ecuador) and the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos) in the targeted areas, facilitated the participation of different stakeholders thanks to the existing trusting relationships. One absent partner was the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries.
15. The project did not develop a strategy for the inclusion of the gender-sensitive approach in its entire cycle, as stated in the PRODOC. Consequently, the work completed was not equal and as such, the outcomes were different in the various targeted areas. It is worth highlighting the empowerment of the female 'concheras' (shell gatherers) and the awareness raised among the men of the fishery organizations in the province of Esmeraldas.
16. In accordance with the PRODOC, the project fell under category C, as it was considered that the risk of it having a negative social or environmental impact was low. According to the interviews conducted and the documentation review, the project did not generate any negative social or environmental effect. However, no periodic information was provided about the environmental

and social safeguards in the annual progress reports, even after modifying the framework of outcomes that included the completion of productive projects.

17. It was possible to consolidate some of the fishery organizations and awareness was raised among the communities about the conservation of beaches, the sustainable use of fishery resources and the conservation of turtle nests. This suggests that the social sustainability of these achievements will probably be maintained at a local level, provided that the COVID-19 pandemic permits it, as it has impeded social organization in the area until now. In addition, the international cooperation projects that take place in the targeted areas, or in adjacent areas, will also contribute towards prolonging this sustainability.
18. The project contributed to establishing a sound regulatory basis for the marine and coastal area, by developing Book V of the Organic Environmental Code Regulation, and regulations that are still under review. However, their fulfilment and/or approval are uncertain due to the instability of the Ministry of Environment. This substantially limits the institutional sustainability of the project achievements.
19. The changes made in the framework of outcomes affected the environmental sustainability of the project achievements. A particularly significant modification was the proposal to create ecologically sensitive zones – they are not conservation instruments and lack stability in the medium and long term – instead of establishing marine protected areas. In addition, the sources of financing to give continuity to the activities and processes that the project initiated have decreased and their availability is uncertain in the medium- and long-term. This includes the counterpart assigned initially by the Ministry of Environment by means of its “Socio Bosque” programme and the regular budget geared towards the management of marine and coastal areas, in addition to the resources available for the municipalities involved in the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas.
20. The changes made in the framework of outcomes substantially reduced the project impact, by modifying its global environmental objective and, consequently, its outputs and outcomes. The new objective supports the conservation and use of biodiversity by preparing proposals for the creation of ecologically sensitive zones rather than conservation areas, as stated in the PRODOC. The ecologically sensitive zones are not conservation instruments, rather zoning included in the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, which are planning tools. The modification of the framework of outcomes also stopped the project from contributing to a comprehensive conservation of biodiversity that includes commercial and endangered species. In addition, resources were invested in outputs not connected to the project activities or that barely contributed to the project global objectives.

## Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. Relevance and coherence.** The relevance of the project with the marine and coastal policy of the Republic of Ecuador is uncertain at this time, due to the structural weakening and instability of the Ministry of Environment and the lack of clarity of the government environmental policies. The project is aligned with the GEF and FAO strategies and objectives, as well as the responsibilities of the local governments. The project has covered needs of the national government and of local stakeholders.

**Conclusion 2. Effectiveness.** The level of fulfilment of the project targets is 68 percent. It is worth highlighting the contribution that the project made to consolidating the organizations that hold AMESUC and the updating of one of the books of the COA Regulation, that includes the integrated coastal management approach. Some achievements cannot be attributed to the project, as they were accomplished before the framework of outcomes was modified and were not included in the PRODOC.

The modified framework of outcomes contains inconsistencies and inaccuracies that make it impossible to adequately measure the achievements. In addition, some of the achievements could not be corroborated due to a lack of access to all of the project information.

**Conclusion 3. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The execution of the budget of the annual operating plan was low in the first two years of the project: 46 percent and 40 percent respectively. As of July/August 2020, 90 percent of the accumulated budget of the GEF funds had been implemented. Fifty percent of the co-financing pledged has been materialized. The co-executors have performed their work successfully and identified areas of opportunity, which have had a substantial influence on the completion of the project, that are linked mainly to the substantial fiduciary risks. The relationship between the project partners was troubled.

**Conclusion 4. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The modified framework of outcomes has substantial shortcomings in its content: from inconsistencies between the baselines and targets of some outputs and outcomes, to the inclusion of outputs that had been developed before the modification of the framework and that were not included in the original framework of outcomes. Substantial resources were invested in outputs not connected to the project activities or that made a limited contribution to its global objectives.

**Conclusion 5. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The monitoring and evaluation plan was almost completely fulfilled. However, the project monitoring has substantial shortcomings. These include those detected in the annual PIR, the lack of means to verify the data reported, the use of an outdated monitoring tool, the dispersion of the information generated and the low supervision of the project on the ground.

**Conclusion 6. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The project updated and generated biological and fishery information, therefore increasing knowledge about important commercial fisheries – such as octopus, Pacific bearded brotula, lobster, black ark clam and red crab – and endangered species, such as the hawksbill sea turtle and the American crocodile. This information was systematized in the project website and the data about black ark clam and red crab was incorporated into the IPIAP databases. However, the lack of care in the collection of data impedes the identification of trends in stocks or the effects of the execution. In addition, fishers in the targeted areas have exchanged experiences with fishers in the Galapagos Islands.

**Conclusion 7. Normative values.** The participation of the different stakeholders in the project activities was unequal and, as a result, had different effects. A wide range of actors (local and national civil servants, restaurant owners, companies, NGOs, community members) were involved in the development of the beach management plans, therefore raising more awareness about the problems of the beaches and, in most cases, generating a consensus on zoning. In the case of developing some fishery guidelines, the participation of fishery organizations was limited, leading to the rejection of some of them. It is worth highlighting the lack of participation by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries. The prior experience of Hivos and CI Ecuador in the targeted areas facilitated the participation of stakeholders due to the trust these organizations generated.

**Conclusion 8. Normative values.** The project did not have a strategy to address gender matters, and as such its work was unequal in the different targeted areas and, consequently, led to different outcomes. It is worth highlighting the empowerment of the female 'concheras' (shell gatherers) and the awareness raised among the men of the fishery organizations in the province of Esmeraldas. Environmental safeguards were not included.

**Conclusion 9. Social and environmental safeguards.** The project has not generated any negative social or environmental effect. All that is left to highlight is the lack of any reference in the corresponding PIR to the state of risk of the project after the modification of the framework of outcomes and the inclusion of productive projects.

**Conclusion 10. Sustainability.** Social sustainability offers a proactive panorama for the permanence of some of the project achievements. Above all, awareness was raised in the community about the conservation of turtle nests, but community mobilization has not been achieved on this matter due to the social restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some of the project actions will have continuity by means of international cooperation projects, such as the implementation of some plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. Structural weakening and instability in the Ministry of Environment limits the institutional sustainability of the project achievements. The ecologically sensitive zones are not, *per se*, biodiversity conservation instruments, and some regulations, guidelines and management plans have not been formalized and adopted, a circumstance which also affects environmental sustainability. There were few sources of financing to give continuity to the project achievements and their availability is uncertain in the medium- and long-term. Consequently, the financial sustainability also has limitations. Social sustainability offers a positive panorama for the permanence of some of the project achievements.

**Conclusion 11. Impact.** The modification of the framework of outcomes – which led to a change in the global environmental objective, consisting of the substitution of the creation of conservation areas with the proposal of ecologically sensitive zones – has decreased the expected impact of the project. The ecologically sensitive zones are not biodiversity conservation instruments *per se*, but zoning included in the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, which are planning tools. Similarly, the repercussion was limited, as some outputs did not contribute to the specific activities of the project and others did not help to provide the expected effects, due to not being realized by the project itself.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1. For the Ministry of Environment, FAO Ecuador, the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, CI Ecuador and Hivos.** Given that the circumstances that led to the modification of the framework of outcomes prevailed since the start of the project, and taking into account that this change occurred just one year before the project ended, it is recommended that these kinds of situations be analysed, where relevant, at the beginning of each project. In addition, if there is any sound basis that justifies changing the framework of outcomes, the modifications must be made at that time or subsequently, without waiting for the mid-term review before doing so. Making these changes in a timely fashion could avoid a decrease in the project impact. This is of particular importance when the modifications are related to the creation of conservation areas, as this may not depend on the project but on one of the co-executors, usually the national environmental authority, which is exposed at all times to a change in government priorities.

**Recommendation 2. For the Ministry of Environment, FAO Ecuador, the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, CI Ecuador and Hivos.** On considering that the modification of the framework of outcomes – made during the execution of the project, endorsed by the Steering Committee of such and included in the annual PIR submitted to GEF – has had a negative effect for the project, it is recommended that any change in the framework of outcomes of any project be based on a rigorous technical and strictly professional analysis. In this regard, it is important that a framework of outcomes does not include outputs that other projects have already materialized and does not claim that outputs belong to the project if they are not even included in the PRODOC (e.g. National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles), nor outputs that do not contribute or consolidate the project strategy (e.g. dredging regulation proposal). The strategic usefulness of a framework of outcomes depreciates when there is no coherence (horizontal logic) among its components (e.g. baseline and targets) or when it lacks any of them (e.g. indicators).

**Recommendation 3. For FAO Ecuador, the Ministry of Environment and CI Ecuador.** It is recommended that the biodiversity conservation projects have a component about productive alternatives that are just as robust as the conservation approach. In other words, resources should be provided and comparable activities defined to promote conservation, and to support economic alternatives geared towards the communities who depend on said resources.

**Recommendation 4. For the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit and for FAO.** In the first phase of the project, in which FAO only acted as executor, the need to have a manager who carried out personalized monitoring of the project for said organization was clear, due to the numerous responsibilities held by the person in charge at that time. This is why, although it did not work optimally in this project, it is suggested that as a good practice, in projects under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality, FAO representation have the necessary resources – as a manager of these – to hire an expert in M&E who monitors said projects exclusively and effectively. This would help FAO to have greater control over the project and would also make it possible to resolve the problem of dispersion and lack of systematization of information when there are several co-executors, which made it impossible for the evaluation team to have all of the necessary information to perform the final evaluation of this project.

**Recommendation 5. For FAO and the Ministry of Environment.** Taking into account the changes made to the framework of outcomes and, in particular, the inclusion of productive projects (one of which involves farming a species of oyster categorized as invasive), it is suggested that the project team include a technical justification of the reasons why the project risk category (environmental and social) did not have to be changed after the modification of the framework of outcomes. This justification could be included in the final report of the project.

**Recommendation 6. For FAO Ecuador, the Ministry of Environment and CI Ecuador.** Given that some productive projects selected require changing the legal entity of some fishery organizations and/or the legalization of boats and engines for their use, it is suggested that any activity related to these be interrupted until such are modified or the permits and legalizations required by the competent authorities (e.g. Ministry of Tourism) are obtained.

**Recommendation 7. For the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador, FAO Ecuador and Hivos.** Given that the project website will close and it will not be possible to access the abundant information generated about the fisheries and endangered species that are the object of this study, it is suggested that technical or scientific publications be prepared, to more widely disseminate the knowledge generated and extend its use.

**Recommendation 8. For FAO Ecuador.** It is recommended that the project M&E manager compile and systematize all of the information generated by the project, to avoid the loss of documents and relevant outputs.

**Recommendation 9. For the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador and FAO Ecuador.** In order to strengthen the sustainability of the project outcomes, it is recommended that the proposals of regulatory instruments generated in the framework of the project be adopted – regulation of the AMESUC, regulation for fishery management in MPA and dredging regulation, among others – and that the finalization of plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas be speeded up to submit them to the decentralized autonomous governments and expedite the possibility of incorporating them into the land use and development plans.





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

1. The final evaluation of this project – included in the PRODOC and aligned with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) requirements – takes place for a dual purpose. On the one hand, it serves to report to the donor (GEF), to the Ministry of Environment, to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and to other counterparts in the execution. On the other hand, this exercise has an educational purpose. While assessing the progress made in achieving the objectives and outcomes proposed by the project, an attempt is made to identify lessons learned that can be applied to other similar projects.

## 1.2 Users foreseen

21. The foreseen users of this evaluation are shown in Table 1, along with the foreseen uses.

**Table 1. Foreseen users and uses of the evaluation**

Foreseen users	Foreseen uses
Project team, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ministry of Environment team: national project director and team of technicians from the former Subsecretariat of Marine and Coastal Management.</li> <li>ii. CI Ecuador team: manager and technical and operational team (director of the marine and coastal programme, director of operations, coordinator of contracts and general accountant).</li> <li>iii. Hivos team: representative in Ecuador, projects officer and financial assistant.</li> <li>iv. FAO Ecuador team: GEF portfolio coordinator, administrative assistant representative and specialists.</li> </ol>	The recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation may be considered to improve the execution of future interventions.
Ministry of Environment (Subsecretariats, Provincial Departments and coastal and marine protected areas), Municipal DAG involved, partners and fishery organizations of the beneficiary coastal communities.	The knowledge and experience acquired in the design and execution of this project will enable them to improve the design and execution of similar interventions in the future.
GEF	It will be able to use, in consultation with FAO, the evaluation conclusions and recommendations to contribute to strategic decision-making regarding similar future interventions and for future evaluations of their interventions.
FAO Representation in Ecuador	It will be able to use the main results of the evaluation for its next strategic planning, and for the design and execution of new projects.
FAO-GEF Coordination Unit at the central headquarters	It will be able to use the evaluation findings to improve the design and implementation of future projects financed by GEF, and to consider the good practices to improve management and extend the dissemination of knowledge.
Other donors, government institutions and organizations interested in supporting projects on the integrated management of natural resources in Ecuador.	To resume the recommendations and lessons learned to support other projects focused on the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources.

### **1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation**

22. The main objective of this final evaluation is stated in the PRODOC: "The aim of the final independent evaluation will be to describe the impact the project has had, the sustainability of its outcomes and the degree of achievement of the outcomes in the long-term. In addition, the final independent evaluation must indicate the future actions needed to sustain the project outcomes, expand on the impact it has had in subsequent phases, mainstream and upscale its outputs and practices, and share the information obtained with the authorities and institutions that have competences relating to integrated coastal management and the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, to therefore ensure the continuity of the processes that this project initiated".
23. Other aspects of the evaluation detailed in the PRODOC are translated into the following specific objectives:
  - i. To value the relevance of the intervention in relation to national priorities; the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries (participating municipalities and province); the national development objectives, including the Country Programming Framework (CPF); FAO Strategic Objective 2 (SO2), paying special attention to the integrated approach of the project; and objectives BD-1 and BD-2 of GEF-5.
  - ii. To evaluate the progress made by the project throughout the period of execution, focusing on its second phase after the mid-term evaluation, and the extent to which the progress contributes to achieving its objectives. To this end, the evaluation will assess the progress and the failure to fulfil the targets foreseen.
  - iii. To assess the progress to achieve the sustainability of the project intervention and its possible long-term impact.
  - iv. To identify the lessons learned with regard to the project design, implementation and management.
24. The evaluation is guided by the questions included in its terms of reference (TOR).

### **1.4 Method**

25. This is a final evaluation (also called a "summative" evaluation), which takes place upon completion of the projects to analyse different aspects of their execution and to determine the extent to which they achieved their objectives. To this end, different methods are used that make it possible to obtain robust evidence, which substantiates the assignment of a final rating for the project in the different aspects evaluated.
26. Consultations with the interested parties have followed ethical guidelines to guarantee that the participation of those involved is safe, non-discriminatory and respectful. In addition, these guidelines ensured that all of the participants in the evaluation took part voluntarily, understood the purpose of such and that the information gathered was dealt with confidentially. The approach involving the participation of interested parties also aimed to go beyond a simple questionnaire to include self-reflection and learning geared towards action.
27. This final evaluation is guided by the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and adopts a consultative and transparent approach. In particular, the process was implemented in close collaboration with the FAO Representation in Ecuador, the Steering Committee and the project Management Committee. The evaluation team incorporated the GEF

criteria and requirements into the methodology, to facilitate comparison with the reports prepared by said association and to contribute to the selection process of the programme.

28. The evaluation takes into consideration the theory of change (TOC), adapted by the final evaluation team based on the theory proposed for the mid-term evaluation, with an emphasis on the chain of outcomes. The TOC aims to capture the causal relationship between inputs, outputs expected as detailed in the project framework of outcomes, outcomes to which said outputs should contribute, and conditions under which they should occur.
29. The evaluation also takes into account the FAO Policy on Gender Equality to try to understand the challenges and successes handled in the context of the project, including the different access men and women have to resources, knowledge and finances, as well as the local differences in gender roles, responsibilities and rights.
30. The verification of the information was a key process in having sound and verifiable evidence that supports the findings and recommendations resulting from this evaluation.
31. The methods used in this evaluation are as follows:
  - i. Documentation review. An exhaustive review of the documents resulting from the project was completed, which include annual and half-yearly progress reports; technical outputs resulting from the direct work of the project executors and of the consultancies recruited; annual audits; annual operating plans; co-financing reports; minutes of the meetings of the Steering Committee and Management Committee; reports on the inspection visits and missions completed; tools used to monitor the project; and national strategic documents, of the decentralized autonomous governments (DAG) and of the organizations and institutions involved, which are related to the conservation of marine and coastal areas of high value for biodiversity, among other information available. This review provided the information to analyse each of the evaluation criteria shown in the evaluation matrix – including the progress towards the achievement of the outcomes – and made it possible to prepare more specific questions in the remote consultations with the interested parties. The Bibliography lists the external documents consulted.
  - ii. Gathering of information. To collect the opinions, perspectives, data and observations about the execution of the project from the executors, implementing parties, beneficiaries and other national and local stakeholders involved, semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted remotely. To this end, different communication tools were used, such as conference calls via Zoom and Teams and phone calls to landlines or mobile phones, or via WhatsApp. Seventy-eight people were interviewed and their details are included in Appendix 3.

## 1.5 Limitations

32. With regard to geographical cover, it was not possible to visit the project intervention areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A higher number of interviews were conducted with local stakeholders to compensate for this limitation. Evaluation resources were even used to pay for the men and women who work gathering shells to travel from the area of Esmeraldas to the municipality of San Lorenzo, where there is a telephone signal and an internet connection. However, only two interviews could be conducted with fishery organizations that participated in the preparation of fishery guidelines.

33. Another limitation was the availability of the information generated by the project. Several requests were made to the executing partners, which resulted in the partial delivery of the documents required. Annex 4 specifies the information that was not provided and that makes it impossible to determine whether some targets were met or not.

## **1.6 Structure of the report**

34. Following this introduction, chapter 2 presents the background and context of the projects. Main findings are presented in chapter 3, followed by lessons learned in chapter 4 and conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

## 2. Background and context of the project

35. Ecuador is known for housing high levels of biodiversity and endemism in its low surface area. In particular, the meeting of cold and warm currents (from Humboldt and Panama) off its coastlines generates varied climatic regimes on land and a wide range of marine and coastal ecosystems. Along its 2 859 kilometres of continental coastline lie 21 of the 27 globally recognized ecosystems (10 of the 14 marine ecosystems and 11 of the 13 coastal ecosystems), which have a combination of tropical elements and of warm waters (Salm *et al.*, 2000).
36. In particular, the Ecuadorian coastline has nesting beaches for four species of sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, *Dermochelys coriacea*) (Baquero *et al.*, 2008) and a substantial area of mangroves and estuaries that host a wide variety of species, including endangered species (*Crocodylus acutus*, *Lontra longicaudis*, *Anhima cornuta*) and species of commercial importance, such as Pacific bearded brotula (*Brotula clarkae*), black ark clam (*Anadara similis* and *A. tuberculosa*), red crab (*Ucides occidentalis*), lobster (*Panilurus gracilis* and *P. penicillatus*) and octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*).
37. However, these ecosystems face serious threats, such as the urbanization and mass use of beaches, overfishing, pollution and the destruction of mangroves as a result of the promotion of shrimp farming pools. Mangrove coverage lost approximately one-fifth of its surface area (22.5 percent) from 1969 to 2014, going from 202 695 hectares to 157 000 hectares (Ministry of Environment of Ecuador, 2014).
38. To tackle this situation, a network of 19 coastal and marine protected areas was created and policies were implemented that promote the sustainable use of fisheries and mangrove resources. The legislation recognizes the mangroves as public property and the coastal area as part of the natural heritage of all Ecuadorians, and prioritizes the use of its resources for the benefit of local communities. However, in practice, most of the coastline is unprotected and in many areas no sustainable use measures were implemented or their application faces substantial obstacles. The management of marine protected areas (MPAs) is not always aligned with municipal management and has also not been able to control and manage the fishing activities of local groups and poachers. Additionally, not all concessions granted by means of the Agreements for Mangrove Ecosystem Sustainable Use and Custody (AMESUC) have achieved full management of the areas in custody and concessionaires face limitations for investing in capital goods.
39. As a result of this situation and current problems, this project was submitted to the GEF. In the focal area of biodiversity of its fifth financing cycle (GEF-5), the association defines a system of sustainable protected areas as that which: i) has available, sufficient and predictable financial resources, including external financing, to cover the management costs of the protected areas; ii) effectively protects representative and ecologically feasible samples of the ecosystems of the country and provides appropriate coverage of endangered species at a sufficient scale to ensure their continuity in the long-term; and iii) retains the appropriate individual and institutional capacity to manage protected areas in such a way that they achieve their conservation objectives. In particular, GEF emphasizes that the mangroves are marine ecosystems that protect the livelihoods and food security of the communities, and that they can store carbon. Recent studies suggest that these carbon sinks related to the sea are just as or more important than the terrestrial forests in the global carbon cycle.
40. In accordance with the modified framework of outcomes, the project environmental objective is “the development of an integrated management approach for the use and conservation of marine and coastal areas of high value for biodiversity, by preparing proposals for “ecologically sensitive

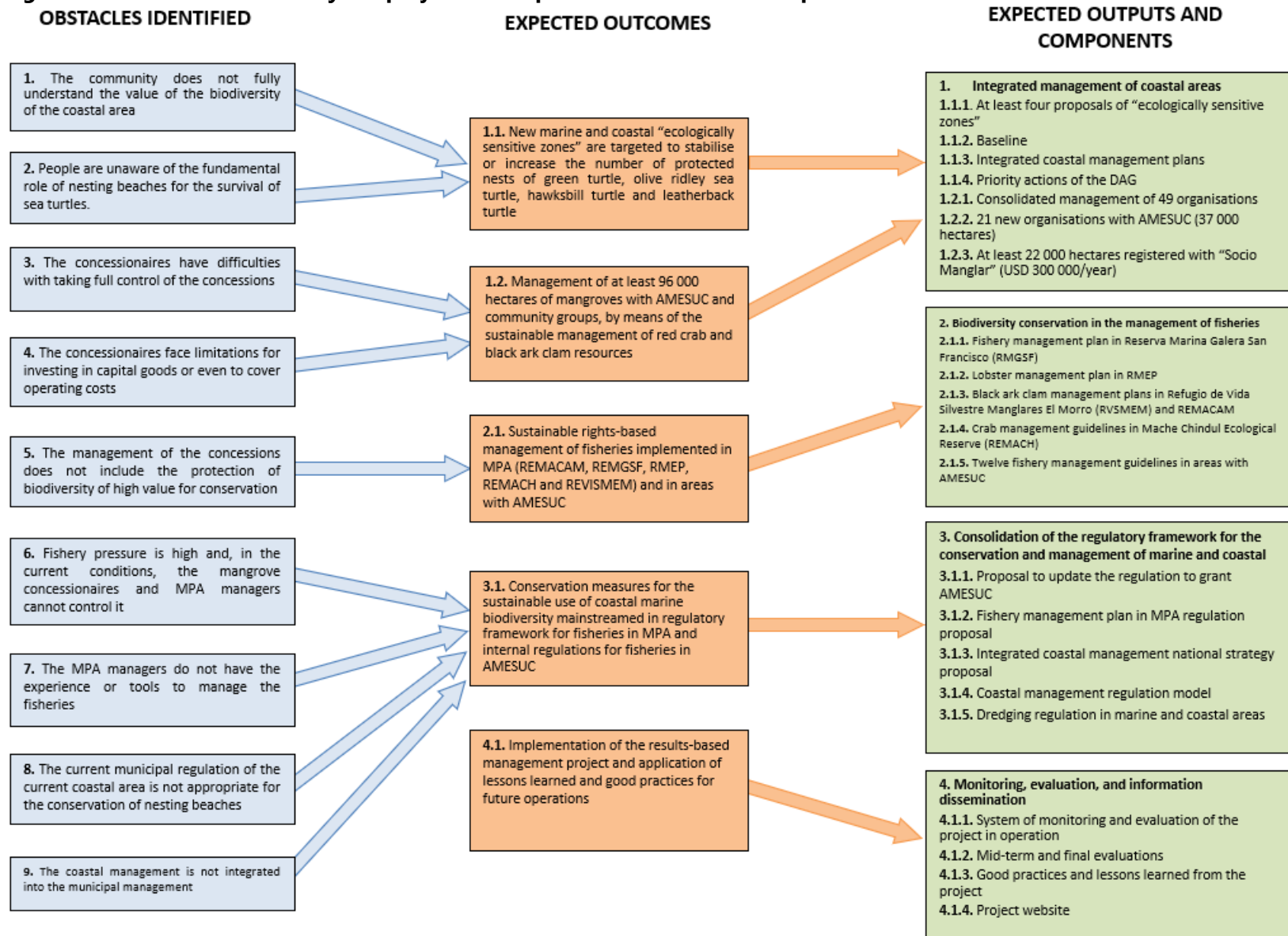
zones”, consolidating the areas granted to local organizations by means of AMESUC and the integration of the conservation of biodiversity in fishery management”. It is worth highlighting that this objective is different to that which was included in the PRODOC. This matter is discussed and examined in detail in section 3 on Findings. The development objective is “to improve and sustain the livelihoods of the people who depend on collecting black ark clams and red crab in the Gulf of Guayaquil and the Cayapas-Mataje estuary”. To achieve both objectives, the project focuses on four components:

- i. **Integrated management of coastal areas of high value for biodiversity.** This Component focuses mainly on the proposal of new marine and coastal “ecologically sensitive zones” that would encompass 15 000 hectares – equal to 100 kilometres of beach – which would be targeted to stabilize or increase the number of protected nests of green turtle, olive ridley sea turtle, hawksbill turtle and leatherback turtle (outcome 1.1). These “ecologically sensitive zones” would be included in plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, based on the integrated coastal management plans. Similarly, biodiversity conservation is addressed in the management of at least 96 000 hectares of mangroves and the increase in red crab and black ark clam populations (Outcome 1.2).
- ii. **Biodiversity conservation in the management of fisheries.** This Component focuses on rights-based sustainable fishery management, which would be implemented in five existing MPAs. This would make it possible to consolidate the sustainable management of red crab, black ark clam, lobster, Pacific bearded brotula and octopus resources. The aim is that at least 60 percent of the shell gatherers and crab gatherers of the Gulf of Guayaquil and the Cayapas-Mataje estuary participate in the proposed management guidelines, which would contribute to stabilizing the income obtained from these fishery resources (Outcome 2.1).
- iii. **Consolidation of the regulatory framework for the conservation and management of marine and coastal biodiversity.** This Component focuses mainly on the proposal of legal and operating instruments that sustain the actions proposed by the project in terms of AMESUC, fisheries management in the MPA and local coastal management, and in the adoption of an integrated coastal management strategy (Outcome 3.1).
- iv. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and information dissemination.** This Component focuses on the sustainable and results-based management of the project, as well as on the integration of annual and half-yearly reports. In terms of communication, the aim is to offer publications on good practices and lessons learned, and a project website to share and exchange the experiences resulting from such (Outcome 4.1).

41. Figure 1 shows the obstacles identified during the project design phase, which would be addressed by means of the expected outputs and outcomes. Component 4 is not based on the obstacles identified for the intervention but on the project management needs.

42. The institutional structure of the project includes a Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Environment, *Conservación Internacional Ecuador* (CI Ecuador), Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos) and FAO Ecuador; a Management Committee composed of operational personnel from the aforementioned institutions; a national project Director (civil servant of the Ministry of Environment); the technical team that executes the project on a daily basis; and five provincial coordination roundtables.

**Figure 1. Obstacles identified by the project and expected outcomes and outputs to tackle them**



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the PRODOC.



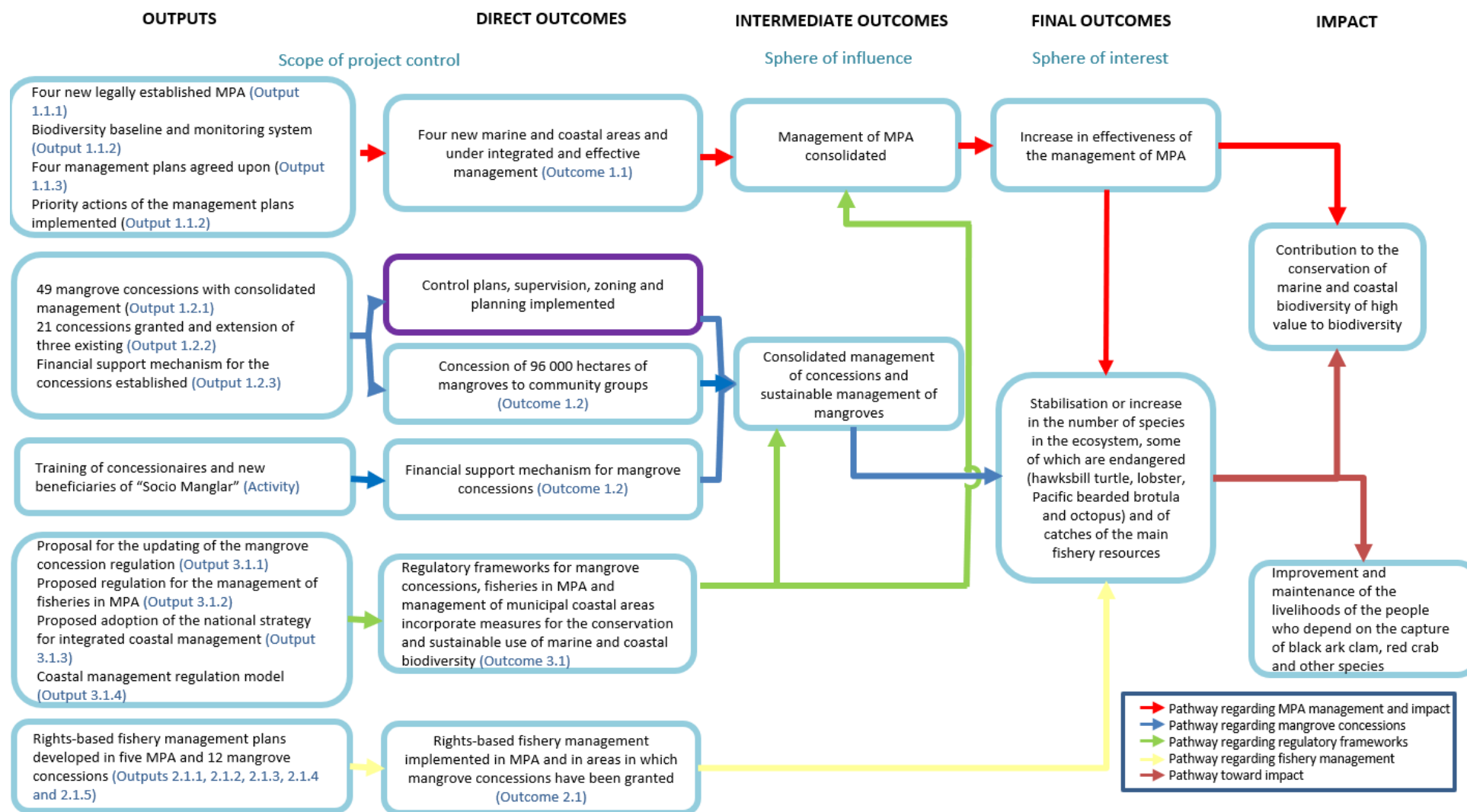
## 2.1 Theory of change

43. The theory of change (TOC) is resumed, reconstructed by the team that completed the mid-term evaluation with some adjustments to make it clearer (Figure 2). In accordance with the TOC map, four pathways are identified to generate the expected project impact. These pathways are:
- i. Management of MPAs (red arrows): Preparing proposals of new MPA and management plans and implementing priority actions included in these would lead to the creation of four legally established MPAs, with integrated and effective management (direct result). This would consolidate the management of the MPA in Ecuador (intermediate outcome). If this is achieved, the effectiveness of the management of the MPA could be increased (final outcome), which, in turn, could stabilize or increase the number of species in the ecosystem, some of which are endangered, such as the hawksbill turtle, lobster, Pacific bearded brotula and octopus. The increased effectiveness in the management of the MPA and the stabilization or increased number of species would have a positive effect on contributing to the conservation of these areas considered of high value for biodiversity (impact) and helping, therefore, to fulfil the GEF objectives.
  - ii. Management of the AMESUC (blue arrows): The series of outputs expected from the project, such as the training plans implemented, the preparation of management plans, the equipment provided, the recuperated AMESUC, the preparation of internal regulations and the generation of new information, would lead to the concession of additional mangrove areas and management and control plans to improve their management and protection (direct outcomes). These direct outputs and outcomes consolidate the management of the AMESUC (intermediate outcome). It is important to clarify that the plans relating to the control, monitoring, zoning and planning included in the TOC map do not correspond to a direct outcome of the project but to an outcome proposed by the team that performed the mid-term evaluation, essential for strengthening the management of the mangroves under concession. For its part, the training of the concessionaires and of the new beneficiaries of the "Socio Manglar" (Mangrove Partner) programme would make it possible to establish a financial mechanism that would support the implementation of the sustainability actions in the areas with AMESUC and, consequently, would contribute to the consolidation of the management of the AMESUC (intermediate outcome). If this intermediate outcome is achieved, it might also help to stabilize or increase the number of species in the mangroves (final outcome). This final outcome would equally favour the conservation of high value marine and coastal biodiversity.
  - iii. Regulatory frameworks (green arrows): This pathway decisively contributes to achieving the expected impact of the project by means of the updated AMESUC regulation; the adoption of the regulation of fisheries in the MPA by the Ministry of Environment; the preparation of five coastal management regulations that the new MPAs coordinate with the local and national governments; and the adoption of the National strategy for Integrated Coastal Management (outputs). These instruments would contribute to the incorporation of the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and, consequently, to the preparation of regulatory frameworks that support effective management of the MPA, consolidated management of the AMESUC and rights-based fishery management in MPA and mangroves, for which a concession was granted.
  - iv. Fishery management (yellow arrows): A very direct pathway is identified to generate a positive effect on the livelihoods of people who depend on the capture of species of commercial value in mangroves. This impact would be achieved by means of the preparation of fishery management models for different species, based on rights-based fisheries management (output). The project foresees that these fishery models would be implemented in 5 existing MPAs and 12 areas with AMESUC (direct outcome). This would

substantially contribute to achieving sustainable fishery management, in the MPA and in the areas with AMESUC (intermediate outcome). Consequently, this intermediate outcome would contribute to stabilizing or increasing the number and diversity of fishery resources (final outcome). In turn, this would generate the expected impact of an improvement in the livelihoods of the people who depend on the capture of black ark clam, red crab and other commercial species. In addition, sustainable fishery management also helps to stabilize or increase the number of other species in the ecosystem. The above reaffirms the contribution of the project to the GEF objectives with regard to the conservation of high value ecosystems, in turn generating very substantial social benefit.

44. As a result of the mid-term review, the framework of outcomes of the project was modified, although the recommendations in said review were not exactly complied with. The modifications the review suggested at all times tried not to reduce the project impact. However, the framework of outcomes that the Steering Committee approved did not manage this. This adjusted version was included in the 2019 project implementation review (PIR). Annex 2 shows a comparison between the original framework of outcomes from the PRODOC and the modified framework of outcomes, pointing out the main differences. For its part, Annex 3 shows the analysis of the modified framework of outcomes and specifies its areas for improvement. The main changes performed include the following:
- i. The global environmental objective of the project was modified. The new objective states that the conservation and use of biodiversity will take place by means of the formulation of proposals for the creation of ecologically sensitive zones and not of conservation areas as stated in the PRODOC. As can be seen in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.7 of this report, the ecologically sensitive zones are not, *per se*, a conservation instrument but an element that the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas must include.
  - ii. Outcome 1.1 was modified substantially to incorporate the change in the global environmental objective of the project. In particular, the need to create new marine protected areas was eliminated and replaced by the assignment of ecologically sensitive zones.
  - iii. The scope of Outcome 1.2 was also reduced, by focusing it on the conservation of red crab and black ark clam, and leaving out the conservation of some endangered species, such as the American crocodile.
  - iv. The scope of Outcome 2.1 was modified to indicate that sustainable fishery management in five already existing MPAs will consolidate sustainable management, excluding the influence of said management on the stabilization or increase of the captures of the main fishery resources.
  - v. The scope of the outputs of Outcome 3.1 was not modified substantially. The main changes consisted of the incorporation of two new outputs. One of them addresses a priority of the Ministry of Environment related to the creation of a regulation on dredging in marine and coastal areas, and the other focuses on the approval of the Organic Environmental Code Regulation (COA).
45. The effects of the changes made to the framework of outcomes of the PRODOC, whose main impact lies in the modification of the global environmental objective, are analysed throughout this report. In order to analyse these effects and therefore determine the contribution of the project to the biodiversity conservation objectives of GEF, a new theory of change was prepared based on the modified framework of outcomes, which is examined and discussed in section 3.7 of this report.

**Figure 2. Project theory of change based on the PRODOC and the mid-term review**



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the PRODOC.

### 3. Evaluation questions: key findings

#### 3.1 Relevance and coherence

**EQ 1.** Were the project strategy and actions appropriate for meeting the needs of all stakeholders involved in matters of sustainable use and conservation of marine and coastal areas of high value for biodiversity, including support for the generation and implementation of policies and programmes of the Government of Ecuador, of GEF (BD-1 and BD-2 of the GEF-5) and of FAO (particularly SO2)?

**The project relevance and coherence criterion is rated as moderately satisfactory.**

**Finding 1.** The project covered important needs of the local and national stakeholders involved.

46. The project covered important needs of the stakeholders involved. In accordance with the interviews conducted, the management and zoning of the beaches (Outcome 1.1) was, and continues to be, a priority for local stakeholders. They consider that the management and control of the beaches presents substantial shortcomings, given that there is no regulation of the economic activities of such conduct or monitoring of the access of the vehicles. For their part, the fishery organizations that managed to renew or obtain their AMESUC (Outcome 1.2) highlighted the extensive support that the project provided to offer greater certainty and sustainability to their fishery operations. In addition, some of the productive projects that have begun to be implemented have offered economic alternatives to some fishery organizations that aim to reduce the pressure on the mangroves (Outcome 1.2). The preparation of fishery plans and guidelines has contributed to consolidating the capacities of the fishery organizations, which appreciate the alignment of the project with their desire to improve the sustainable use of their resources (Outcome 2.1). Similarly, the project has met the needs of the Ministry of Environment to consolidate their regulatory framework on the use and conservation of mangroves and protected areas (Outcome 3.1).

**Finding 2.** The project was aligned with the government programme and strategic documents. However, project relevance was affected by the structural changes in government, which led to the discontinuation of the Subsecretariat of Marine and Coastal Management of the Ministry of Environment, that the National Director of the project reported to. In addition, the financial crisis that prevailed at the start of the project – exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – substantially lowered the ministerial budget, leading the Ministry to decide against creating more protected areas and suspend the financing of “Socio Manglar”, a programme that constituted a financial incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of the mangroves. Consequently, the alignment of the project with the marine and coastal policy of Ecuador is uncertain at this time.

47. In May 2017 – a year after hiring the first project manager – a new government took office in Ecuador. The 2017-2021 National Development Plan diagnosis (National Secretariat of Planning and Development, 2017) of the incoming government identified the same marine and coastal ecosystems issues that underpin the project. Consequently, its 3.1 policy focuses on conserving, recuperating and regulating the use of the marine and coastal natural heritage, among others, to guarantee and protect the rights of present and future generations. In this regard, the territorial guidelines highlight the importance of promoting the conservation of oceans and coastlines as well as marine and coastal biodiversity to guarantee the production of commercial and non-commercial fish species, and to preserve marine biodiversity. Similarly, they establish the need to incorporate new priority areas – terrestrial, aquatic or marine – for conservation and/or sustainable management, as stated in the 2015-2030 National Biodiversity Strategy. In addition, they state the need to comprehensively assess the National System of Protected Areas for marine and

terrestrial spaces, particularly for high value conservation areas and areas with levels of intervention that involve re-zoning and re-categorization.

48. In particular, target 13.2 of the 2015-2030 National Biodiversity Strategy (Ministry of Environment of Ecuador, 2016) states that in 2017 Ecuador increased its continental marine and coastal surface area under conservation or environmental management to 817 000 ha, in line with Aichi Target 11. However, to achieve the outcomes of the 2015-2030 National Biodiversity Strategy, it emphasizes the need to guarantee financial sustainability mechanisms, and the main challenges to this end are the downward global trend in the price of oil, the appreciation of the United States Dollar, and the presence of natural events such as the El Niño phenomenon, among others.
49. Although the current framework of Ecuador's government strategies and policies is aligned with the project, the execution of the 2017-2021 National Development Plan and its government programmes have, in practice, faced an economic crisis and institutional changes that have substantially affected the project. In particular, in 2020 the former Ministry of Environment merged with the National Secretariat of Water, which led to the discontinuation of the Subsecretariat of Marine and Coastal Management (SGMC), that the National Director of the project reported to. The duties of this institution therefore passed on to the Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage, with headquarters in Quito. Although the technical team of the former SGMC continues to support the project, its new duties are unclear. In the interviews conducted, various civil, international and academic organization stakeholders expressed their concern over a possible lack of visibility of marine and coastal matters due to structural merging and centralization in the Ministry of Environment. At the moment, said Ministry is reviewing the regulatory proposals that resulted from the project to adjust them to the structural changes. As of today date, it is not known which changes will be made to said proposals.
50. In addition, the economic crisis in Ecuador that prevailed at the start of the project – worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic – led to a substantial reduction in the Ministry of Environment budget. As a result of the foregoing, the Ministry decided to suspend the creation of protected areas, an essential component of the environmental objective of the project and one of the main expected outcomes of such. In addition, it suspended the government budget for "Socio Manglar", which constitutes an economic incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of the mangroves. However, the Ministry of Environment has managed international cooperation resources to avoid halting contributions to the associations previously registered with "Socio Manglar". Other institutional changes that affected the project are presented in more detail in the section about the performance of the Ministry of Environment.
51. Given the aforementioned, it is possible to state that, although the project remains aligned with the government strategy and planning instruments – that establish actions which contribute to the fulfilment of international commitments and objectives –, priority is currently being given to a transition policy on marine and coastal matters, which makes it impossible to determine the current alignment of the project with the priorities of the national Government, with certainty. These government changes have put the adaptation capacity of the project to the test, as can be seen in section 3.3.

**Finding 3.** The project adjusted to the priorities of the local governments with regard to their responsibility for the administration of beaches. The alignment was consolidated due to the modification of the framework of outcomes and the enactment of the new national environmental legislation, the COA and its Regulation.

52. At local level, the COA Regulation – enacted in 2019 – details the responsibility that local governments have to contribute to the management of marine and coastal ecosystems by means

of the administration of beaches. In particular, sections 1 and 2 of Title II of Book V establish the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, which are obligatory for the decentralized autonomous governments, as one of the elements of an integrated coastal management plan. To this end, the mid-term evaluation detailed actions undertaken by the municipalities to regulate the beach activities before the initiation of the project. In this manner, the mid-term evaluation cites the regulatory ordinance enacted by the municipality of Salinas in 2013, which regulates the circulation of vehicles along the beach, the management of pets and the cleaning of the beach. It also mentions that in that same year, the government of the canton of Esmeraldas enacted an environmental management regulation that led to the creation of the Environmental Management Department, guided by the principles of conservation, development, repair and sustainable use of the natural environment.

53. Consequently, it can be stated that the project aligned with the local priorities and policies. The project outcomes also make it possible to confirm their contribution to the fulfilment of said policies and priorities. The aforementioned is addressed in more detail in section 3.2.

**Finding 4.** The project scope and objectives aligned with the 2018-2021 Country Programming Framework given that FAO Ecuador considers the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources as one of its priorities. The project is complemented by other FAO Ecuador fishery initiatives, and it is the only one that is related to the mangroves.

54. With regard to the project relevance in terms of the FAO programmes and objectives, it is corroborated that the project remains in line with SO2 of the FAO Revised Strategic Framework: "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner" Particularly with Outcome 2.2. of such: "Countries developed or improved policies and governance mechanisms to address sustainable production, climate change and environmental degradation in agriculture, fisheries and forestry".
55. The project also forms part of the FAO framework of priorities and regional initiatives for Latin America and the Caribbean, and aligns with regional initiative 3 (Sustainable use of natural resources, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management), which stipulates the following: "[Provide assistance to the governments to] strengthen national programmes for the sustainable management of natural resources, the reduction of agroclimatic risks, the mitigation of emissions and the adaptation of the agriculture sector to climate change, in the new low-carbon development context".
56. With regard to the 2018-2021 Ecuador Country Programming Framework, the project aligned with Priority Area 3 (Sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to risk, by means of the consolidation of environmental public policy related to the sustainable management and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources, guaranteeing ecosystem services and the development of strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change) and specifically with Outcome 3.3 (Multi-sectoral and integrated strategies are developed and implemented at national and local level for the integrated management and conservation of natural resources (landscapes, forests, land, water and ecosystem services), incorporating practices for the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change that reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and the vulnerability of the population to climate change).
57. The project therefore continues to be relevant for FAO in Ecuador. For complementary purposes, FAO has accredited experience in the field of fishery in marine ecosystems, and FAO Ecuador is working on a project with the European Union to strengthen the Fisheries Law of the country. However, its programme and projects do not include initiatives related to the management of mangroves that could expand upon or continue on with the project achievements.

**Finding 5.** The project aligned with the GEF-5 objectives detailed in the PRODOC. Specifically, the project aligned with the second objective of the focal area of biodiversity (BD-2), which addresses the sustainable use of production in terrestrial and marine sectors and landscapes, and in the improvement of the sustainability of protected area systems. With regard to the current financing cycle (GEF-7), the project aligned with BD-2, as regards the reduction of the direct promoters of biodiversity loss, and with the blue economy approach of the strategy relating to international waters.

58. The project aligned with the GEF-5 objectives detailed in the PRODOC. It has aligned with BD-2 (Incorporation of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the productive sectors and landscapes, whether terrestrial or marine). Given that the project contributed towards generating fishery plans and guidelines in protected areas, this also aligned with objective one of the focal area of biodiversity (BD-1) (To improve the sustainability of protected area systems), specifically as regards maintaining adequate institutional and individual capacity to manage protected areas in such a way that they achieve their conservation objectives.
59. Although the project was designed for GEF-5 – and it is evaluated based on the objectives of this replenishment cycle – it is worth pointing out that it has also aligned with the objectives of replenishment cycle seven (GEF-7). Specifically, the project aligned with BD-2, which involves the reduction of the direct promoters of biodiversity loss. Specifically, it is aligned with Output 7 of said objective (Anthropogenic pressures on vulnerable marine and coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds, and associated ecosystems, including pollution, over-fishing and destructive fishery, and non-regulated coastal development, have decreased, therefore contributing to the integrity and resilience of the ecosystem). It also aligned with Output 9 (The ecological representation of the protected area systems and their coverage, and of other conservation measures effective in the areas, which are of particular importance to biodiversity, specifically the habitats of endangered species, has increased).
60. It is also worth pointing out that, although the project is not evaluated based on the objectives of GEF-7, it has also been aligned with the blue economy approach of the strategy relating to the international waters of said cycle. In particular, with regard to the integration of healthy ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and adequate governance structures, by means of the promotion of the sustainable management of fisheries in the mangroves and MPA in the targeted areas.
61. In summary, the project has met important needs of the local stakeholders. These have coincided with the urgent need to regulate the use of the targeted beaches and the importance of having new, renewed and updated AMESUC to formalize their activity, and of having fishery guidelines and training activities that reinforce the application of practices for the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources. In addition, there are regulatory instrument proposals – requested by the government – that will complement its legal framework. In addition, the project aligned with the government programme and strategic documents. However, the recent policy and structural reforms and the prevailing economic crisis in the country have weakened and destabilized the Ministry of Environment, generating uncertainty over the positioning and relevance of marine and coastal matters for the current government. Moreover, the project aligned with GEF and FAO priorities and strategies, although the contribution to their fulfilment has substantially decreased due to the modification of the framework of outcomes. As a result of the aforementioned, the relevance and coherence criterion is rated as moderately satisfactory.

## 3.2 Effectiveness

**EQ 2.** Which intentional as well as involuntary outcomes were achieved in relation to the framework of outcomes determined in the mid-term evaluation at the time of the evaluation? Are these contributing and/or positioned to contribute to the achievement of the project development and environmental objectives?

**The rating for the criterion on the achievement of the project outcomes is moderately unsatisfactory.**

62. The project achievements are analysed in accordance with project progress as of the date of completion of this evaluation (September/October 2020) and the modified framework of outcomes, included in the 2019 PIR. It is important to mention that this framework has design errors, which are analysed and described in section 3.3. One of these errors consists of including a target in the output description and another target – sometimes different – in the “targets” column. When the targets included in the different columns do not match, the evaluation team agreed to determine the level of achievement of the outputs and outcomes based on the target explicitly detailed in the modified framework of outcomes. In other words, the target included in the output description is not taken into account.
63. The level of achievement of each output and outcome is shown as the percentage of fulfilment of the respective target. The evaluation team assesses this value in accordance with the target and available evidence, which includes the review of the output or outcome, *per se*, the progress reports, the documentation generated by the project regarding such, and the analysis of the interviews, among others.
64. It is also worth mentioning that GEF approved an extension for the completion of the project – now programmed for January 2021 – due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is why the percentage fulfilment of some of the targets is probably increased. Appendix 2 provides more detailed information on the project achievements. The following details the most relevant aspects of said achievements for each of the components.
65. In general, the level of fulfilment of the project targets is approximately 68 percent.<sup>1</sup> The actions to monitor and protect sea turtle nests were extended but an official system for the management or protection of beaches outside of the MPA was not specified. The sustainable management of fisheries under the AMESUC and in MPA also improved but its scope is still limited. Both outcomes contribute to the fulfilment of the project development and environmental objectives. With regard to regulation proposals, the highest achievement would be the inclusion of topics relating to integrated coastal management in the COA Regulation, as a result of the modifications made to the framework of outcomes. In addition, there are achievements that cannot be attributed to the project, as they materialized before changing the framework of outcomes and were not included in the PRODOC. The framework of outcomes modified after the mid-term review has inconsistencies and inaccuracies that make it difficult to adequately measure the achievements.

---

<sup>1</sup> Average of the project outcomes and outputs, not including those that are undetermined or that could not be evaluated:

(4.2 percent+50 percent+90 percent+25 percent+72 percent+80 percent+100 percent+75 percent+100 percent+60 percent+10 percent+85 percent+40 percent+40 percent+45 percent+90 percent+60 percent+100 percent+100 percent+100 percent+100 percent)/19 = 67.9 percent.



In addition, some of these could not be corroborated due to lack of access to all of the project information. Consequently, the effectiveness criterion is rated as moderately unsatisfactory.

## Component 1

**Finding 6.** Fulfilment of the targets of the outcomes and outputs associated with Component 1 is 66 percent.<sup>2</sup> A level of fulfilment of 72 percent was reached in the mangrove area covered by AMESUC and, at the moment, it is not possible to determine fulfilment in the targeted coastal areas. The consolidation of the organizations that hold AMESUC has generated positive outcomes in the sustainable management of species of commercial interest but not necessarily of other elements of the biodiversity of this ecosystem. No integrated coastal management guidelines were made that include the conservation of new sea turtle nesting areas. In addition, it was not possible to determine the fulfilment of the three targets due to a lack of information, and it was not possible to evaluate another four targets due to inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the modified framework of outcomes.

66. The fulfilment of Outcome 1.1 could not be evaluated. The first target involves reaching 10 000 hectares of targeted coastal area and over 100 kilometres of sea turtle nesting beaches. The 2020 PIR reports a targeted area of 12 000 hectares across 120.61 kilometres of beaches. The evaluation team received an intervention proposal specifying the beaches and surface that is the object of the action. However, it does not make it possible to verify whether the foreseen intervention was carried out. That is why it was not possible to evaluate the fulfilment of this target. The second target involves an increase in the number of nests detected compared to the baseline. It was not possible to corroborate this increase either. The information provided in the reports (2019 PIR and 2020 PIR) corresponds to the national monitoring of sea turtles and only includes aggregate data per province, with no reference whatsoever to the beaches that the project targets. Part of the increase registered (>20 percent) is due to the second report including data for the province of Galápagos, outside the scope of this project.
67. Output 1.1.1 has a low percentage of fulfilment. Its associated target consists of proposals of new ecologically sensitive zones, with a total surface area of 10 000 hectares. However, the coverage identified covers 422.83 hectares (4.2 percent). Said surface area corresponds to the sum of the "ecologically sensitive zones" proposed in four of the six drafts submitted to the decentralized autonomous governments, as two of them do not specify said areas.
68. Output 1.1.2 involves accomplishing three targets: i) baseline number and distribution of sea turtles; ii) operational monitoring system; and iii) National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles. However, these targets had already been reached before the Steering Committee approved the modified framework of outcomes in August 2019. With regard to the first target and, in accordance with the documentation review and the interviews performed, the Ministry of Environment started to monitor turtles in 2010. In 2014, this acquired more momentum with the publication of the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, and as such there were already baseline numbers and distributions of sea turtles in several areas of the targeted zones.<sup>3</sup> To this end, the project prepared a baseline and completed a comprehensive diagnosis of the nesting beaches. However, it does not provide nesting data or data on the number of sea turtles. In addition, of the six areas studied, only two correspond to those in which beach management plans were proposed (Santa Marianita and Engabao). To complement existing information, the project completed another study in foraging (not nesting) areas in the Gulf of Guayaquil, outside

---

<sup>2</sup> Average of Component 1 targets, excluding undetermined targets or targets that could not be evaluated: (4.2 percent+50 percent+90 percent+25 percent+72 percent+80 percent+100 percent+75 percent+100 percent)/9 = 66.24 percent.

<sup>3</sup> This was achieved with the support of civil organizations and groups of volunteers from the communities.

of the project targeted areas. This study focused on determining the movements and use of the habitat of the hawksbill turtle and the American crocodile. It did not contribute to the accomplishment of the target for the aforementioned reason, as this had already been accomplished in any case before being included in the modified framework of outcomes in 2019, because the Ministry of Environment already had baseline numbers and distributions of sea turtles since 2010. Due to the foregoing, it is not possible to determine the achievement of this output.

69. With regard to the second target of Output 1.1.2 and, as mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, the Ministry of Environment completed studies and applied non-standardized procedures for monitoring sea turtles in the MPA since 2010. The project contributed to its strengthening by training park rangers and volunteers on topics related to nest monitoring, nest management, necropsies and care of stranded sea turtles; delivery of materials (e.g. monitoring kits, signs, educational material, nest protection material) and logistical support (e.g. Ministry of Environment technician mobilization costs, vehicle for the care and transportation of wild animals). Thanks to this, it was possible to consolidate the system for monitoring and protecting nests inside and outside of the protected areas, including beaches that now have plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. However, it was not possible to determine the accomplishment of this target, as the Ministry of Environment had a monitoring system and the modified framework of outcomes indicates the contrary.
70. The third target of Output 1.1.2 (National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles), does not specify whether it relates to preparing or updating said plan. However, the baseline of this target states that there is no plan, and as such it is assumed that the intention is to prepare one. Under this premise, it was found that the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles was prepared in 2014, in other words, far before the modified framework of outcomes was approved in 2019. The inside cover of said plan, published in 2014, states the following: "The preparation and publication of the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles took place in the framework of the project "Marine Landscape of the Eastern Tropical Pacific", financed by the Walton Family Foundation and executed by CI Ecuador, in collaboration with the former Ministry of Environment of Ecuador and a wide network of partner organizations". Consequently, this output cannot be considered an achievement of the project. The contribution would have consisted of an update of said plan. However, due to accumulated delays in this task, the decision was made to delegate this responsibility to the project "Conservation of Sea Turtles in Continental Ecuador", executed by WildAid with support from the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ). It was agreed that the project should take care of outlining and imposing the updated plan.
71. With regard to Output 1.1.3, it should be noted that the integrated coastal management plans were not prepared, which form part of one of the targets of the new output included in the modified framework of outcomes of 2019. The justification provided by the evaluation team is that these plans go beyond the scope of the project, as they encompass other areas and aspects of the municipalities. The modified framework of outcomes states that the beach management plans must be included in the integrated coastal management plans. From the aforementioned, it can be gathered that the changes made to the framework of outcomes did not result from a robust analysis of the possible achievements of the project in accordance with its objectives and scope. On the other hand, the other part of said target, which consisted of proposing four beach management plans, was accomplished. The second target of this output was also accomplished, as it involved updating (although the target does not specify that it relates to an update) four MPA management plans, three of which consider climate change adaptation criteria.
72. Output 1.1.4 is also a new output included in the modified framework of outcomes. In addition to presenting inaccuracies in the target, this output was ambitious as it involves the implementation

of coastline use systems for the management of solid waste, wastewater and the monitoring of stray animals in four ecologically sensitive zones by the municipalities. The implementation of these systems may require a period of time, which exceeds the lifetime of the project. Up until now, only one municipality (Esmeraldas) implemented a regulation system, and as such only 25 percent of the target has been achieved. Priority actions were implemented in the remaining areas. Rubbish bins, signs and boundary markers were installed on the beaches of Las Palmas (municipality of Esmeraldas) and of Punta Napo-Canoa (municipality of San Vicente) to stop the entry of vehicles; whereas in Engabao (municipality of Playas), Santa Marianita (municipality of Manta) and Las Palmas, pet sterilization campaigns took place. These actions were completed despite the health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

73. As stated in Outcome 1.2, the surface area of the mangrove managed under AMESUC was increased to almost 70 000 hectares nationally, and consequently the target (96 000 hectares) is 72 percent achieved. It is possible that in the next few months this figure will increase to over 80 000 hectares, corresponding to 18 AMESUC in the process of approval. This increase represents a relevant contribution for the sustainable management of the mangroves of Ecuador. However, it was not possible to determine the magnitude of the contribution with regard to the state of the commercial species as no measurements were taken for the red crab and black ark clam populations since the implementation of the interventions. This is due to the fact that the preparation of the baseline of said populations was not timely (it took place in 2019, during the interview or after such) or complete (only four AMESUC for black ark clam and seven for crab, in the Gulf of Guayaquil and in a community of the archipelago of Jambelí).
74. Important activities were carried out to strengthen the organizations that hold AMESUC for the sustainable management of fishery resources (Output 1.2.1). Work was carried out with a total of 63 organizations to prepare management plans (20 delivered and 18 in progress), update management plans (4 renewals and 6 extensions), deliver fishery guidelines (12), promote productive projects (12) and conduct training activities (26 organizations trained). Although these actions can be considered activities that strengthen the organizations, they correspond – with the exception of the training activities – to other outputs of the modified framework of outcomes. It is observed that the combination of activities generates better outcomes, but it is difficult to determine the achievement of the target and the complementarity of the project, which was awaiting the adoption of sustainable management measures in more than 49 organizations. Specifically, as there is no information about the actions completed before the project and which were incorporated thanks to the intervention, and there is also no record of the progress made by each organization. In other words, a baseline that makes it possible to make comparisons was not prepared: a substantial obstacle to report the changes generated by the project regarding the sustainable management implemented by the communities.
75. Training on administrative, governance and sales matters provided important support in strengthening the management of the organizations and the implementation of the management actions, and in accessing – in some cases – better prices for their products. In addition, the supply of tools called 'peinetas' for minimum size control, outboard motors and - in some cases - boats for surveillance activities, as well as the placement of signs to mark the boundaries of the areas under the *Acuerdos de Uso Sostenible y Custodia del Ecosistema Manglar* (AUSCEM), were very useful. The target of training ten organizations on gender equality was also accomplished, although the effectiveness of this training was variable. This matter is addressed in more detail in section 3.4.
76. The targets of Output 1.2.2 regarding the delivery, renewal or extension of AMESUC were partially accomplished. Up until now, 20 new agreements have been submitted (out of 21 planned), 4 have

been renewed (out of 3 planned) and 6 have been extended (out of 3 planned). In total, they amount to 27 730.82 hectares of the 37 000 hectares planned. As previously mentioned, this surface area could increase, as 18 additional files are currently in the process of approval. Fourteen (14) of these files correspond to AMESUC managed in the Cayapas-Mataje Mangroves Ecological Reserve (REMACAM) and they have not been authorized yet. This wait and the little information provided caused unease among some of the beneficiaries. According to the Ministry of Environment officials, these AMESUC are being processed as normal, in line with the regulation in force. This output also included the preparation of a multi-temporal study of mangrove coverage in seven protected areas. Four (4) of them coincide with the AMESUC in the areas targeted by the project: REMACAM, El Morro, El Salado and Churute Mangroves. This activity took place without issues, but it is not linked to the expansion of the surface area under the AMESUC modality, as this output states.

77. Eight new organizations were included in the "Socio Manglar" programme (Output 1.2.3); together with the 17 pre-existing organizations, they represent 41.6 percent of the AMESUC in force and amount to a total of 39 944.12 hectares. As a result, the targets included in this programme of incentives were exceeded (incorporation of 40 percent of AMESUC and at least 22 000 hectares into "Socio Manglar"). The target to transfer a total of USD 300 000 annually was also exceeded, with more than USD 400 000 transferred each year. The "Socio Manglar" programme is very useful for the management of the organizations, particularly for the purposes of planning and liquidity to cover administrative and logistical costs (above all for control and monitoring activities).
78. This output also included the support for twelve organizations for the implementation of productive activities geared towards reducing pressure on the mangroves. To this end, a call was issued for the submission of project proposals. A committee composed of the Ministry of Environment, Hivos, CI Ecuador and FAO selected the proposals best suited to the criteria of the call. However, the legal entities of the organizations and the administrative requirements needed were not taken into account for the implementation of said projects. It was consequently found that 7 out of 12 productive projects have problems relating to their regularization. For example, to conduct tourism activities – such as the provision of food and drink or accommodation services – the respective licences are required from the Ministry of Tourism. To this end, the organizations must create a company or register as Community Tourism Centres, if they have community territory and after registering with the National Secretariat for the Management of Policies. This has discouraged some of the organizations and generated internal conflicts; it has led to certain informality due to the lack of licences required to perform the activities; or has led to the modification of the ideas proposed initially. In addition, the boats supplied were registered under the modality of cargo and passengers, which permits the transport of passengers but is not enough to perform sightseeing tours, as an additional licence is needed for this from the Ministry of Tourism.
79. The Pacific oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*) farming project, which is being implemented by the Hualtaco-Huaquillas Cooperative, has the licences and studies required by the legislation in force on introduced species. The oysters are being bred in suspended cages and are harvested before their reproductive cycle culminates, as the technical studies suggest. However, taking into account that this species has caused serious problems in marine ecosystems of other parts of the world, it is vitally important that the authorities closely monitor the project and that it meets all of their requirements.

## Component 2

**Finding 7.** Approximately 60 percent<sup>4</sup> of the targets associated with the outcomes and outputs of Component 2 were met. It was not possible to evaluate the achievement of five of the ten targets of the outputs, as only the baselines of the populations of the species addressed were generated, but a subsequent measurement was not taken in all cases, to determine the effect of the project on the populations. It is worth highlighting the consolidation of the technical capacity and of the management of the organizations in charge of managing the fisheries targeted.

80. Outcome 2.1 (Implementation of rights-based sustainable management guidelines in the MPA and mangroves with AMESUC) was partially accomplished (by approximately 60 percent). Up until now, the guidelines have been submitted to four of the five MPAs proposed in the target, although it has not been possible to clearly identify their level of implementation. The five MPAs are carrying out different actions – mainly of fishery use and control (minimum sizes, observation of zoning) – but these do not always relate to the sustainable management guidelines. However, the process has strengthened the MPA management activities, including an improvement in the relationship between the managers of protected areas and the fishery associations. However, the sustainable management guidelines submitted to the organizations that hold AMESUC have hardly been implemented, as they are restrictive, not very practical and are not connected to the local situation.
81. It was verified that the updated Management plan (Output 1.1.3) for the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve included a small number of specific guidelines delivered (Output 2.1.1) for the management of lobster, octopus and Pacific bearded brotula fisheries. It shows a lack of coordination or disagreement. However, the sustainable management guidelines provide more comprehensive and structured guidelines, such as the management plan, and include general recommendations that are being applied in relation to fishery regulation (census and legalisation of boats, identification cards in progress), control (minimum sizes, spawning females), surveillance (twice per week, with the support of the navy and fishing coves) and signage in the fishery zone including notices and signs to mark the boundaries between the extractive and non-extractive zones. The level of fulfilment of the associated target is 85 percent.
82. The guidelines for lobster management in the El Pelado Marine Reserve were submitted to the Ministry of Environment for review and approval (Output 2.1.2). It is known that control (minimum sizes, capture of spawning females) and fishery regulation actions (fishery census, identification cards in progress) are being implemented, many of which are related to the guideline recommendations. It was found that the process was positive, raised awareness and involved some of the fishers. In particular, it is worth highlighting the visit made to the Galapagos Islands, where the local park rangers and fishers explained the results after decades of lobster fishery management.
83. With regard to the management of the black ark clam in the El Morro Mangrove Wildlife Refuge and in the REMACAM (Output 2.1.3), similarities in its implementation and one substantial difference between the documents submitted are observed. In both MPAs, activities are being implemented such as the control of small sizes and observation of the bans, in coordination with the organizations that hold AMESUC in said areas and their surroundings (El Morro). The document submitted to the REMACAM is structured as a management plan and reflects a participatory process, which also includes other activities. However, according to the interviews

---

<sup>4</sup> See the effectiveness table. With outcome indicators:

(60 percent+0 percent+85 percent+40 percent+30 percent+45 percent+90 percent)/7=50 percent. Without outcome indicators: (85 percent+40 percent+40 percent+45 percent+90 percent)/5=60 percent.%

conducted, their application was limited due to a lack of staff resources at the Reserve, the extensive size of such and the delay in delivering AMESUC to the organizations. The document prepared for El Morro is based on statistical data from the Public Institute for Aquaculture and Fisheries Research (IPIAP), but it only recommends two guidelines: reduction of fishing effort and establishment of a maximum permitted catch. However, these guidelines were consulted with the local organizations and their suggestions were taken into account, which favours their implementation. The level of fulfilment of this output is estimated to be 40 percent.

84. The fishery guidelines submitted to the *Reserva Ecológica Manglares Churute* (Churute Mangroves Ecological Reserve) (Output 2.1.4) are very similar to those of El Morro and were prepared by the same consultancy company. They follow the same methodology based on fishery data, in this case red crab. In addition to the two aforementioned guidelines, the recommendation is made to reduce the number of fishers. However, despite the initial rejection that this proposal generated among the local organizations and after completing a process of consultation, the fishers signed letters of commitment to implement it. Given that the guidelines have not been implemented yet, the level of achievement of this output is estimated to be 45 percent.
85. With regard to Output 2.1.5, the target of which establishes the application of improved fishery management systems for 12 organizations (occupying more than 22 000 hectares of mangroves), it is evident that measures such as the control of minimum sizes and spawning females, rotational harvesting or self-imposed bans, among others, have been implemented or improved. Most of these actions form part of different management plans, as they are a requirement for obtaining AMESUC (Output 1.2.1), and their implementation was largely driven by Outputs 1.2.1 and 1.2.3. However, the practices currently applied do not show a link with the fishery guidelines submitted. These were prepared by the same consultant that prepared the documents for El Morro and Manglares Churute and they have the same problem: good technical base but limited to the fishery resource, ignoring the participation of communities and the local context (cultural, social, economic), in addition to showing little creativity and applicability. All of the documents indistinctly make the case for recommending two or three restrictive guidelines: maximum captures, reduction of catch effort and reduction of the number of fishers. This approach is the opposite to that of the GEF, focused on promoting a progressive change in fishery practices, but adopting a sustainable approach that also considers the economic, social and environmental aspect. It is estimated that this output was 90 percent accomplished.
86. In addition, the gathering of baseline information and the subsequent measurements in the 5 MPAs and the 12 AMESUC were not timely or consistent, making it impossible to gain evidence of an increase in the catch per unit effort of the fisheries. Consequently, it was not possible to determine the level of fulfilment of these targets.

### Component 3

**Finding 8.** Almost 92 percent<sup>5</sup> of the targets associated with the outcomes and outputs of Component 3 were achieved. Out of the seven targets, it was not possible to evaluate two of them due to problems with the elements included in the modified framework of outcomes (e.g. inclusion of targets already achieved previously). It is worth highlighting the contribution the project made to Book V of the COA Regulation, which regulates the marine and coastal zone and has already been approved.

87. With regard to outcome 3.1., work was done on the preparation of proposals to generate a policy framework on fisheries in MPAs and on AMESUC. Specifically, it is worth highlighting the inclusion

---

<sup>5</sup> Estimation based on the targets that could be evaluated:  
(60 percent+100 percent+100 percent+100 percent+100 percent)/5 = 92 percent.

of integrated coastal management in the COA Regulations, which established solid foundations for the regulation, planning, protection and use of resources in marine and coastal areas, and the delivery of a regulation model for the municipal decentralized autonomous governments.

88. A proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Environment on updating the regulation for AMESUC (Output 3.1.1.) that, in accordance with the interviews conducted, is the object of a final review process and it is expected to be approved in the short-term. The fishery regulation proposal for the continental MPA (Output 3.1.2) is in a similar situation, and as such the level of achievement of both outputs is 100 percent. According to the interviews conducted, the fishery regulation does not have the same level of acceptance as the proposed AMESUC regulation and does not show greater prospects of approval.
89. Output 3.1.3 suggests preparing a proposal on a national strategy for integrated coastal management. The project was initially working on this proposal. However, due to coordination problems – resulting from structural changes in the project and in Government – *Planifica Ecuador* (a central government planning entity) had at the same time prepared a Marine and Coastal Space Management Plan, approved by the Interinstitutional Sea Committee. Given that the content and scope of this Plan coincides with the Strategy, the decision was made to suspend the work completed by the project to date on this matter to avoid duplicating efforts. It was agreed that instead of preparing a Strategy proposal, the project would invest resources in imposing the Plan, after having completed a joint review of such with the participation of its technicians. The development of the Plan is considered part of the Ministry of Environment contributions to the project, and as such the level of achievement of this output is 100 percent.
90. An error in the modified framework of outcomes resulted in the inclusion of two different outputs with the same numbering (3.1.4). One of the outputs involves the preparation of a regulation model on integrated coastal management for the municipalities. The other output anticipates having a dredging regulation and a COA and its respective regulation. The target of preparing a regulation model was achieved by means of joint work with personnel from the respective municipalities and constitutes a good reference point for other locations that may decide to implement integrated coastal management actions. A proposal was also submitted regarding a regulation on dredging in marine and coastal areas. However, this activity is not directly related to the project actions and, according to the interviews conducted, resulted from a specific need identified by the Ministry of Environment during the execution. As detailed, it complies with the regulation on the final disposal of sediments extracted from the Guayas River, which have historically been dumped on mangrove areas in order to create new land for urbanization. However, the regulation proposal does not specifically mention the mangroves, rather it only refers to sensitive zones and protected areas, and as such its nature is more general and does not contribute to the specific project activities.
91. It is considered that the main contribution of the project in the regulatory field was the inclusion of an integrated coastal management approach in Book V of the COA Regulation, which includes plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas as management instruments for the municipal decentralized autonomous governments. The approval of this regulation made it possible to change Outcome 1.1 as an alternative to the creation of new MPAs. However, this target shows important difficulties that make it impossible to determine its level of achievement. First, it makes reference to the COA, which was published in the Official Register in 2017, prior to the modification of the framework of outcomes in 2019. In addition, the preparation of a set of norms of this nature - which constitute a national law relating to the environment in Ecuador – far exceeds the scope of this project, limited to the marine and coastal sphere. The target also

refers to the COA Regulation – made up of a total of seven books – although the project only contributed to the development of Book V.

### **3.3 Efficiency and other factors that affect the outcomes**

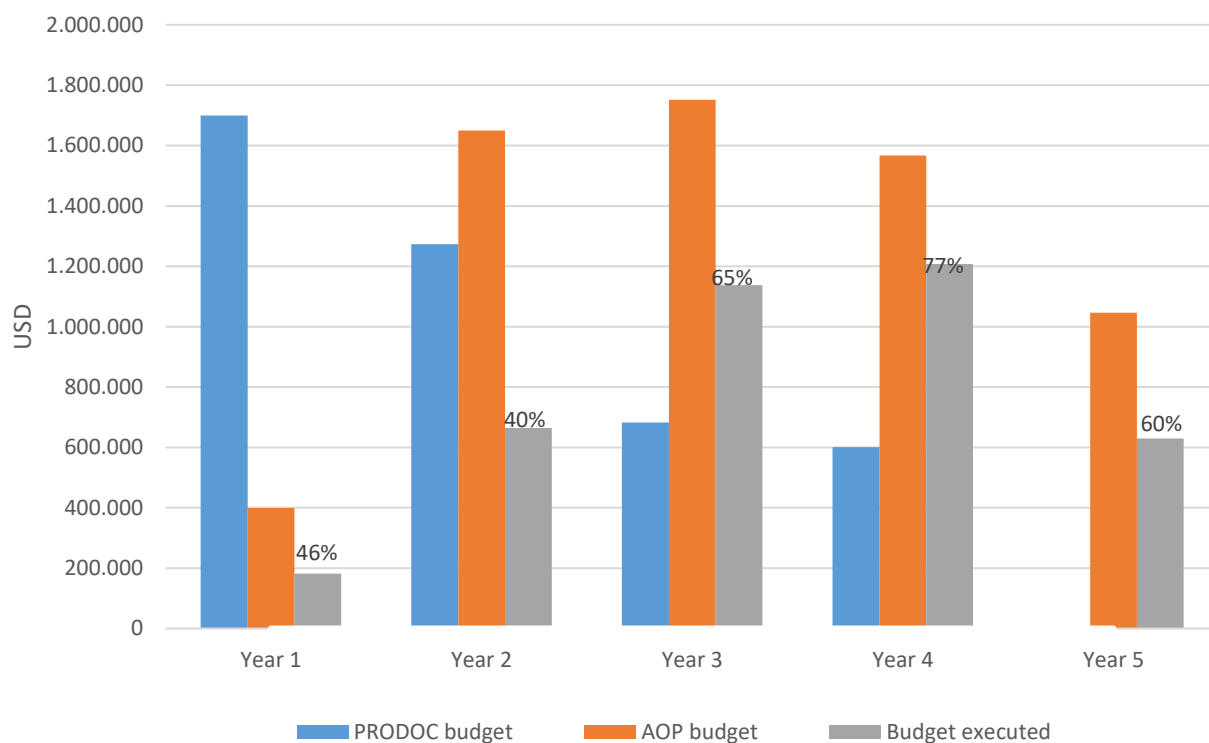
**EQ 3.** Have the intervention methods, and particularly the methods of cooperation between the project partners, as well as the institutional structure, financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available, contributed to project outcomes and objectives? How?

**The rating for the criterion regarding efficiency and other factors that affect the outcomes is moderately unsatisfactory.**

**Finding 9.** As of July/August 2020, 90 percent of the accumulated budget of the GEF funds had been executed. In the first two years of the project, the execution of the annual operating plan ( budget was low: 46 percent and 40 percent respectively. This is due to several causes: the learning curve of the project implementing party and co-executors, realized under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality; the need to consolidate administrative and financial processes; errors in the execution of the project; the delayed positioning of the environmental authority in relation to specific outputs; the COVID-19 pandemic; and the insecurity in the municipality of Esmeraldas. Fifty percent of the co-financing pledged has been materialized.

92. The project had a donation for its preparation amounting to USD 70 320 and a contribution from GEF for project execution amounting to USD 4 258 788, in addition to the contribution from the executing partners (co-financing) amounting to USD 19 407 147. The total project amount is therefore USD 23 736 255. According to the data provided, USD 3 820 792 of the GEF funds have been used, which equates to 90 percent execution of this item five months from the end of the project, planned to take place in January 2021.
93. Figure 3 shows the annual comparison between the budget detailed in the PRODOC, the budget planned in the annual operating plans and the executed budget. As can be seen in the figure, it was planned in the PRODOC that the funds would largely be used in the first year of the project – in the amount of USD 1.7 million – and it would be gradually reduced until the end of the project. In the annual operating plan, planning was different taking into account the establishment of the working team and the adjustments made to the project activities. Consequently, in the first year (2016), the plan was to make low use of the funds in the amount of USD 400 000, which increased in the following years (2017 and 2018) and started to decrease from the fourth year (2019). On comparing the budgets of the different annual operating plans with those executed, substantial differences can be observed in the first two years. Specifically, only 46 percent and 40 percent of the funds budgeted in the annual operating plan for the first and second year were executed, whereas the budget executed amounted to 65 percent and 77 percent in the third and fourth year respectively. As of August 2020, approximately 60 percent of the funds budgeted in the annual operating plan of the fifth year of the project have been executed.



**Figure 3. Annual comparison between the budget detailed in the PRODOC, the budget planned in the annual operating plan and the budget executed**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on information provided by the co-executors. The annual operating plan budget is that approved by the Steering Committee at the start of each year. The budget executed is the sum of the budget assigned by CI to the evaluation team up to August 2020, and the budget allocated by FAO up to July 2020. It also includes the percentage of the budget executed.

72. The reasons that explain the under-execution of the budget of the annual operating plan and the delays in the project are detailed below:

- i. **Lack of clarity in the administrative and financial processes and delayed disbursements.** The lack of experience of the executing partners and of the implementing agency in directing and managing a project under the GEF Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) has contributed to this situation. It is worth highlighting that the experience held by FAO Ecuador in the implementation of projects under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality was limited to a single project with a public body, and it had not previously worked with a non-governmental organization (NGO). CI Ecuador and Hivos had never collaborated with a United Nations Organization – in this case FAO – and they had not participated in a project with GEF financing under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality. In the case of the Ministry of Environment, it was the second project worked on with GEF funds and implemented under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality. In this regard, the learning curve to direct, coordinate and manage the project was long and complex. This is particularly evident in the preparation of the project operating manual, which was prepared jointly by the four entities in order to have certain clarity on the relevant financial and administrative processes. The project operating manual was initially approved in June 2016. However, given the lack of experience in this operative modality, the manual had to be modified several times to include some clarifications and additional specifications. The final version was prepared in August 2017, approved by the Steering Committee. It was subsequently modified once again to incorporate the guidelines and procedures from the new management model authorized in 2018. In addition, this learning curve is reflected in the observations made regarding the half-yearly financial reports, which go from the identification of non-eligible expenses – due

to not meeting the requirements set – to the recommendations to improve the internal monitoring of the acquisition processes. In this regard, the review and approval process of the financial reports was long. In accordance with the audit reports, this process was extended by an additional 146 days for the first report and 16 days for the fifth. However, the audits also stated that CI Ecuador responded with a delay to the comments in some cases, and their response was an essential requirement for the approval of the reports. These delays led to delayed disbursements to CI Ecuador, which in turn was obliged to delay payments to Hivos. This led to both organizations having to use their own resources in some occasions to avoid suspending project activities. The recruitment and goods purchasing processes were very drawn out – with a duration of up to three months – and it took a long time to obtain the results from each of the co-executors (e.g. one month). It is worth emphasizing that the number of recommendations and comments made regarding the financial reports decreased as the co-executors and implementing agency had a clearer idea on the processes and began to understand them better. With regard to the audits performed on CI Ecuador in 2017, 2018 and 2019 – which in turn included the financial review of Hivos – partially satisfactory and satisfactory ratings were given to the criteria evaluated regarding internal and financial management controls.

- ii. **There was not enough time to adjust and calibrate the administrative and financial processes of CI and Hivos.** Given that the fiduciary evaluations carried out on CI Ecuador and Hivos identified a substantial risk in their internal administrative processes, both organizations were obliged to implement risk mitigation measures, alongside the execution of the project. This meant that there was not enough time to test the adjustments made in their processes and therefore verify the effectiveness of the modifications geared towards mitigating the risks foreseen. As previously mentioned, this situation explains the drafting of comments and recommendations about the half-yearly financial reports by CI Ecuador (which included Hivos information), and a tense atmosphere between the two co-executors as a result of different errors and omissions.
- iii. **Shortcomings in the project execution.** Part of the modifications of the framework of outcomes included a new output focused on the promotion of productive projects. For its execution, an open call was made to the fishery organizations of the targeted zones for the submission of productive project proposals. The bases of the call were reviewed by the Ministry of Environment, FAO, Hivos and CI Ecuador. However, correspondence between the legal entity of the fishery organizations and the proposed productive activity was not included as an important requirement. As a result of this omission, the feasibility of 7 of the 12 projects selected was called into question as they do not fulfil the necessary administrative or legal requirements for their execution (e.g. lack of licence on the part of the fishery organizations to operate as companies that provide tourism services, or legalization of boats). Consequently, adjustments had to be made to the projects themselves to fulfil the administrative or legal conditions required to ensure the feasibility of the projects and their alignment with the GEF policies. According to the interviews conducted, some activities foreseen in some of the projects are taking place without taking the necessary permits or licences into account. This also led to a minor delay in the execution of the budget, also caused by the time required for the tenders and the delay in the submission of documents by the fishery organizations. According to the interviews conducted, this situation has generated certain unease in some of the fishery organizations selected.
- iv. **Delayed formal positioning of the Ministry of Environment regarding the creation of new protected areas.** As will be discussed in more detail in the section on the performance of the Ministry of Environment, the economic crisis that affected the project from the outset led to the decision against creating new protected areas belonging to the Natural Heritage Areas of the State. This decision was not formalized until the eighth meeting of the Steering

Committee, held on 7 August 2018, in the third year of the project. Given the uncertainty about the creation of these new protected areas, the execution of the project slowed down, above all in relation to Component 1.

- vi. **Delayed start of the project.** The project officially began on 16 February 2016. However, the first manager and the three technical specialists were not hired until May and August 2016 respectively. Consequently, the project fieldwork began in September 2016, seven months after its official start date. It is important to mention that these delays relate to the lack of initial clarity on the administrative and financial processes to follow. In addition, the delay can also be explained by the earthquake that took place in Ecuador on 16 April 2016, which focused the attention of the Ministry of Environment and the municipalities in the coastal area on supporting the affected population.
- vii. **Insufficient technical team and shortcomings in the project management.** The project technical team hired by CI Ecuador was initially composed of a technical manager and three technical specialists in fishery, mangroves and integrated coastal management as set forth in the PRODOC. According to the mid-term review, the three specialists dedicated most of their time to taking care of administrative matters and not technical issues. This showed that the number of specialists was insufficient and that there were certain limitations in the managerial capacities to direct the everyday project activities. Consequently, a new manager and more technical specialists were hired in 2018. As will be seen in the evaluation of the performance of the co-executors, the second manager hired took on technical responsibilities regarding the land that limited the completion of some of their duties.
- viii. **Insecurity in one of the project targeted areas.** The insecurity prevailing in the REMACAM area – located on the border with Colombia – affected the performance of the work by Hivos, due to the limited number of consultants prepared to work there. One of the consultancies who began the work in the area decided to cancel availability for the same reasons of insecurity for their team of workers. However, the experience of Hivos in the area made it possible for its team to perform the activities promised under their coordination.
- ix. **The COVID-19 pandemic.** Ecuador declared the state of emergency and established mobility restrictions – which began on 13 March and were gradually lifted in a staggered manner in the different regions of the country from May 2020 – due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The state of emergency was lifted on 13 September 2020. That is why the project fieldwork was temporarily suspended, leading to physical and financial delays.

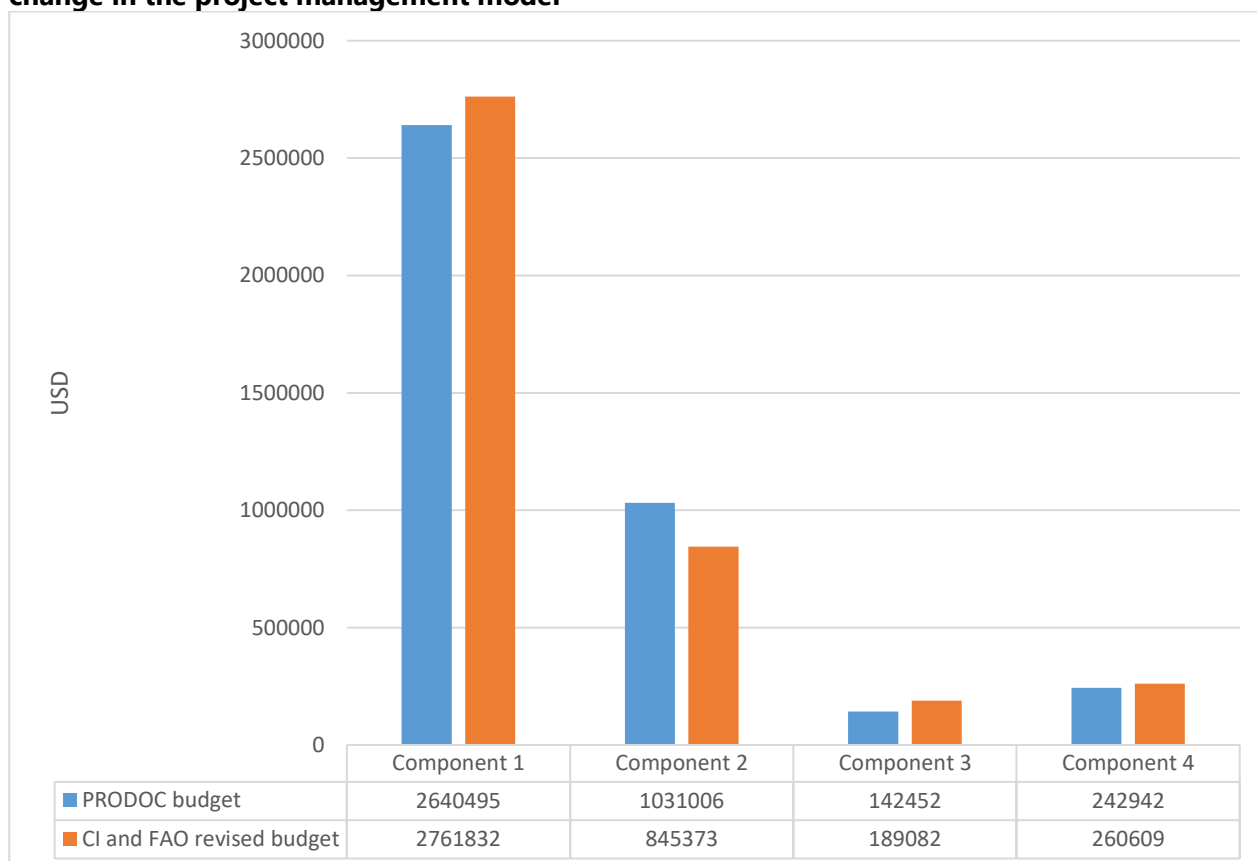
94. Another possible cause that explains the under-execution is the overestimation of the budget. The mid-term evaluation mentions the following: “The Ministry of Environment proposed increasing the GEF budget from USD 1.2 million to USD 4.2 million, to make the work in Cayapas-Mataje possible. Lastly and without being involved in this decision, the budget granted to Hivos was just part of this increase (USD 700 000)”. In the end, GEF granted USD 4.2 million. Taking into account that Hivos only received USD 700 000 to perform the work in the REMACAM, it is assumed that the additional funds (USD 2.3 million) were assigned in the budget to activities in other targeted areas, initially provided with USD 1.2 million. Some of the people interviewed agree that the project budget was overestimated.

95. The overestimation of the budget would have been easy to detect if the activities initially planned in the PRODOC had been specified and if there had been funds to execute the additional productive projects. However, given that the framework of outcomes was modified in 2019 and, taking into account that activities that the project did not perform or only partially performed in the end were included, it is difficult to precisely determine the cost of the new activities and compare it to that of the original activities, to determine whether these represented a lower or higher disbursement and, in such case, if this saving made it possible to cover the expenses of the productive projects. The people interviewed have different explanations on this matter. Some

state that the budget assigned to the productive projects came from project savings, and as such did not involve a reduction in the budget of any of the activities set forth. Others state that the cost of the productive projects impeded an adequate completion of the other activities. However, it is possible that the budget was sufficient to cover the productive projects, as the adjustments made in the framework of outcomes involved the inclusion of less ambitious outputs and outcomes and, therefore, required fewer resources.

96. After the change in the management model – which includes the participation of FAO not just as an implementing partner but also as a co-executor of the project – the revised budget assigned a higher item to Component 1 (USD 2 761 832), specifically 5 percent more than that set forth in the PRODOC (USD 2 640 495). The outputs associated with this Component were the object of the main changes, with the inclusion of the completion of beach management plans – which in turn incorporated the ecologically sensitive zones – and the productive projects. In comparison with the corresponding item of the PRODOC, the item budgeted for Component 2 decreased by 18 percent, whereas that of Components 3 and 4 increased by 33 percent and 7 percent respectively (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Comparison of the budget detailed in the PRODOC with the revised budget due to the change in the project management model**



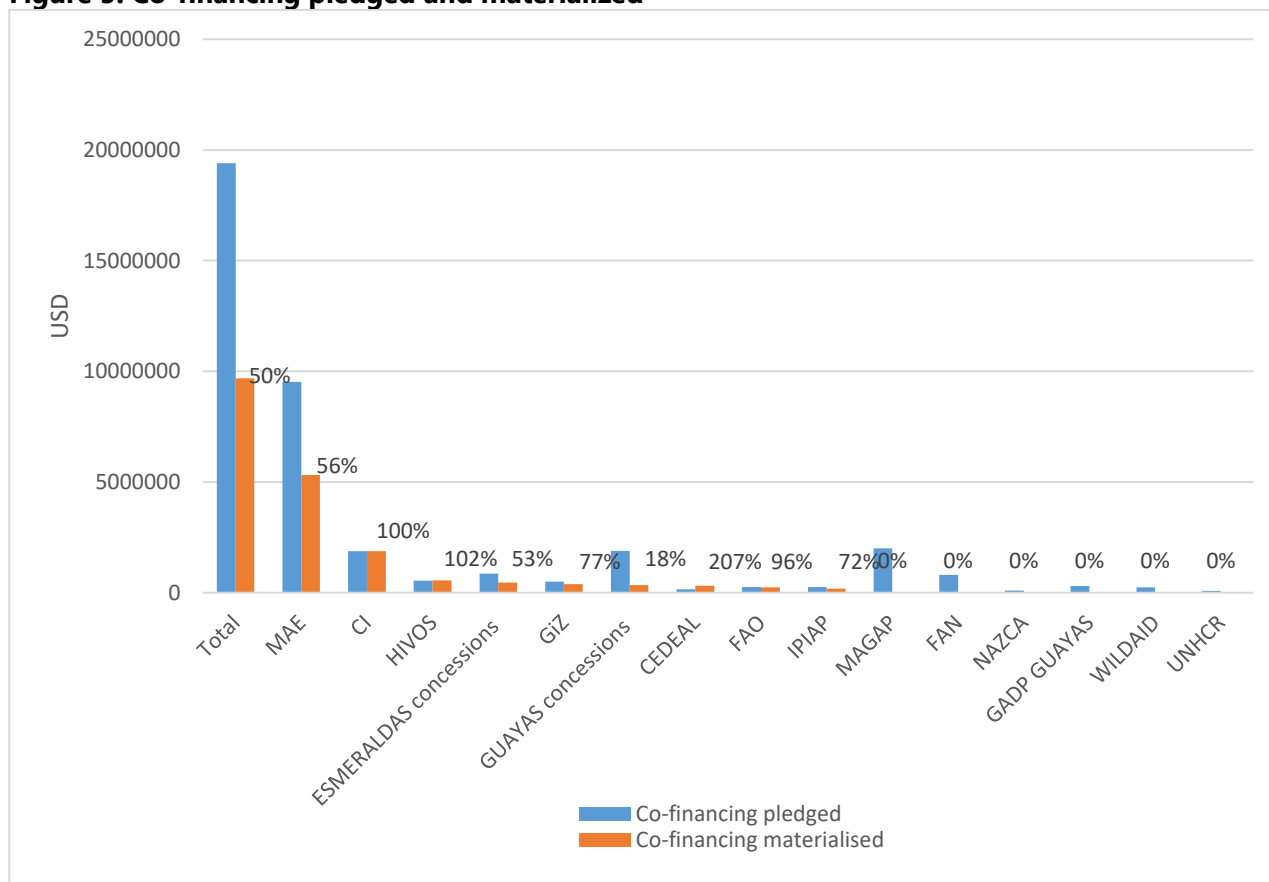
Source: Prepared by the authors.

### Co-financing

97. The co-financing pledged by the project partners amounts to USD 19 407 147. According to the data provided by CI and FAO Ecuador, USD 9 688 380 was materialized, which equates to almost 50 percent of the co-financing. Given that the project will conclude soon, it is foreseen that the percentage of co-financing will not increase substantially, and therefore the co-financing foreseen for the project will be low. Figure 5 shows the co-financing pledged and materialized and Appendix 4 shows the co-financing table.

98. As can be seen in Figure 5, 9 of the 15 partners contributed funds to the project, in amounts ranging from 18 percent to 207 percent of the amounts pledged. CI Ecuador, Hivos and the *Centro Ecuatoriano de Desarrollo y Estudios Alternativos* (Ecuadorian Centre for Alternative Studies and Development) contributed 100 percent or more of the funds pledged. It is worth highlighting that the Ecuadorian Centre for Alternative Studies and Development doubled its contribution (207 percent) compared to the co-financing pledged in the PRODOC. Other partners such as FAO, IPIAP and GIZ are close to covering 100 percent of the pledged amount. The Ministry of Environment contributed 56 percent of the total pledged. This has a substantial impact on the total co-financing of the project, as it pledged to contribute almost 50 percent of such. The most affected items in this sense were the contributions made by the Ministry of Environment to the "Socio Manglar" initiative, which initially amounted to USD 1 million and decreased to USD 571 408. Four partners did not provide funds to the project. Among them, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fishery, which had pledged to mobilize resources in kind, by means of the *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) project. However, staff turnover in this Ministry made it impossible to materialize the support pledged. The National Environmental Fund of Ecuador was eliminated and the Sustainable Environmental Investment Fund was created in its place in 2019, and as such it was not possible to count on its contribution. For its part, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees did not provide funds as these were reassigned to assist displaced people in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the peace agreement in Colombia. No information was found about the funds provided by WildAid and Nazca. That is why these have not been taken into account in this information, although the 2020 PIR does provide information on their contributions.

**Figure 5. Co-financing pledged and materialized**



Source: Prepared by the authors based on information provided by CI Ecuador and FAO. The figure shows the total percentage of co-financing materialized per institution.

## **Operational Partners Implementation Modality**

**Finding 10.** The institutional arrangement for the development of the project shows areas for improvement that have affected its implementation and execution. Among them, the relationship between the co-executors, which was troubled from the outset due to the tension created as a result of the errors or omissions in the administrative and financial processes; the lack of experience of the co-executors and the substantial fiduciary risk identified, which represented a high cost in terms of learning; weak National Management of the project; the existence of different views on the completion of the activities; and the change in the management model due to the low execution of the annual operating plan budget in the first two years, which affected labour relations.

### **Institutional arrangement**

99. The project was completed under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality, following the ad hoc procedures in force prior to the official launch of section 701 of the FAO Administrative Manual (MS701)<sup>6</sup> in November 2015. However, given the proximity between the project approval dates and the submission of the manual, the project took the risk-based management approach into account, which included an evaluation of the fiduciary capacity of the executing partners and a risk mitigation plan in accordance with their magnitude. According to the experience of the evaluation team, this same procedure was applied to other projects implemented by FAO before the publication of MS701. As a result, the fiduciary evaluation of CI Ecuador,<sup>7</sup> which acted as an executing partner, was completed on 30 October 2014.
100. The fiduciary evaluation concluded that the financial management capacity of CI Ecuador entailed a substantial risk, linked mainly to possible labour contingencies, lack of internal audits and processes for assessing the composition of accounting records. Despite this risk and given that MS701 was not yet in force, CI Ecuador was approved as an executing partner with a plan to mitigate the risks identified, agreed upon between CI Ecuador and FAO Ecuador. However, it is worth mentioning that this approval took the satisfactory outcome of the GEF evaluation of the fiduciary standards of the CI Ecuador headquarters into account. In addition, it took into account that CI Ecuador was accredited as a GEF implementing agency, and that said organization must follow the operative policies and procedures established for its headquarters. However, at that time CI Ecuador was migrating a new accounting system from ORACLE to Business World. It is worth highlighting that the Operational Partners Implementation Modality rules currently prohibit the acceptance of an operative partner with a high or substantial fiduciary risk.
101. Some of the mitigation plan measures were fulfilled in the first six months, in line with the requirements (e.g. finalization of the process to migrate the accounting system, updating of financial balance sheets). Other measures were applied periodically during the completion of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Section 701 of the FAO Administrative Manual (MS701) establishes the framework, the accountability and the rules that govern the indirect implementation of the FAO projects and programmes, also known as the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM). OPIM is the indirect execution of projects and programmes that involves the transfer of FAO funds for the associated transactions to execute the programme or project components. This is based on the programme or project objectives – jointly defined and shared – in which FAO holds general liability before the partner that contributes resources, and the government bears liability for the adequate management of the funds, the technical quality and outcomes obtained. OPIM can be used with national and international non-profit organizations, in order to guarantee better sustainability of the outcomes and/or make the most of the experience, competences and complementary resources that the selected partners offer to have a greater impact. OPIM takes an approach based on the risk of managing the funds transferred by FAO to the operative partners.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth mentioning that the fiduciary evaluation was carried out before the publication of the MS701. It was completed by a qualified consultant in accordance with the quality standards required by the Manual, and not by an audit office.

project. The monitoring of the risk mitigation plan was reported in the half-yearly financial reports prepared by CI Ecuador and was submitted to FAO Ecuador. The reports on the physical and financial execution of the project were provided to the Ministry of Environment.

102. In this manner, on 16 February 2016, the execution agreement was signed between CI Ecuador and FAO,<sup>8</sup> establishing that CI Ecuador would be responsible for the execution of the project activities, the daily monitoring and financial management in line with the applicable standards. To this end, FAO would provide the executing partner with a total allocation of USD 4 258 788.
103. For its part, FAO would take care of managing and disbursing the GEF funds; supervising the implementation of the project according to the PRODOC and the agreements signed with GEF; providing technical support to ensure all of the activities concerning the project have the adequate technical quality; examining the financial reports and expenses and monitoring the financial management of the project; completing at least one supervision mission per year; ensuring that the mid-term and final external evaluations take place; and reporting the progress made by the project, by means of the annual review of the PIR and the financial reports for GEF.
104. In its capacity as executing partner, it also completed a fiduciary evaluation of Hivos on 30 October 2015. The result of such also revealed a substantial risk due to the need to strengthen its procedures in the fields of human resources, accounting policies and procedures, planning and in the completion of reports and of monitoring. That is why the recommendations formulated include, among others, the preparation of a plan of action to address the risks identified. Consequently, a donation agreement was signed between Hivos and CI Ecuador in October 2016. This agreement details the commitments made by both entities and the activities Hivos undertakes to complete with the donated funds.
105. The execution agreement between CI Ecuador and FAO – which identifies Hivos as an executing partner – states that Hivos and CI Ecuador would jointly plan and supervise the technical aspects of the project, including regular visits to the intervention areas; prepare the technical and progress reports and the annual operating plan; prepare the terms of reference; and participate in the selection and hiring processes.
106. For its part, the Ministry of Environment – by means of the Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage, the former SGMC and the Subsecretariat of Climate Change – would take care of the general supervision of the project and the approval of applications for the transfer of funds and of financial and project progress reports, before sending them to FAO. This work would be coordinated by the national project director, a position that would be held by a civil servant from the Management of SGMC. In addition, the National Director of the project would guide and advise the manager and the technical team of the project on matters relating to government policies and priorities; participate in the project Management Committee; and coordinate the work with the Provincial Departments of the Ministry of Environment in Esmeraldas, Manabí, Santa Elena, Guayas, and El Oro, and with the managers of the protected areas belonging to the Natural Heritage Areas of the State that would participate in the project.
107. The mid-term evaluation identified that this institutional arrangement had not contributed to an efficient management of the project, as the collaboration between the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador, FAO Ecuador and Hivos was troubled and not very constructive, with severe criticisms of the work and performance of each of the co-executors. At the time of completing this final

---

<sup>8</sup> Given the project implementation modality, it is pointed out that no execution agreement was signed between the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries and CI Ecuador.

evaluation, the relationship between the co-executors had not improved, as mutual disparagement and a tense atmosphere prevailed between them. According to the assessment by the evaluation team, this situation arose as a result of the following causes:

- i. Errors and omissions made as a result of the lack of experience of the implementing agency and the co-executors in the Operational Partners Implementation Modality, and areas for improvement identified in financial management. From the beginning of the project, CI Ecuador, FAO Ecuador and Hivos had little knowledge and/or understanding of the administrative and financial processes required by the Operational Partners Implementation Modality. This situation led to three versions of the project operating manual and to the modification of the administrative processes, above all in the first two years. This triggered different errors or omissions in the submissions of reports and in acquisition processes that led to observations in the financial reports and rejections of payments by FAO Ecuador and CI Ecuador due to the failure to fulfil the requirements. This scenario generated an atmosphere of mistrust and unease between the co-executors and the implementing agency. It can be concluded that project completion was complex, with a reduced execution of the annual operating plan budget in the first two years, delays in the disbursement of resources, a low level of co-financing and a troubled relationship between the partners. The governance structure implemented is common to GEF projects although due mainly to the lack of experience of the implementing agency and the co-executors in this type of modality, and the economic crisis of Ecuador, project outcomes were limited.
- ii. **Complex implementation.** It is worth mentioning that the administrative processes required by FAO were in line with the GEF requirements and the standards required by the United Nations system. These requirements and standards are complex, extensive and highly demanding in terms of information, given the need to guarantee transparency and competitiveness in the completion of acquisitions and hiring processes.
- iii. **Weak national management of the project.** Not having a National Director with extensive experience of managing projects made it impossible for the problems that arose between the co-executors and implementing agency of the project to be resolved in a timely manner. The National Director did not take the initiative to warn of this interinstitutional problem, which began to take shape, so that it could be resolved in a timely fashion by the Steering Committee, and it did not propose alternatives to resolve it.
- iv. **Different visions and support to fulfil the project activities.** The conceptualization of the project arose from the former SGMC located in Guayaquil and from CI Ecuador, and as such both entities have quite a strong sense of appropriation of the project. Both identified FAO as a body that could implement it, and as such this organization was seen as a means to achieve an end and not as an institution that would add value to the project. With regard to Hivos, the Ministry of Environment invited it to participate when the project had already been designed, and as such only some adjustments could be made. During project execution, the different views about its execution became evident, particularly those of CI Ecuador and Hivos. The latter highlights that its conservation view is comprehensive and based on people, while the project focused more largely on conservation, without taking into account a more socioecological approach.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Ministry of Environment made a lower number of visits to the area targeted by Hivos

---

<sup>9</sup> This approach was subsequently included in the project by means of the productive projects.



(the REMACAM), due to its distance and little accessibility. In addition, the focal point of the Ministry of Environment in the province of Esmeraldas only monitored the project activities linked to the development of the beach management plans, and not the actions performed in the REMACAM. With regard to the administrative processes, the project operating manual did not take into consideration the context of insecurity and illegality of the area of work of Hivos, and as such it was not very useful for the institution, and generated tension between the entities and a limited level of coordination with the technical team of the Guayaquil project. It is worth pointing out that Hivos received a budget lower than that initially agreed upon with the Ministry of Environment. That is why Hivos did not feel part of the project and felt isolated from the work. In response, it executed a model of intervention with local professionals working full time in the targeted communities. This strategy enabled it to gain the support and trust of the associated organizations.

- v. **Change in project management model in response to the low execution of the budget.** To improve the execution of the project, the Ministry of Environment asked CI Ecuador and FAO to propose adjustments to the management model. However, in the the management model proposed by the central offices of the Ministry of Environment in Quito were approved. The approval was granted in the seventh meeting of the Steering Committee, held on 27 February 2018. This model assigned FAO the role of executing partner, with an available budget of USD 772 000 and involved the cancellation of the services of two specialists<sup>10</sup> and the hiring of four people for the technical team<sup>11</sup> of CI Ecuador, financed by the project; the hiring of two specialists<sup>12</sup> for FAO Ecuador and an additional support professional on the ground for Hivos. This change in model increased the tension between the co-executors and the implementing party. In particular, CI Ecuador sent a protest letter to the former SGMC and to the members of the Steering Committee, in which it lamented the decision made by the Ministry of Environment. According to the mid-term evaluation, this decision also led to a questioning of the internal functioning of the Ministry of Environment, as the former SGMC was not invited to participate in the definition of the management model proposed by the Ministry Offices in Quito.<sup>13</sup>

**Finding 11.** The co-executors – the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador, FAO and Hivos – completed their work with successes and areas of opportunity that had a substantial effect on project execution, affecting its sustainability and impact.

### **Performance of the Ministry of Environment**

108. The framework of outcomes was modified late partly due to the drastic decrease in the budget of the Ministry of Environment. Ecuador was the object of two external disruptions that affected the economy: from June 2014 to February 2016, the price of Ecuadorian crude oil fell considerably, and the United States Dollar depreciated substantially compared to the Euro. Consequently, and according to the mid-term evaluation, the Ministry of Environment budget decreased from USD 80 million in 2015 to USD 28 million in 2016. In 2017 and 2019, the budget was USD 26 and 25 million, respectively. In 2018, the budget was higher – USD 58 million – and was geared towards paying debts with beneficiaries of its programmes. In addition, on 16 April 2016, there

---

<sup>10</sup> The services of the spatial planning manager and the public policies manager of CI Ecuador were dispensed.

<sup>11</sup> One administrative assistant in Guayaquil, one social specialist, one mangrove technician and one communicator.

<sup>12</sup> One monitoring and evaluation specialist and one specialist in the promotion of productive projects.

<sup>13</sup> As detailed in a notification from the SGMC on 20 January 2018, geared towards the Ministry of Environment and Water of Ecuador.

was an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale that severely affected the provinces of Manabí and Esmeraldas, which is why the Ministry of Environment joined forces with other national entities to attend to this emergency.

109. As a result of this economic crisis and the resulting lack of financial capacity and human resources – in the eighth meeting of the Steering Committee, held on 7 August 2018 – the Ministry of Environment reported its decision against the creation of new protected areas within the state system. It is important to highlight that the creation of four protected areas was an essential element of the environmental objective of the project and one of its main outcomes, which the Ministry of Environment was to authorize. In addition, prior to the start of the project, this Ministry had stopped providing government resources to “Socio Manglar”, an incentive that complements and consolidates the outcomes achieved by means of the AMESUC to guarantee its conservation and improve the living conditions of the traditional users of the mangroves. At the time of completing this evaluation, the already existing instalments of the beneficiaries were met, as well as those of some new concessionaires within the framework of the project with resources from international cooperation managed by the Ministry of Environment (e.g. the reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) programme, connected to payments for reducing deforestation). Annex 2 shows this information in more detail.
110. Given that the economic downturn began in 2014 and an improvement of the situation was not foreseeable in the short term, it is considered that the Ministry of Environment decided on its position with regard to the creation of new protected areas and provided information on this late (in August 2018). Consequently, the project had little time to propose measures to adapt to the situation and try to prevent its impact being affected. In other words, the project capacity for adaptation was limited to these substantial changes. However, as detailed in sections 3.6 and 3.7, the changes made did affect the sustainability of the project benefits and reduced the expected outcome.
111. In addition, the project has geared funds towards offering travel grants and logistical support to the Ministry of Environment and the IPIAP, due to the lack of resources to cover these expenses. It is worth highlighting that the project trips continually increased since the start of the project and led to the addition of comments in the financial reports. It was consequently considered necessary to establish support limits per day for trips and to request authorization so that the project could cover them.
112. The structural changes in the Ministry affected the execution of the project and generated greater uncertainty about the sustainability of its benefits. In 2020, a drastic structural change was made at the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador, which consisted of merging the Ministry and the Secretariat of Water, to form the Ministry of Environment, in order to optimize the functioning of the institutions. This led to the discontinuation of the former SGMC – that the National Director of the project reported to, and with headquarters in Guayaquil – and the positioning of its staff at the Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage. In accordance with the Ministry of Environment, the Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage – with headquarters in Quito and at the time of completing this evaluation took care of the national management of the project – took on the competences and responsibilities of the former SGMC. According to the interviews conducted and given the recent restructuring, there is no clarity about the role the technicians from the former SGMC, who participated actively in the project, will now play. As mentioned previously, some people interviewed expressed their concern about the possibility that the Ministry of Environment pays less attention to marine and coastal issues.

113. Other structural changes made at the start of the project made talking with other counterparts difficult and led to changes in the outputs. The General Secretariat of the Sea became part of the Department for Marine and Coastal Matters of the new Technical Secretariat *Planifica Ecuador*. The Secretariat began to develop the Marine and Coastal Space Management Plan, whose objective and content aligned with the national strategy for integrated coastal management. Given that this Strategy is considered a project output, it tried to establish collaboration with the Technical Secretariat *Planifica Ecuador*, albeit unsuccessfully. To avoid duplicating work, the project dismissed the progress made in the development of the strategy and contributed to outlining and imposing the final revision of the aforementioned plan. This work is considered part of the contributions of the Ministry of Environment to the completion of the project.
114. The institutional changes in the Ministry of Environment led to a modification of the framework of outcomes. It is worth mentioning that, since the arrival of the new government administration, six different Ministers from the Ministry of Environment and Water of Ecuador have been appointed, as have six different Managers from the former SGMC. These changes have affected the continuity of project support and monitoring by high level ministry officials. For example, in the minutes of the seventh meeting of the Steering Committee, the Minister for Environment and Water considered the enactment of the regulation on fishery management in protected marine coastal areas (PMCA) feasible within the framework of the project. However, after the Minister left, this output remained simply as a proposal, without the commitment of the Minister to approve it in the course of the project. In addition, these changes resulted in new requests from the Ministry of Environment for the project. These included the preparation of the marine and coastal section of Book V of the COA Regulation and of the dredging regulation. These requests were included as new outputs in the framework of outcomes modified in 2019 and were reported to GEF in the 2019 PIR. Although, generally speaking, they help to conserve biodiversity, they do not contribute to the project activities.
115. In addition, the COA – published in 2017 – modified the competences to grant the AMESUC to the Ministry of Environment and to the new Ministry of Aquaculture and Fisheries, a situation that led to a lack of legal clarity about the roles of both Ministries, which has also delayed the enactment of the updating of the regulation about AMESUC.
116. As previously mentioned, the national project management was weak. Since it began and until mid-2020, it fell to the Department of Regulations and Projects of the former SGMC. In the period detailed, the responsibility fell to a civil servant with little experience in the management of projects and conflict resolution. As a result, the supervision, coordination and monitoring of the project were limited and not very strategic, and the contribution to the detection of problems and risks in a timely manner for their adequate resolution was lacking. All of the aforementioned did not help to improve the relationship of mistrust among the partners or the mutual disparagement, and contributed to reducing the sustainability and impact of the project. With the restructuring of the Ministry of Environment, the national management of the project fell to the Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage. During the evaluation, there was knowledge of the appointment of four different managers from the Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage, a situation that also limited attention given to the project upon its closure.

### **Performance of CI Ecuador as the main executing partner**

117. The strategic lines of CI Ecuador include work specializing in marine and coastal ecosystems, it has a marine and coastal programme and different studies linked to the creation of protected areas and mangrove conservation. Specifically, CI Ecuador has collaborated with the Ministry of Environment – since the creation of the former SGMC in 2007 – in the implementation of its strategies on integrated coastal management by means of several projects. A highlight among

these is the project "Marine Landscape of the Eastern Tropical Pacific", executed by CI Ecuador in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and other organizations. This project led to the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles of Ecuador, published in 2014, and the Regional Plan of Action for the Conservation of Mangroves in the Southeast Pacific, published in 2015 and prepared in the framework of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific. In addition, CI Ecuador executed the project "Mangrove Conservation in the Eastern Tropical Pacific", together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNICEF), the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), along with financial support from GEF. One of the project outcomes worth highlighting is the National Plan for the Conservation of Mangrove in Ecuador, published by the Ministry of Environment in 2019.

118. The knowledge and experience accumulated by CI Ecuador by means of the studies detailed – closely linked to this project – contributed to guaranteeing the relevance and technical quality of some outputs generated by the project, such as the marine and coastal section of Book V of the COA Regulation. They also facilitated the work on the ground for the development of beach management plans, AMESUC and fishery guidelines. All of the people interviewed – including communities and civil servants – expressed a positive opinion about the work of CI Ecuador on the ground.
119. The aspects of the performance of CI Ecuador that affected project execution included the substantial fiduciary risk detected before it began. As previously explained, to mitigate this significant risk, CI Ecuador had to make changes in its financial management and administration alongside the execution of the project, without having expert support. This led to errors and omissions in the acquisition and administrative processes, which led to a climate of mistrust and tension between the project partners and to the execution of the budget of the annual operating plan being low in the first two years of the project.
120. According to the mid-term evaluation, the first manager was removed from their position due to inability to manage a project of this magnitude and their partial responsibility in the low execution of the budget. With regard to the second manager, it is worth highlighting their strategic vision to warn the Steering Committee of the imminent need to modify the framework of project outcomes in line with the context and condition it was in. In particular, they made proposals for the change in the framework of outcomes, which were discussed in the eighth meeting of the Steering Committee, held on 7 August 2018. With regard to the role of guaranteeing collaboration between the project participants, the interviews conducted suggest that the new management has not been able to contribute towards an improvement in the everyday cooperation between the co-executors. The project continues to be perceived as fragmented: reference is made to the work of Hivos, of CI Ecuador and of FAO but no mention is made of united and comprehensive work. In addition, technical activities were performed on the ground that are not set forth in the PRODOC. Specifically, there is knowledge of the preparation of plant inventories in the six zones where the beach management plans were developed and of the capturing of photos requested by management. In addition, such offered training sessions on the handling of Guadua bamboo cane for the construction of homes, gave talks on environmental education and has helped to install different signs in the areas under AMESUC. Although this fieldwork has saved costs for the project as specialized technicians did not have to be hired, it did use up time that the management needed to dedicate to completing their duties in terms of technical monitoring and management. In this regard, it is known that the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles of Ecuador was not updated as the project management was overwhelmed with work with the preparation of plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. The evaluation team was also able to confirm these time limitations for management, due to the little support it could offer to the completion of this evaluation. In

addition, some beneficiaries interviewed expressed their unease with the lack of information that management provided on the up-to-date situation of the project.

121. In the interviews, it was necessary to clarify the name and activities of the evaluated project, as people confused it with others that CI Ecuador was also implementing at that time. As analysed in section 3.6, some CI Ecuador projects are lending continuity to some of the project achievements, but have not given it enough visibility, despite having a communication strategy and a communicator. It is worth highlighting that the project website began operating in June 2020, in the closing phase. According to the PRODOC, it is the responsibility of the project management to implement the communication programme, a task that it has neglected.

### **Performance of Hivos**

122. The work performed by Hivos in the REMACAM generated great satisfaction and a sense of greater appropriation among the beneficiaries. This was achieved thanks to the prior work performed by Hivos in the area and to the adoption of a more social approach in the mangrove conservation strategies. To achieve better interaction with the communities, Hivos held cultural events that strengthened the Afro-descendant identity of these and took into account their traditions in the educational conservation activities and training sessions organized. According to the interviews conducted, the gender equality training given to women who work gathering shells from the mangrove managed to initiate a process to change the perception of women in the area.
123. Although the funds budgeted were lower than those initially considered, Hivos managed to fulfil most of the outputs pledged in July 2020, coinciding with the technical and financial closure of its participation in the project, six months prior to its official termination. The mobility restrictions imposed by the health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the delays generated due to the level of insecurity and violence in the targeted area – that at times impeded access to the area or made it difficult to hire consultants – made it impossible to conclude all of the work.
124. Aspects that affected project execution also include the limitations identified in the administrative and financial processes of Hivos, which had to be consolidated during the project execution process. As previously mentioned, they contributed to a work atmosphere that was not very constructive between the co-executors and a low execution of the budget.

### **FAO performance**

125. FAO Ecuador has performed two roles in this project. Since the project started on 7 June 2018, it acted as an implementing party of GEF. As a result of the change in the project management model and, once the second amendment of the Implementing Agreement between CI Ecuador and FAO was approved on 7 June 2018, FAO Ecuador also became an executing partner, taking on the responsibility for the productive projects and the M&E of the project.
126. As an implementing agency, one of the main tasks it has performed is to complete the financial supervision. As previously mentioned, FAO Ecuador did not have prior experience in the implementation of projects under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality, with an NGO as an executing partner, and as such it also went through a learning curve that made it impossible to provide complete and effective training to the project co-executors, in relation to the administrative and financial processes required by FAO and GEF. As previously stated, this inexperience – added to that of the other partners – contributed to the processes for reviewing and giving feedback on the financial reports accumulating significant delays, as detailed in the audits performed. These also state that the responses to comments about the financial reports will also take a long time. These delays pushed back the transfer of funds from FAO to CI Ecuador

and generated certain unease and tension among the co-executors. It is also worth mentioning that FAO provided administrative support to CI Ecuador since the start of the project.

127. With regard to the technical support provided by FAO, it is worth highlighting that the lead technical officer only made two visits to the project targeted areas. The first took place at the start of the project, from 26 to 29 July 2016. In this meeting, the officer took part in the first meeting of the Steering Committee and gave general recommendations about the project, in addition to visiting three intervention areas. The second visit took place two years later. The mission report is dated 8 May 2018 but it does not specify the duration. In this mission they prepared technical recommendations about the project, which were well received by the executing team. In general, the knowledge and the advice provided by the lead technical officer during the mission were rated as satisfactory, albeit of little meaningful impact given that only two visits were made.
128. Taking the changes made to the framework of outcomes into account and, specifically, the inclusion of productive projects (one of which involves the farming of a species of oyster categorized as an invasive species), it is considered that the lead technical officer should have completed more timely and effective monitoring of this matter and have reflected their expert opinion on the PIR regarding the effect of these changes and activities on the level of social and environmental risk of the project.
129. In its condition as an executing partner in the project, the responsibility for M&E was assigned to FAO. Its performance in this field was very limited, due to the lack of up-to-date and effective M&E. In addition, the mid-term review was delayed and took place in 2019, while it should have taken place in 2018. More information about the M&E of the project can be found in the Monitoring and evaluation section.

### **Performance of the committees**

130. At the time of completing this evaluation, the Steering Committee had held 14 meetings and acted in line with that planned in the PRODOC. However, it lacked a more strategic vision to tackle significant problems that arose during the execution of the project. One of them was the deterioration in the relationship between the project co-executors. The Steering Committee did not tackle this problem in its infancy and the problem became worse and worse until it reached the current situation. In addition, the Steering Committee did not strategically tackle the changes that arose in the Ministry of Environment due to the economic crisis and did not foresee the effects that these would have on the project outcomes and impact. This was reflected in the lack of monitoring of an agreement that stipulated that the Ministry of Environment ought to perform a consultation with the "Socio Manglar" managers so that they could provide information on their situation and the Steering Committee could make a decision about how to modify the output that compromised the "Socio Manglar" resources. In general, the agreements adopted were inconsistently monitored.
131. The Management Committee aligned closely with that detailed in the PRODOC. At the time of completing this evaluation, it has held 19 meetings and carried out consistent work, performing effective monitoring of its agreements.
132. The Zone Committees were replaced with six provincial coordination roundtables, which were key for the participatory preparation of the six plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. Due to their role being limited to the preparation of the aforementioned plans, their contribution was limited to more comprehensive communication about integrated coastal management with the stakeholders that took part in the development of the plans.

## Factors affecting efficiency

### Modifications of the framework of outcomes

**Finding 12.** The modified framework of outcomes of the project shows substantial shortcomings in terms of its content. Among others, these included inconsistencies between the baselines and the targets of some outputs and outcomes; the absence of indicators and assumptions for the outcomes and outputs; or the inclusion of outputs that had been developed before the modification of the Framework, by means of other initiatives or projects, and that were not recorded in the PRODOC.

133. Based on the interviews conducted, it was possible to confirm that the project was designed by means of a participatory and consultative process. The Ministry of Environment and CI Ecuador were in charge of the conceptualization of the project. Subsequently, FAO joined the team, and the three entities defined the project components together. Hivos joined when there was already a general project design and proposed changes at the stage of validation of the PRODOC. As previously mentioned, there were different visions on how to execute the project, as Hivos adopted a more social approach to the conservation of biodiversity, consisting, among others, of the organization of cultural events, linking conservation to the ancestral knowledge of the communities and the delivery of initial capital to the fishery organizations. These kinds of initiatives were not carried out at the beginning in the other targeted areas. Subsequently, activities relating to the promotion of productive projects were carried out, geared towards fishery organizations in all of the targeted areas. However, this initial situation affected the relationship between the co-executors of the project.
134. With regard to the framework of outcomes of the project, the mid-term evaluation analysed the design of the original framework in detail, and detected the lack of assumptions and the existence of targets, the fulfilment of which was beyond the scope of the project. Based on these findings, the mid-term evaluation recommended modifying the framework of outcomes, which was eventually adjusted and presented in the 2019 PIR based on the arguments provided by the executing partners. However, as previously mentioned, the project did not follow some specific recommendations of the mid-term evaluation and made some changes to the framework of outcomes that did not align with these (e.g. replacing conservation areas with ecologically sensitive zones). That is why this evaluation focuses on the analysis of the modified framework of outcomes, and adopts an accumulative approach consisting of taking into account the outcomes achieved prior to the mid-term evaluation and that were included in the PRODOC.
135. In the first instance, one of the main shortcomings identified is the modification of the global environmental objective of the project, as it decreased the impact of the project. Another substantial shortcoming was not having explicitly reported this change in the 2019 PIR, which includes the modified framework of outcomes. This report only states that changes were made to the project outcomes and outputs – without specifying which – and that an Appendix is included in the modified framework of outcomes. This framework presents the modified environmental objective and the development objective is written differently. Annex 2 shows a comparative analysis between the original and modified framework of outcomes.
136. Other substantial defects identified in the modified framework of outcomes are related to the inclusion of:
  - i. Outputs that materialized before the start of the project or before the modification of the framework of outcomes. For example, the plan that the target of Output 1.1.2 (National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles) refers to was published by the Ministry of Environment in 2014 and the COA was published in 2017.

- ii. Outputs that the project did not fully materialize (e.g. COA Regulation).
  - iii. Outputs that have no direct connection to the specific project activities or that do not specifically contribute to such (e.g. regulation on dredging and multi-temporal study of mangrove coverage in 2010-2014-2018). This lack of a direct relationship with the project activities can be seen in the theory of change of the modified framework of outcomes, shown in section 3.7.
137. There are inconsistencies between the baselines and the targets of some outputs and outcomes. In addition, some targets are inaccurate. The lack of care in the modification of the framework of outcomes is also reflected in the repetition of Output 3.1.4, as this same number is assigned to two different outputs. Annex 3 includes detailed versions of these observations.
138. It is also worth highlighting the lack of indicators and assumptions for the outcomes and outputs, a situation which makes it difficult to monitor the project achievements. The column of indicators of the framework of outcomes includes the outcomes and outputs expected and not the indicators themselves. It is important to point out that an indicator must measure a strategic aspect of the outcome or output aimed at, in terms of quantity, quality or time, to make it possible to determine whether these were fulfilled or not. In addition, the lack of assumptions for the outcomes and outputs expected from the project limits the support that the framework of outcomes should provide to the implementing parties to know which external events or situations must arise or be fulfilled to ensure the expected outputs and outcomes are obtained.
139. With regard to the identification of risks in the PRODOC, it must be pointed out that the "Modification of the coastal dynamic and morphology as a result of sea level rise and climate change" is a risk inherent to climate change but it is not a risk that can directly affect the execution of the project, and as such it is considered inappropriate.
140. The modified framework of outcomes has multiple shortcomings in its content and also considerably decreased the project impact. There were enough resources but the outputs obtained do not compare to the original ones. In addition, many of them did not materialize and as such it can be stated that the project had a low level of efficiency. The technical resources were recognized on the ground. However, the quality control of some outputs (e.g. some fishery guidelines) was not adequate. As a result of the above, the rating for the criterion regarding efficiency and other factors that affect the execution of outcomes is moderately unsatisfactory.

## Monitoring and evaluation

**Finding 13.** Although the monitoring and evaluation plan was fulfilled to a high level, the monitoring of the project was not adequate due to the shortcomings identified in the annual PIR, the use of an outdated monitoring tool, the dispersion of the information generated and the low supervision of the project on the ground by the lead technical officer and the FAO-GEF liaison unit.

141. Table 2 provides the main M&E reports and activities and their level of fulfilment. Overall, these elements constitute the baseline monitoring plan, which is standard for all FAO-GEF projects. The level of completion of these reports and activities is generally high. The areas for improvement identified in relation to this completion include the lack of a detailed monitoring plan in the project start-up report or a limited number of supervision visits by FAO. With regard to the latter, the lead technical officer only made two visits, while the FAO-GEF Liaison Unit only made one, when at least one annual supervision visit should have been made. In 2019, FAO did not make any visits.



**Table 2. Main M&E reports and activities and their level of fulfilment**

M&E activity	Parties responsible	Time period/ frequency	Level of fulfilment
Start-up workshop	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador; FAO (task force with support from the lead technical officer, budget holder and FAO-GEF Coordination Unit).	Two months from the start of the project	The workshop took place on 30 May 2016.
Project start-up report	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador; FAO task force. Approved by the lead technical officer, budget holder and the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit.	Immediately after the start-up workshop	The report presents an update on the current situation of the country and the baselines of the outcomes pledged, the work plan, progress made by the project, and reiterates the duties and responsibilities of the participating institutions. It lacks a detailed monitoring plan.
Monitoring of the impact "on the ground"	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador; fishery organizations and associations of users of the mangroves participating in the project.	Ongoing	The evaluation team did not have access to the reports on the trips the project manager made to determine the number of visits made and their objectives. There is knowledge of the exchange of experiences between fishery organizations from different areas of the project.
Supervision visits and evaluation of progress in the project progress report and the annual project implementation review reports	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador; FAO (task force, lead technical officer, FAO-GEF Coordination Unit).	Annually, or as required	The lead technical officer had only made two visits. The first of them was at the start of the project, in May 2016. And the second in 2018, after the framework of outcomes and the project management model were modified. The officer for the FAO-GEF Liaison Office and manager of fishery and aquaculture of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) made a joint supervision visit to the project from 10 to 13 October 2017.
Project progress reports	Project technical team/CI-Ecuador	Half-yearly	At the time of completing this evaluation, nine half-yearly reports had been prepared that cover the period from the first six months of 2016 to the first six months of 2020.
Annual project execution review reports	FAO (lead technical officer and task force) with the support of the technical team of the project. Approval and submission to GEF by the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit	Annually	Four annual reports were submitted, which correspond to 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.
Technical reports	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador; FAO (lead technical officer, task force).	As appropriate	The following technical document was published: "Manual for monitoring turtles".
Co-financing reports	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador with contributions from the other co-financiers.	Annually	Letters to update the co-financing were requested from the co-executors and from the project partners, whose information is gathered and included in the annual project execution review reports.

M&E activity	Parties responsible	Time period/ frequency	Level of fulfilment
			The evaluation team did not have access to the updating letters.
Independent interim evaluation	External consultant, FAO independent evaluation unit in consultation with the project team, including the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit and other stakeholders.	Halfway through the implementation of the project.	The interim evaluation began in March and ended in July 2019.
Final Independent Evaluation	External consultant, FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) in consultation with the project team, including the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit and other stakeholders.	After the implementation of the project	The evaluation is in progress.
Final report	Technical team of the project/CI Ecuador; FAO (task force, lead technical officer, FAO FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, Trade Standards Compliance Report Unit (TSCR)).	Two months before the date of termination of the execution Agreement.	It will be drafted at the end of the project, which is due to close in February 2021.

142. According to the PRODOC, the project manager should take care of executing and managing the monitoring and evaluation plan. After modifying the project management model, in its role as co-executing partner, FAO took on the responsibility of hiring an M&E specialist to supervise the evolution of the project. Therefore, from 2019, a new monitoring system was followed, which consisted of an Excel workbook composed of 15 sheets known as matrices. The matrices on gender and general monitoring of the Ministry of Environment were empty. With regard to gender, the project did not define a plan of action or establish any target. With regard to the monitoring of the Ministry of Environment, this took place by means of an independent matrix sent by the former SGMC, although it was subsequently suspended at the request of the secretariat itself.
143. It is worth pointing out that the most relevant matrices – those that monitor the fulfilment of the project objectives, outcomes and outputs – are not updated in line with the modifications made to the framework of outcomes and as such they are of limited use at this point of the project. The risks matrix does not include all of the risks identified in the PRODOC. The logic for monitoring the agreements of the Steering Committee is unclear, as only some risks from 2019 and none from 2020 are included. The monitoring in relation to financing and co-financing, consultancies, acquisitions related to the productive projects and to the agreements of the Management Committee is not up-to-date. The information generated by the project is not integrated into the M&E system. The project outputs are dispersed among the different co-executing institutions and only CI Ecuador collects the minutes of the meetings of the Steering Committee and the Management Committee. The monitoring activities were dispersed and modified, also focussing on the monitoring of the technicians and the technical review of the outputs.
144. With regard to the identification of new risks, none were included that related to the likelihood of not creating new marine protected areas and, in response, relevant mitigation measures were

proposed to tackle it. The omission of this risk and the delay of the Ministry of Environment in reporting its decision to not create these new areas limited the adaptation capacity of the project.

145. Opportunities for improvement were also identified in the PIR. As mentioned in the previous section, the 2019 PIR did not explicitly detail the change in the global environmental objective of the project, and was limited to including the modified framework of outcomes, which incorporates the change in the environmental objective in an appendix, and to modifying the drafting of the development objective. The PIR did not include a justification for the decision to maintain the level of environmental and social risk of the project, after the modifications of the framework of outcomes.
146. In addition, the 2017 PIR reported progress recorded before the start of the project. For example, for Outcome 1.2 the concession of 48 AMESUC is reported, when only two AMESUC had been granted that year. For Output 1.2.3 related to the "Socio Manglar" programme, achievements were reported that were made from 2014 to 2015, without including an explanatory note. In the 2018 PIR, achievements are reported once again that were not made in the course of the project. For example, Outcome 1.1 reports a surface area of protected turtle nesting beaches that correspond to a time prior to the start of the project, without including the relevant clarifications. In addition, it is also noteworthy that in the 2018 PIR, the progress of the project was given a rating of satisfactory with regard to the fulfilment of its objectives, taking into account that the manager changed that year and the management model was adapted due to the low execution of the budget. These changes took place at the start of 2018 and, consequently, in June of the same year it would already be possible to foresee that the project progress could not improve substantially. In addition, the risks section does not warn of the possibility of not achieving important project outcomes (e.g. creating new MPA) due to the prevailing economic crisis since it began and unlikely improvement. This situation clearly made it necessary to modify the framework of outcomes of the project. In the 2019 PIR, it is also contradictory that the progress in Outcome 1.1 was highlighted considering that said report proposes a substantial modification of the framework of outcomes and, specifically, of the outcome detailed. All of the reports detail the achievement of the intermediate targets. This is an incorrect practice as the framework of outcomes did not define intermediate targets, rather milestones. It is worth clarifying that the milestones are not targets. Based on the 2018 PIR, errors are also detected in the reporting on co-financing, which were not corrected and still remain in the 2020 PIR. For example, in the case of FAO, it is reported that it would contribute USD 75 000 in kind, while the PRODOC states that it would disburse USD 75 540 in cash and USD 175 000 in kind. In addition, the funds that FAO provided – the latest figures are reported in the 2020 PIR – include their contributions in kind and in cash. That is why the veracity of the figures reported in the 2020 PIR about co-financing is questionable. The information shared directly with the evaluation team mentions different amounts.
147. Out of the 11 recommendations made by the mid-term evaluation, 8 were implemented (72 percent). These include the modification of the framework of outcomes (although the specific recommendations formulated were not considered) and of the extension of the project, as well as the systematization of knowledge on the project website, albeit very late. Four recommendations (28 percent) were not made effective. These include the development of a sustainability strategy and of a project exit plan.

## Knowledge management

**Finding 14.** The project updated and generated biological and fishery information on fisheries with octopus, Pacific bearded brotula, lobster, black ark clam and red crab as well as information on endangered species such as the hawksbill sea turtle and the American crocodile, therefore increasing knowledge about said species. This data was systematized on the project website and the information about the black ark clam and the red crab was incorporated into the database of the IPIAP. The fishery organizations exchanged experiences to acquire good management practices.

148. The project updated or increased knowledge of some commercial species in the mangroves and marine ecosystems. To develop the fisher management plans and guidelines pledged by the project, the following studies were performed:
  - i. diagnosis of the octopus fishery in the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve;
  - ii. diagnosis of the Pacific bearded brotula fishery in the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve;
  - iii. diagnosis of the lobster fishery in the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve;
  - iv. diagnosis of the black ark clam in the Gulf of Guayaquil; and
  - v. diagnosis of the red crab in the Gulf of Guayaquil.
149. These studies updated or generated biological and fishery information, such as the current status of the populations, the rate of recruitment and fishing mortality. In particular, the IPIAP performed the diagnoses of black ark clam and red crab, in the framework of the letter of agreement signed by the institute and CI Ecuador, and with the technical and financial support of the project. The IPIAP used the information gathered to complete and update the databases of these two fisheries that date back to 2000. The project contributed to reactivating the participatory monitoring of the IPIAP, interrupted due to a lack of resources. The databases are not publicly accessible, but access can be requested by means of a formal information request to IPIAP. In addition, the information generated by these diagnoses is included on the project website: <https://www.proyectomarinocostero.com.ec/pesquerias-responsables/>
150. In addition, the website shows the baseline of the hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the American crocodile (*Cocodylus acutus*) in the Gulf of Guayaquil and the archipelago of Jambelí. Other studies included are the "State of the art diagnosis of the processing of red crab meat and of the Pacific bearded brotula by the artisan fishery organizations" and the "Good practices guide for the processing of red crab meat and of Pacific bearded brotula", as well as the management plans and guidelines generated based on fishery diagnoses. Another technical document that is relevant for the mangroves is the study "Determination of vegetation cover/current use of the soil and the dynamics of change (2010-2018) in marine and coastal protected areas through the use of satellite images".
151. In addition, the fishers from the El Pelado Marine Reserve exchanged experiences with fishers and park rangers from the Galapagos Islands, who showed them real lobster fishery management practices that they have used for over a decade with very positive results. In addition, the IPIAP trained black ark clam and red crab fishers about the measurement of sizes and other catch data. The fishers register this information and report it to the IPIAP on a monthly basis. In exchange, the IPIAP has provided them with ongoing training and information about fishery management. This exchange was achieved by signing a voluntary agreement with the fishery organizations, which makes it possible for the IPIAP to have up-to-date information on a continuous basis about black ark clam and red crab.

152. In conclusion, the project has generated technical and scientific knowledge, which has extended the information about the targeted species. It is worth mentioning that the project website was developed this year.

### 3.4 Normative values

**EQ 4a.** To what extent has the project, in its work with local communities, ensured the participation of all the stakeholders in the decision-making process (including the implementation of activities)?

**EQ 4b.** To what extent has the project integrated gender equality issues into its design and is it contributing to the empowerment of women, young people and other vulnerable groups?

**The normative values criterion is rated as moderately satisfactory.**

**Finding 15.** The participation of relevant stakeholders in the preparation of the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas facilitated a common understanding on existing problems and, in most cases, a consensus on their zoning. In addition, it extended the use of the information generated for other government initiatives and created partnerships with other NGOs to replicate the implementation of the management plans in other municipalities, as well as a proposal to support the implementation of the management plan for the municipality of Santa Elena. Furthermore, it facilitated the integration of the Economic Integration Network of Associations of Mangrove Users from the cantons of San Lorenzo and Eloy Alfaro in the province of Esmeraldas. One absent partner was the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries.

**Finding 16.** The experience on the ground of CI Ecuador and the Hivos in the targeted areas facilitated the participation of the different stakeholders thanks to the existing trusting relationships.

#### Stakeholders' participation

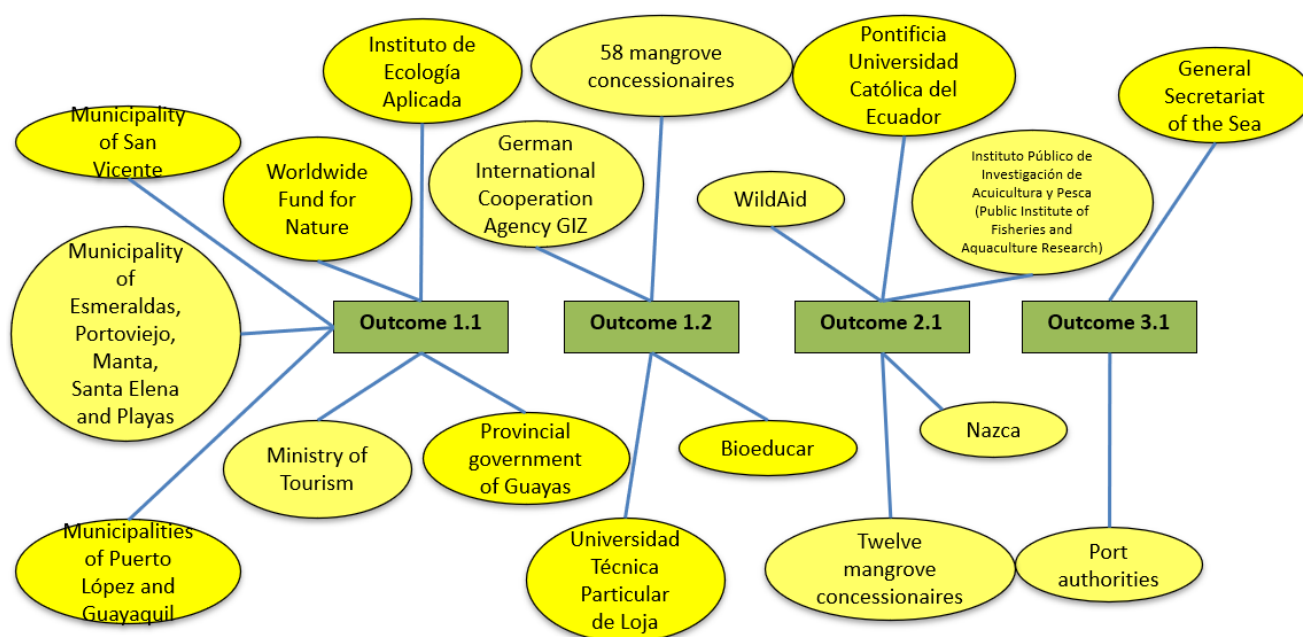
153. The project implemented participatory processes to develop instruments that required consensus among multiple stakeholders, in order to contribute to their appropriation and sustainability. These instruments include the beach management plans, which are developed by means of a series of workshops in six municipalities: Esmeraldas, San Vicente, Portoviejo, Manta, Santa Elena and Playas de Villamil. According to the interviews conducted, the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador and the municipal decentralized autonomous governments held meetings beforehand to formalize the collaboration, and the Ministry of Environment subsequently launched an open call for the workshops. Civil servants of the decentralized autonomous governments from different areas such as planning, tourism and cultural heritage, risk management, sanitation and environment and/or productive development, took part in these. Civil servants from the ministry of Tourism, naval port authorities, park rangers of the nearby MPAs; fire brigades; artisan fishery organizations; owners of restaurants and cabins; local civil organizations such as Estamos Contigo Ecuador and tourism companies such as Ocean Freaks also took part. In general, the local stakeholders interviewed agreed on signalling the urgent need to address the management of the beaches. This led them to participate actively in the process, although the COVID-19 pandemic affected the continuity of the work and most of them do not know what the current status of the management plans is.
154. The dynamic implemented for the development of the beach management plans was very useful because it made it possible to bring together and organize relevant stakeholders interested in improving this matter. In addition, it forged some new collaborations among relevant stakeholders. To give an example, the Tourism Department of the municipality of Esmeraldas began interacting with the port authority due to their participation in the workshops. The community of the municipality of San Vicente participated in the construction of ecological

rubbish containers as a result of their participation in the workshop. In the municipality of Santa Elena, workshop participants are creating an organization to manage the destinations to monitor the management plan and shield it against future government changes.

155. In addition, the participation of the tourism departments of different decentralized autonomous governments and the Ministry of Tourism has also made it possible to use the information generated to prepare beach management plans in other tourism initiatives. For example, in Ayange, Olon and las Palmas, it is foreseen that this information will be used to formally request the designation of "*Pueblo Mágico*" (magical town) and increase tourism in the area given the capacity of the beaches.
156. With regard to the fisheries, the preparation of black ark clam and red crab diagnoses involved the reactivation of participatory monitoring, promoted by the IPIAP since 2012. To do this, a voluntary agreement was signed by the fishery organizations and IPIAP, which makes it possible for this institute to have continuous and up-to-date information on said species.
157. The work in the REMACAM facilitated the establishment of the Economic Integration Network of Associations of Mangrove Users from the cantons of San Lorenzo and Eloy Alfaro (REDAUMSLEA), which brings together 14 fishery organizations. The project executors and beneficiaries highlight the integration of this grouping as one of the main benefits of the project. The network is beginning to show a capacity for management to gain the support of other entities (municipal and provincial decentralized autonomous governments, NGO) and to give continuity to the actions to improve the quality of life of the communities.
158. The experience on the ground of CI and of Hivos in the targeted areas also facilitated the participation of the different stakeholders. Both entities have experience and vast knowledge of their respective areas of work, which has contributed towards generating trust and achieving an active participation of the stakeholders called upon.
159. It is worth highlighting the participation of the WWF in the exchange of experiences with the project, which was not initially set forth in the PRODOC. In particular, WWF is preparing management plans for beaches in areas complementary to those targeted by the project, and it is making the most of the experience acquired by such for its preparation. In addition, with the support of GIZ and, under the project for the consolidation of MPA in Ecuador, WWF will contribute to the implementation of the beach management plan for the municipality of Santa Elena. GIZ has also collaborated on the updating of AMESUC management plans of fishery organizations located in El Oro and it is supporting the execution of a productive tourism project in the same area, with resources. WildAid made use of the work to update the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles in the framework of the project "Conservation of Sea Turtles in Continental Ecuador" of the programme "Sustainable Use and Conservation of Natural Heritage" of GIZ.
160. Some NGOs were hired – such as Nazca and Bioeducar – to perform specific activities of the project. Nazca prepared a lobster protocol in the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve in 2017. Bioeducar designed and executed a consolidation programme for AMESUC beneficiaries in the provinces of Guayas and Manabí, and developed a system for the governance and implementation of a methodological guide for participatory monitoring. The *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador* (Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador), the *Instituto de Ecología Aplicada* (Applied Ecology Institute) of the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* (San Francisco University of Quito) and the *Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja* (Private Technical University of Loja) participated as consultants in the drafting of the AMESUC management plans.

161. According to the interviews conducted with fishers who participated in the development of the fishery management plans and guidelines in MPAs, there was confusion about the project, as CI Ecuador is implementing another one in the same area. In general, those interviewed did not understand the guidelines and confused them with actions that were being performed since before the project began. Figure 6 shows the relationship of stakeholders involved in the project by outcome.
162. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fishery has not participated in the execution of the project. This made it impossible to analyse and align the fishery guidelines, developed by the project, with the conditions of use to regulate the fisheries – that said Ministry must establish, as a national authority on the matter of fishery –, achieve greater impact and contribute to the sustainability of the benefits.

**Figure 6. Stakeholders involved in the project by outcome**



Source: Prepared by the authors.

## Gender

**Finding 17.** The project did not develop a strategy for the inclusion of the gender-sensitive approach in its entire cycle, as stated in the PRODOC. Consequently, the work done was not equal and as such, the outcomes were different in the various targeted areas. It is worth highlighting the empowerment of the female 'concheras' (shell gatherers) and the awareness raised among the men of the fishery organizations in the province of Esmeraldas.

163. According to the PRODOC, the project had to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach throughout its cycle, empower women by making their sources of income sustainable, and promote their participation in all training events and activities. In addition, it mentions the need to explore mechanisms to prevent child labour. In particular, Output 1.2.1 states that the diagnosis for getting to know the state of the AMESUC had to include a gender analysis of the fishery organizations that wanted to update or obtain an AMESUC. The modifications of the framework of outcomes included an additional target for that output, which states that ten fishery organizations had to be trained in gender matters and the inclusion of women in organizational and productive economic activities.

164. The efforts made by the project to fulfil this target include the work performed in the province of Esmeraldas. There, Hivos took care of renewing the AMESUC of the fishery organizations. As part of this work, Hivos hired a consultancy to strengthen the capacities of the AMESUC beneficiaries in the Cayapas-Mataje Mangroves Ecological Reserve. This consultancy implemented a methodology that jointly considered the intergenerational mainstreaming, gender and intercultural approaches, and that is based on the principle of equality and non-discrimination based on human rights. In this way, the training provided considered the differences in needs, interests, behaviours and hopes of men and women. The province of Esmeraldas is different from other areas targeted by the project in that the number of women who depend on collecting black ark clam is higher. The REDAUMSLEA – established in the framework of the project in Esmeraldas – has 686 members, 300 of whom are women. In accordance with the interviews conducted, the representatives of four fishery organizations – including two women – stressed the higher level of awareness that men now have about the role of women and their increasing participation in the decision-making of REDAUMSLEA. The work generated by this consultancy was used to prepare the management plans of the 14 organizations of this network, and they consequently also include a gender-sensitive approach.
165. An attempt was made to use this work in other targeted provinces but it was not possible to achieve the same impact. The project hired a technician with knowledge of gender matters so that they could resume the work in other areas of the project. A training plan was made, and training began to be provided in the area that had a higher number of project interventions (Guayas and El Oro). The training – that in accordance with some of the people interviewed were more like conversations about the matter – was integrated into the field visits that the technical professionals had programmed, and as such no ongoing or monitoring process was implemented. The resources and support were limited. The training plan initially arranged was not completed and the work of the technician hired was geared towards another activity. At the moment, an educational portfolio is being prepared on gender matters in coastal and marine management to raise awareness among the communities.
166. One of the requirements for the selection of the productive projects was the participation of women. However, this requirement was not observed as organizations composed solely of men were selected as support beneficiaries. It is worth highlighting that the project communication strategy also did not specifically promote women participation.
167. For its part, Bioeducar also organized talks about gender as part of its programme to consolidate the capacities of the AMESUC beneficiaries in the provinces of Manabí and Guayas, although these did not use the work performed in the province of Esmeraldas.
168. It is also worth highlighting that the project donated boats and engines to the organizations with AMESUC for the control and supervision of the mangroves. However, women do not drive boats and in some areas their doing so is frowned upon.<sup>14</sup>
169. In summary, the project implemented participatory processes for the completion of the activities that relevant and diverse local stakeholders collaborated on. These procedures made it possible to generate a consensus on and a common understanding of the local problems, although these were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and were unequally effective. With regard to the inclusion of a gender-sensitive approach, this resulted in different outcomes – some successful,

---

<sup>14</sup> From the aforementioned, it can be inferred that the project did not have a strategy to include a gender-sensitive approach and its work in this matter was not equal. This led to the outcomes being different in the targeted areas. It is worth highlighting the empowerment of women in the shell gatherer areas of the province of Esmeraldas.



others not so much – due to the lack of a guiding strategy for the whole process. This criterion is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory.

### **3.5 Social and environmental safeguards**

**The social and environmental safeguards criterion is rated as moderately satisfactory.**

170. According to the environmental impact evaluation – completed in the preparation phase – the project fell under category C, as it was considered that the risk of it having a negative social or environmental impact was low. It is worth highlighting that the project has not generated any negative social or environmental effect.
171. However, taking into account the changes made to the framework of outcomes and, in particular, the inclusion of productive projects (one of which involves farming a species of oyster categorized as invasive), it is considered that the relevant PIR should have included a technical justification of the reasons why the project risk category (environmental and social) did not have to be changed after the modification of the framework of outcomes. That is why this criterion is rated as moderately satisfactory.

### **3.6 Sustainability**

**EQ 5.** How sustainable are the outcomes achieved to date, or how sustainable will they be, at an environmental, social, financial and institutional level?

**The sustainability criterion is rated as moderately unlikely.**

#### **Institutional sustainability**

**Finding 18.** Structural weakening and instability of the Ministry of Environment substantially limits the sustainability of the project achievements. As the ultimate environmental authority in Ecuador, the Ministry of Environment defines the policies and actions that could give continuity to the project interventions. However, the discontinuation of the SGMC and the appointment of six different ministers for Environment and Water and six different deputy secretaries in charge of marine and coastal matters since the arrival of the new government, generate uncertainty about the sustainability of the achievements made.

172. The project contributed towards setting a strong regulatory foundation for the planning, environmental management, land use and integrated coastal management, regulation of activities and the sustainable use and protection of coastal and marine area resources, by preparing Book V of the COA Regulation, which addresses the marine coastal area. However, this contribution towards the institutional sustainability of the benefits generated by the project contrasts with the successive economic and institutional weakening of the Ministry of Environment, which can compromise the fulfilment of the COA Regulation provisions.
173. The discontinuation of the SGMC and the merging of the Ministry of Environment with the National Secretariat of Water constitute a risk due to the possible loss of institutional memory and technical and managerial capacity for fishery management and integrated coastal management. In fact, the creation of the former SGMC was the result of a long process of institutionalization of integrated coastal management policies, developed over more than 20 years by the renowned Coastal Resources Management Programme.

174. With regard to the sustainable management of fishery resources in the MPA and in the mangroves by means of the AMESUC, it is pointed out that in both cases the consolidation of the capacities of the fishery organizations, which contributes to the sustainability of the sustainable management actions of commercial species. In the MPAs, this improved their management capacity in general aspects of fishery regulation and control and monitoring activities; but above all it improved their relationship with fishery organizations, who are more aware and prepared to collaborate. However, given the limited resources of the Ministry of Environment and its important role in supporting and monitoring these organizations it is not known whether these process would be maintained and make progress towards the sustainable and comprehensive fishery management after the project is over.
175. One example is the fishery register, a basic requirement for rights-based management, which has stagnated in some MPA since its creation. With the support of the project, the fishery organizations participated in the preparation of a census of users and boats and, in some cases, their legalization. However, there is concern that the identification cards will not be issued and that regulation by means of quota systems, distinction by coves and others, in the project framework, will not materialize.
176. Meanwhile, the institutionalization of the technical instruments developed by the project was very limited. According to the information gathered in the interviews, the likelihood of approving the fishery regulation the proposal for protected continental areas is low – at least in the short- to medium-term – due to discrepancies about its content. In addition, the scope of the fishery management plans was reduced to voluntary guidelines, that were not highly related to the updated management plans of the five MPAs, a situation which weakens their sustainability.

**Finding 19.** The project contributed to establishing a sound regulatory basis for the marine and coastal area, by developing Book V of the COA Regulation. However, its fulfilment is uncertain due to the weakening and instability of the Ministry of Environment. The other regulatory instruments developed have still not been adopted by the Ministry of Environment.

177. One unquestionable success of the project was to include a regulation development component to consolidate the institutional and social sustainability of the actions implemented. However, only one of the five proposals submitted were approved: the COA Regulation, through which the project contributed to the development of Book V. In accordance with the interviews conducted, it is foreseen that the update of the AMESUC regulation and the dredging regulation will be approved in the short-term. However, it is not possible to ensure this given the instability in the Ministry of Environment.

### **Environmental sustainability**

**Finding 20.** The modification of the framework of outcomes affected the environmental sustainability of the project achievements. In particular, the creation of MPAs was replaced with ecologically sensitive zones, which are not conservation instruments and lack stability in the medium- and long-term.

178. The situation of the Ministry of Environment also led to major changes in the project. These included the modification of the global environmental objective, which included the creation of conservation areas. The modified framework of outcomes eliminated the creation of new MPAs and replaced it with the proposal of “ecologically sensitive zones” of the municipal decentralized autonomous governments. However, this substitution did not imply an equivalent solution, given that the ecologically sensitive areas do not, *per se*, constitute a conservation instrument. In accordance with the COA of Ecuador (Title II, On in situ conservation), the mechanisms for the *in situ* conservation of terrestrial, insular, marine and freshwater biodiversity are the National System of Protected Areas, the management categories of which are national parks, wildlife refuges, fauna

production reserves, the national area for recreation and the marine reserve; the special areas for conservation, that include areas or sites recognized by international instruments ratified by the state, environmental buffer zones, ecological rights and connectivity corridors; the sustainable management of natural and semi-natural landscapes; and others that the National Environmental Authority determines. The conservation categories and mechanisms do not include ecologically sensitive zones.

179. For its part, the ecologically sensitive zones are cited in the COA Regulation (Book V, Title II, sections 1 and 2). They constitute only one of the zoning elements that the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas should provide for. These are planning and regulation instruments that can enter into effect by means of specific regulations (municipal norms) or by means of their inclusion in land use and development plans (LUDP).
180. The beach management plans (including their ecologically sensitive zones), as well as the regulations and the LUDP that back them, can be modified by each new municipal administration. In fact, each new administration has to update its LUDP in accordance with its management plan, with an execution horizon of five years. Consequently, the sustainability of the beach management plans and, in particular, its support for the conservation of biodiversity and of sea turtles, are uncertain in the medium- and long-term. In contrast, the formal conservation schemes (municipal or national) are more stable in the event of any political change and can even become irreversible once registered in the National System of Protected Areas, and they have financial and personal resources available for their maintenance.
181. In addition, both the adoption and the execution of plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas prepared by the project depend to a great extent on the political will and technical capacity of the decentralized autonomous governments. This is demonstrated by the different levels of appropriation observed in the six municipalities the project worked in. In all of these, the process of lobbying, support, technical assistance and coordination of local stakeholders was very brief (less than a year) given the complexity and lack of experience of the decentralized autonomous governments with this management tool. The outcomes were unequal. The decentralized autonomous governments of Esmeraldas (Las Palmas beach) made the most of the support from the project to coordinate the stakeholders and implement a genuine comprehensive regulation system. In contrast, in the decentralized autonomous governments of Santa Elena (Olón beach), the conflicts of interest between local stakeholders have until now impeded reaching agreements to define ecologically sensitive zones. Between these two extremes, there is a whole range of levels of commitment and adoption of policies that in general offer little certainty over the continuity of the actions executed.
182. The renewal or acquisition of AMESUC contributes to environmental sustainability by making fishery organizations formally undertake to sustainably manage mangrove resources. However, fishery organizations expressed their concern for the difficulties in fulfilling said commitment, due to the lack of resources for monitoring and supervision tasks in the mangroves. As can be gathered from the section on financial sustainability, the contribution of the "Socio Manglar" programme is fundamental in this regard.

## Social sustainability

**Finding 21.** It was possible to consolidate some of the fishery organizations and awareness was raised among the communities about the conservation of beaches, the sustainable use of fishery resources and the conservation of turtle nests. This could perhaps exert certain pressure in the future and promote the fulfilment of the beach management plans. However, due to the brief duration of the work and the COVID-19 pandemic, no community mobilization and organization has yet taken place to this end.

183. In general, the development of beach management plans promoted greater participation by civil organizations concerned about local ecological problems and better coordination with Ministry of Environment employees (of local protected areas or provincial administrations, as applicable). Thanks to this, it is likely that – at least – the actions to monitor and protect turtle nests will be maintained. In the best-case scenario, this social base could promote reforms in beach regulation and eventually exert pressure so that the municipalities adopt or implement their management plans or other similar instruments. However, given the brief duration of this work and the social restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, no community organization is working towards this objective yet.
184. With regard to the fishery organizations and shell gatherers of the mangroves, the formalization of their use – by means of AMESUC and the legalization of the organizations – and the training and materials provided (sets of signs, “peinetas”, etc.) were fundamental but require ongoing support and monitoring by the Ministry of Environment to ensure their effectiveness. The draft regulation update to grant the AMESUC extended the support that the Ministry of Environment should provide to these organizations to fulfil the terms of said agreements exactly. After the discontinuation of the SGMC – whose offices were in Guayaquil – support from the Ministry of Environment is uncertain. The government contribution to the “Socio Manglar” programme – currently suspended – is also up in the air, and only support obtained through international cooperation prevails, meaning that its reach was limited.
185. Similarly, the actions to consolidate the organizations (particularly the delivery of engines and boats) extend the possibilities for performing ongoing activities for the conservation of mangroves, such as surveillance and reporting logging or other illegal activities. However, some associations stated that they did not have resources to buy the petrol needed for the boats. In addition, the lack of support from the authorities in charge of the surveillance is a serious problem that constantly truncates their work, as they report the illegal activities but the corresponding activities do not perform the necessary monitoring.
186. Awareness was raised among the communities about the conservation of beaches, the sustainable use of fishery resources and the conservation of turtle nests. This could perhaps exert certain pressure in the future and promote the fulfilment of the beach management plans. However, due to the brief duration of the work and the COVID-19 pandemic, no community mobilization and organization has yet taken place to this end.
187. The productive projects began just over a year from the end of the project. The project will not be able to guide their execution and verify whether the management model proposed is the right one. However, the technical support was managed with NGOs, universities and other stakeholders in the territory. For its part, the contribution of initial capital to the REMACAM generated a lot of motivation among the organizations, which aim to capitalize on these funds by buying shells that fulfil the size requirements, therefore promoting greater care of the resource. In addition, REDAUMSLEA began work to obtain support from other entities – such as municipalities (San Lorenzo, Eloy Alfaro) and universities – in order to give continuity to the actions undertaken with the project.

188. On the other hand, it is observed that, rather than implementing new practices for the sustainable management of fisheries, the sustained implementation of traditional practices was improved, which produce good outcomes if correctly implemented (such as rotational harvesting, self-imposed bans, participatory monitoring, or cooperative sales, among others). In fact, the social sustainability of the guidelines prepared by the project is very low, as they are quite restrictive and took into account few elements of the socio-economic and cultural contexts of the communities.
189. Another element that can contribute to the sustainability of the actions is the existence of other projects that could complement them or give continuity to them. According to CI Ecuador, this includes another seven projects executed by this entity and at least two more by other NGOs. Particularly noteworthy is the "Network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas" project, which CI Ecuador executed with significant geographical and temporal overlapping. Some of the people interviewed expressed the intention to complement the actions with this project, a situation that reflects the appropriation by CI Ecuador of the project and its high interest in continuing to work on matters relating to conservation, fishery management and integrated coastal management. This entity is also executing the "Sustainable Productive Development and Strengthening of Mangroves" project for the fishery organizations of Sabana Grande and Campo Alegre, with financing from The Nature Conservancy (Ecuador), which contributes directly to the sustainability of the actions performed in these two areas with AMESUC. Something similar occurs with the project "Fishing for a Prosperous Future", executed in the El Morro Mangrove Wildlife Refuge and its buffer zone, with financing from Blue Action Fund. In addition, CI Ecuador is designing a new project with the Ministry of Environment for the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which will be geared towards the adaptation and mitigation of climate change in the mangroves. It has also specified an alliance with the Association of Ecuadorian Municipalities (AME) to strengthen the integrated management of beaches in coastal municipalities and to continue to implement the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, designed with the support of the project and that will give continuity to its work.
190. Giving continuity to the process developed by the project, WWF is providing support to five municipalities in the adoption of the beach management plans, in the framework of the "Sustainable Use and Conservation of Natural Heritage" programme of GIZ. In addition, WildAid is working on activities to monitor and protect nests and, as explained in section 3.2, assumed the task of updating the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, which the project was initially in charge of. For its part, Hivos also obtained financing for a new project that will give continuity to the process of consolidation of the organizations of the REMACAM from next year. It can therefore be stated that the sustainability of some of the project benefits is due mainly to international cooperation. However, the weakening of the Ministry of Environment in this field and the foreseeable transition process lead one to think that the work specified is perhaps not appropriately planned and administered, is duplicated or is dispersed and hardly coordinated.
191. It is also worth mentioning that in its programme and projects, FAO Ecuador does not include current initiatives related to the management of mangroves that could expand upon or continue on with the project achievements.

## Financial sustainability

**Finding 22.** The sources of financing to give continuity to the activities and processes that the project initiated have decreased and their availability is uncertain in the medium- and long-term. This includes the counterpart initially planned by the Ministry of Environment by means of its “Socio Bosque” programme and the regular budget geared towards the management of marine and coastal areas, in addition to the resources available for the municipalities involved in the development of the beach management plans.

192. The austerity policies implemented by the government prioritized other sectors, which substantially affected the Ministry of Environment. As mentioned in other sections, this portfolio of the state made budget cuts that limited the cover of the “Socio Bosque” programme and its “Socio Manglar” programme, a fundamental counterpart for providing support to the organizations that hold AMESUC and to ensure the fulfilment of these agreements. This mechanism managed to cover 39 944.12 hectares under AMESUC. In these areas, the Ministry of Environment succeeded in managing resources from international cooperation to continue with the payments, therefore ensuring their sustainability in the short-term, although not in the medium- and long-term.
193. In addition, a substantial number of civil servants, including park rangers of the MPAs, were dismissed. There are over 500 at national level and they are key actors in the consolidation of fishery management, sea turtle nest protection and the monitoring of both.
194. In addition, the limitation of Ministry of Environment funds reduced their logistical capacity for routine monitoring, control and supervision activities in the marine and coastal areas, as well as activities relating to coordination with technical support and fishery organizations. The project therefore geared more resources to covering the travel of the Ministry of Environment civil servants, to the targeted areas and to events linked to marine and coastal matters. These resources will not be available after the project ends, and this is a situation which could affect the continuity of the processes. Furthermore, the economic crisis also affected the capacity of other state actors to act, such as the IPIAP, the Navy and the Environmental Police, responsible for fishery monitoring, support for MPA control and surveillance activities, and public safety (in the sea and on land) and action in case of environmental crimes, respectively.
195. With regard to beach management plans, despite several municipalities (Esmeraldas, Manta, Playas) expressing their desire to include them in the land use and development plans, they would beforehand need to review and adjust their final versions that have not yet been submitted. Although they are delayed in the processes to update the land use and development plans, it is very unlikely that they will succeed in including the management plans. This would also have consequences for the financial sustainability of the actions, as they form the basis for the allocation of the budget from central government.
196. As previously stipulated, the sustainability of the outcomes is limited particularly due to the weakening of the Ministry of Environment and the low level of institutional appropriation of the outputs developed. This also has repercussions on financial sustainability, due to the budget cuts it involves and to the extrication of outputs (beach management plans, regulation proposals, AMESUC management plans) with management instruments backed by budget items (land use and development plans, MPA management plans, “Socio Manglar” programme). Simultaneously, the same process of execution generated social consolidation with participation in the conservation of sea turtle nests and the implementation of practices for the sustainable fishery management, which is expected to resume after the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the development of other international cooperation projects that they are currently executing in the

area will give continuity to some of the project achievements, but the strategic orientation of the Ministry of Environment is necessary to avoid the duplication or dispersion of their work. The sustainability criterion is therefore rated overall as moderately unlikely.

### 3.7 Progress towards impact

**EQ 6.** Taking into account the change in the framework of outcomes and despite the difficulties encountered, which changes or suggestions must be implemented to strengthen the outcomes and objectives of similar projects?

**The progress towards impact criterion is rated as unsatisfactory.**

**Finding 23.** The changes made in the framework of outcomes substantially reduced the project impact, by modifying its global environmental objective and, consequently, its outputs and outcomes. The new objective supports the conservation and use of biodiversity by preparing proposals for the creation of ecologically sensitive zones rather than conservation areas, as stated in the PRODOC. The ecologically sensitive zones are not conservation instruments, rather zoning included in the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, which are planning tools. The modification of the framework of outcomes has also stopped the project from contributing to a comprehensive conservation of biodiversity that would include commercial and endangered species.

197. As a result of the modification of the framework of outcomes, the environmental objective of the project was changed. Rather than aspiring to the establishment of conservation areas as one of the ways to use and conserve biodiversity, it proposes creating "ecologically sensitive zones". These are not conservation instruments, rather zoning included in the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. The original objective involved the declaration of conservation areas under one of the modes of the National System of Protected Areas. The fundamental objective of this system is the comprehensive conservation of biodiversity and its declarations are of an irreversible nature. To this end, the national legislation has robust legal backing (international conventions, Constitution of the Republic, COA, secondary regulations) and a wide variety of management models, in line with the category of management and the system of ownership (private, community, of the decentralized autonomous governments and of the central government).
198. By contrast, in accordance with Book V, Title II, sections 1 and 2 of the COA Regulation, the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas are planning instruments, the obligatory nature of which is limited to their preparation and connection to the land use and development plans of each canton. Beyond the guidelines included in the reference detailed, the definition of uses and zoning continue to be contingent upon the wish of the municipalities. Specific mandates or restrictions are not detailed for the regulation of activities in the stretches of beaches. Consequently, ecologically sensitive zones constitute a tool to support conservation activities – mainly for marine turtles – but are not a formal protection system. In addition, without a beach management plan proposal, it was possible to establish regulation systems. Proof of this is that the municipal decentralized autonomous governments of Esmeraldas managed to establish a comprehensive regulation system for Las Palmas beach, backed by regulations and budget items, without having adopted a plan for the management of beaches and adjacent areas.
199. This change in the environmental objective affected Outcome 1.1, whose indicators and outputs revolved around the creation of protected areas. That is why its impact also decreased, as it focused on activities linked to the ecologically sensitive zones.
200. Another modification of the framework of outcomes, which lowered the project impact, was the reduction (42 percent) of the government budget geared towards the "Socio Manglar"

programme of incentives for conservation. Initially, an item of USD 1 000 000 was allocated, and this was subsequently decreased to USD 571 408. Only four organizations that acquired their AMESUC with the support of the project were admitted into this system. This economic incentive constitutes one of the most effective measures for the fulfilment of the AMESUC, the tool proposed by the project to guarantee the sustainable use of the mangrove resources in the long-term. At the time of performing this evaluation, the Ministry of Environment is compensating for its budgetary limitations with financing from international cooperation, geared towards supporting associations it has granted agreements to.

201. An attempt was made to compensate for the impact by including an activity focused on the promotion of productive projects. However, this began in 2019 – the penultimate year of the term of the project – and as such there will not be enough time to monitor the associated projects and guarantee their effective functioning. This situation worsens even more when taking into account that just over half of the productive projects approved present legal problems for their execution and another one – which involves the farming of Pacific oysters in open waters – constitutes a potential risk for the native biodiversity as this species is categorized as potentially invasive.
202. In the REMACAM the testimonies of fishers who have started to see improvements in their quality of life thanks to obtaining higher quality outputs were collected. The initial capital delivered has also helped them to obtain higher income for selling the shells. In the Gulf of Guayaquil, three of the nine organizations interviewed also mentioned an increase in their income from the sale of their products. It is worth pointing out that these fishery organizations received support from other institutions and, as such, this outcome is also the result of prior work and cannot be attributed exclusively to the project. If such had been able to prepare the baselines of the fisheries in their first or second year, it would have been feasible to take a second measurement and see the effect of the project intervention. Given that these measurements were not taken, this comparison is not possible.
203. Another important modification of the framework of outcomes was that of Outcome 1.2. Originally, it made reference to the comprehensive conservation of biodiversity – in the management of mangroves with AMESUC – which will stabilize or increase the number of commercial species (red crab, black ark clam) and endangered species, focussing particularly on the hawksbill sea turtle and the American crocodile. With the modification of the Framework, this outcome was reduced to the conservation of biodiversity in the management of mangroves by means of the sustainable management of red crab and black ark clam resources. This change dispensed with the comprehensive approach to biodiversity conservation – which includes commercial as well as endangered species – and eliminated the contribution of the project to stabilizing or increasing the number of these species. The project work was therefore only limited to promoting the sustainable management of resources without undertaking to decisively improve the situation of commercial species. In addition, the diagnostic study performed on the hawksbill sea turtle and the American crocodile lost importance as it was not linked to any project activity.
204. The impact of the regulation proposals developed in the framework of Component 3 is limited. Of all of them, only the COA Regulation was approved (although the project contributed to the development of one of the seven books of said Regulation), the national impact of which is commendable. However, given the discontinuation of the SGMCC, there is uncertainty about the importance that will be given to the fulfilment of the COA Regulation. The other regulatory instruments developed remained as proposals, and as such it is not possible to guarantee their adoption, and this also decreases the impact of the project. In addition, the reach of the outputs

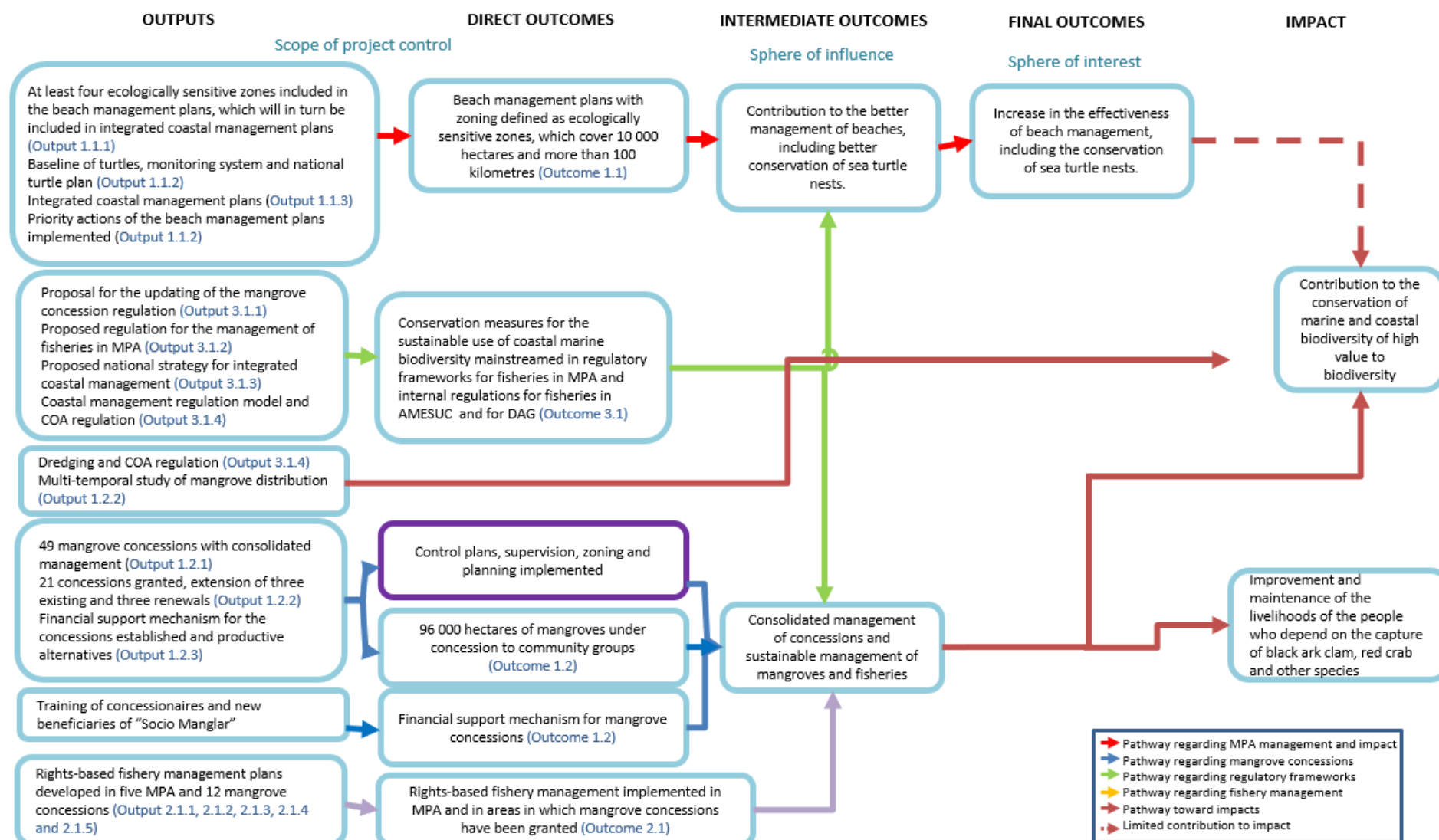


geared towards improving fishery management in the MPAs was low, going from management plans to voluntary fishery guidelines.

**Finding 24.** The decision to implement corrective measures to mitigate situations that delayed or impeded the execution of some activities was not timely. In addition, outputs were included that do not contribute to the specific activities of the project or that had already been completed before modifying the framework of outcomes.

205. As mentioned in section 3.3, the decision to modify the framework of outcomes was delayed, taking into account that the economic crisis prevailing in Ecuador since 2015 showed no signs of improving. That is why it has not been possible to consolidate the development of beach management plans and productive projects. The time remaining to complete the project is considered insufficient to ensure the adoption of plans by the decentralized autonomous governments and to achieve the proper functioning of the productive projects. Consequently, although progress towards impact is going in the right direction, it cannot be guaranteed that it will eventually be possible to achieve the expected outcome. It is also worth mentioning that the priority actions designed to initiate the management plans were implemented in an isolated manner, without knowing whether they could be coordinated with the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, as these have not yet been adopted by the decentralized autonomous governments and can be modified.
206. Several outputs not included in the PRODOC were disconnected from the project activities and/or had materialized prior to the approval of the modified framework of outcomes. Consequently, they cannot be counted as project achievements and contributors to the progress towards impact. This is the case of the multi-temporal study of mangrove coverage in protected areas that, without denying their use for other actions, did not serve to contribute to the development of the project activities. For its part, the regulation proposal about dredging is linked to the marine and coastal zone but it is of a general nature and does not address specific problems of the mangroves. In addition, the modified framework of outcomes also establishes the preparation of a COA. Its development would not have been possible in the framework of the project as its scale exceeds the scope of the project.
207. With regard to the inclusion of outputs materialized beforehand, the clearest example is the National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, prepared and approved in 2014 with the support of CI Ecuador in the framework of a prior project. However, it was included in the modified framework of outcomes as a contribution to the project. In this same output it is indicated that the project would develop a system for monitoring sea turtles. This system did feature in the baseline of the target, although the actions truly consisted of the consolidation of the monitoring system that the Ministry of Environment had been implementing for several years.
208. To demonstrate the weakening of the project impact and the lack of connection between some of the outputs added, as previously discussed, Figure 7 shows the theory of change of the modified framework of outcomes. This theory also makes it possible to observe the weakening of the integrated coastal management approach, affected by the inclusion of outputs and outcomes that were not very in line with achieving this end.

**Figure 7. Theory of change of the modified framework of outcomes**



Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Finding 25.** The framework of outcomes also shows several errors and inconsistencies that impede the adequate measurement of achievements and the determination of its progress towards the impact of the project. These include inconsistencies in some indicators, errors in the baseline of targets, delay in the collection of baseline data, lack of subsequent measurements and lack of systematic records of the initial situation and of the progress of fishery organizations. In total, of the 35 project targets, it was only possible to evaluate the fulfilment of 19. It was not possible to determine the level of fulfilment of 4 targets due to the lack of information, and 12 targets could not be evaluated due to the problems detailed.

209. It was not possible to evaluate the fulfilment of 12 of the 35 targets of the modified framework of outcomes due to the inconsistencies included in Annex 3. In addition, it was not possible to determine the level of fulfilment of four targets as the necessary information was not generated or the evaluation team was not able to obtain it.
210. For example, the data presented for Output 1.1.2 are not clear in terms of their definition (detected or protected nests) or origin, as the studies completed do not coincide with the nature of the indicators reported. In addition, the information on the target is not correct as it states that there was no monitoring system or baseline data prior to the project.
211. For the target of Outcome 1.2, data is presented from studies that do not coincide with the targeted areas and with a delay of one year between the data compared (2018 and 2019). It is therefore inappropriate to define them as baseline and outcome measurements. Similarly, for all of the outputs of Outcome 2.1, the 2019 study is presented as a baseline and does not include comparisons of subsequent measurements. In general, the delay in gathering data is related to the delay in the execution of activities and impedes the evaluation of the impact of the actions, even if comparative measurements are made.
212. Lastly, in the activities for the consolidation of fishery organizations (Output 1.2.1), it is not possible to distinguish their impact as there was no systematic record of the initial conditions, or of the progress made in the implementation of sustainable management measures. This constitutes a serious obstacle as the actions were dispersed and ancestral users of the mangrove tend to use traditional practices in the management of fisheries.
213. In response to the evaluation question, and taking into account the findings for this criterion, an important lesson learned is to not wait for the mid-term review when the adjustments of the framework of outcomes are imminent and clear. In similar projects that involve the creation/enactment of conservation areas, a detailed assessment must be performed of their political and financial feasibility at the start of the project. The outcomes of this assessment must be broadly discussed in the project start-up workshop. This is relevant as the prevailing context when a project is approved and proposed can be different to that at the start of its execution. In addition, it is also worth taking into account that the creation of conservation areas may not depend on the project but on one of the co-executors, usually the national environmental authority, which is exposed at all times to a change in government priorities. If this matter is discussed in time, it is more likely that these can be realized in a timely manner that will not decrease the impact of the project. Another lesson learned is to make sure that the modification of the framework of outcomes – where necessary – takes place in a rigorous and professional manner. In other words, the inclusion of outputs materialized by means of other initiatives or work must be avoided, as should attributing them to the project if they are not included in the PRODOC. Given that the modifications of the framework of outcomes were delayed and drastically decreased the project impact, the progress towards impact is rated as unsatisfactory.

## 4. Lessons learned

**Lesson 1.** The conflict generated between the co-executors and the implementing party due to their inexperience in the execution of a project under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality, confirmed the convenience of not accepting partners with a high fiduciary risk,<sup>15</sup> but also showed the need to train FAO personnel in the implementation of these kinds of projects.

**Lesson 2.** Ensuring a balanced participation of all of the co-executors in the design of a project under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality is important. This way, the perspective of partners will be reflected and will be adequately integrated into the overall vision of the project, therefore reducing the possibility of discrepancies arising in the execution of the activities. In addition, a common understanding and vision should be reached on the approach and manner of executing the project. In this specific case, CI Ecuador and Hivos had different approaches that led to different outcomes. In projects that have a single executor, this common vision should be reached with FAO.

**Lesson 3.** The National Director must have knowledge and experience of the management of major projects, and act as a national authority that guides and supervises their execution in an effective and strategic manner.

**Lesson 4.** Given that at the start of the project, the fishery organizations had a different degree of progress with regard to the management of fisheries, a diagnosis must be carried out of the training needs for each type of organization and, based on this, the type and level of detail of training should be defined. The diagnosis of needs must serve as a baseline to measure the effects of training.

---

<sup>15</sup> OPIM/MS701 does not currently accept partners with a high fiduciary risk in the execution.



## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. Relevance and coherence.** The relevance of the project with the marine and coastal policy of the Republic of Ecuador is uncertain at this time, due to the structural weakening and instability of the Ministry of Environment and the lack of clarity of the government environmental policies. The project is aligned with the GEF and FAO strategies and objectives, as well as the responsibilities of the local governments. The project has covered needs of the national government and of local stakeholders.

**Conclusion 2. Effectiveness.** The level of fulfilment of the project targets is 68 percent. It is worth highlighting the contribution that the project made to consolidating the organizations that hold AMESUC and the updating of one of the books of the COA Regulation, that includes the integrated coastal management approach. Some achievements cannot be attributed to the project, as they were accomplished before the framework of outcomes was modified and were not included in the PRODOC. The modified framework of outcomes contains inconsistencies and inaccuracies that make it impossible to adequately measure the achievements. In addition, some of the achievements could not be corroborated due to a lack of access to all of the project information.

**Conclusion 3. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The execution of the budget of the annual operating plan was low in the first two years of the project: 46 percent and 40 percent respectively. As of July/August 2020, 90 percent of the accumulated budget of the GEF funds had been implemented. Fifty percent of the co-financing pledged has been materialized. The co-executors have performed their work successfully and identified areas of opportunity, which have had a substantial influence on the completion of the project, that are linked mainly to the substantial fiduciary risks. The relationship between the project partners was troubled.

**Conclusion 4. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The modified framework of outcomes has substantial shortcomings in its content: from inconsistencies between the baselines and targets of some outputs and outcomes, to the inclusion of outputs that had been developed before the modification of the framework and that were not included in the original framework of outcomes. Substantial resources were invested in outputs not connected to the project activities or that made a limited contribution to its global objectives.

**Conclusion 5. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The monitoring and evaluation plan was almost completely fulfilled. However, the project monitoring has substantial shortcomings. These include those detected in the annual PIR, the lack of means to verify the data reported, the use of an outdated monitoring tool, the dispersion of the information generated and the low supervision of the project on the ground.

**Conclusion 6. Efficiency and other factors that affect execution.** The project updated and generated biological and fishery information, therefore increasing knowledge about important commercial fisheries – such as octopus, Pacific bearded brotula, lobster, black ark clam and red crab – and endangered species, such as the hawksbill sea turtle and the American crocodile. This information was systematized in the project website and the data about black ark clam and red crab was incorporated into the IPIAP databases. However, the lack of care in the collection of data impedes the identification of trends in stocks or the effects of the execution. In addition, fishers in the targeted areas have exchanged experiences with fishers in the Galapagos Islands.

**Conclusion 7. Normative values.** The participation of the different stakeholders in the project activities was unequal and, as a result, had different effects. A wide range of actors (local and national civil servants, restaurant owners, companies, NGOs, community members) were involved in the development of the beach management plans, therefore raising more awareness about the problems of the beaches and, in

most cases, generating a consensus on zoning. In the case of developing some fishery guidelines, the participation of fishery organizations was limited, leading to the rejection of some of them. It is worth highlighting the lack of participation by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries. The prior experience of Hivos and CI Ecuador in the targeted areas facilitated the participation of stakeholders due to the trust these organizations generated.

**Conclusion 8. Normative values.** The project did not have a strategy to address gender matters, and as such its work was unequal in the different targeted areas and, consequently, led to different outcomes. It is worth highlighting the empowerment of the female 'concheras' (shell gatherers) and the awareness raised among the men of the fishery organizations in the province of Esmeraldas. Environmental safeguards were not included.

**Conclusion 9. Social and environmental safeguards.** The project has not generated any negative social or environmental effect. All that is left to highlight is the lack of any reference in the corresponding PIR to the state of risk of the project after the modification of the framework of outcomes and the inclusion of productive projects.

**Conclusion 10. Sustainability.** Social sustainability offers a proactive panorama for the permanence of some of the project achievements. Above all, awareness was raised in the community about the conservation of turtle nests, but community mobilization has not been achieved on this matter due to the social restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some of the project actions will have continuity by means of international cooperation projects, such as the implementation of some plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas. Structural weakening and instability in the Ministry of Environment limits the institutional sustainability of the project achievements. The ecologically sensitive zones are not, *per se*, biodiversity conservation instruments, and some regulations, guidelines and management plans have not been formalized and adopted, a circumstance which also affects environmental sustainability. There were few sources of financing to give continuity to the project achievements and their availability is uncertain in the medium- and long-term. Consequently, the financial sustainability also has limitations. Social sustainability offers a positive panorama for the permanence of some of the project achievements.

**Conclusion 11. Impact.** The modification of the framework of outcomes – which led to a change in the global environmental objective, consisting of the substitution of the creation of conservation areas with the proposal of ecologically sensitive zones – has decreased the expected impact of the project. The ecologically sensitive zones are not biodiversity conservation instruments *per se*, but zoning included in the plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas, which are planning tools. Similarly, the repercussion was limited, as some outputs did not contribute to the specific activities of the project and others did not help to provide the expected effects, due to not being realized by the project itself.

## 5.2 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1. For the Ministry of Environment, FAO Ecuador, the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, CI Ecuador and Hivos.** Given that the circumstances that led to the modification of the framework of outcomes prevailed since the start of the project, and taking into account that this change occurred just one year before the project ended, it is recommended that these kinds of situations be analysed, where relevant, at the beginning of each project. In addition, if there is any sound basis that justifies changing the framework of outcomes, the modifications must be made at that time or subsequently, without waiting for the mid-term review before doing so. Making these changes in a timely fashion could avoid a decrease in the project impact. This is of particular importance when the modifications are related to the creation of conservation areas, as this may not depend on the project but on one of the co-executors, usually the national environmental authority, which is exposed at all times to a change in government priorities.

**Recommendation 2. For the Ministry of Environment, FAO Ecuador, the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, CI Ecuador and Hivos.** On considering that the modification of the framework of outcomes – made during the execution of the project, endorsed by the Steering Committee of such and included in the annual PIR submitted to GEF – has had a negative effect for the project, it is recommended that any change in the framework of outcomes of any project be based on a rigorous technical and strictly professional analysis. In this regard, it is important that a framework of outcomes does not include outputs that other projects have already materialized and does not claim that outputs belong to the project if they are not even included in the PRODOC (e.g. National Plan for the Conservation of Sea Turtles), nor outputs that do not contribute or consolidate the project strategy (e.g. dredging regulation proposal). The strategic usefulness of a framework of outcomes depreciates when there is no coherence (horizontal logic) among its components (e.g. baseline and targets) or when it lacks any of them (e.g. indicators).

**Recommendation 3. For FAO Ecuador, the Ministry of Environment and CI Ecuador.** It is recommended that the biodiversity conservation projects have a component about productive alternatives that are just as robust as the conservation approach. In other words, resources should be provided and comparable activities defined to promote conservation, and to support economic alternatives geared towards the communities who depend on said resources.

**Recommendation 4. For the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit and for FAO.** In the first phase of the project, in which FAO only acted as executor, the need to have a manager who carried out personalized monitoring of the project for said organization was clear, due to the numerous responsibilities held by the person in charge at that time. This is why, although it did not work optimally in this project, it is suggested that as a good practice, in projects under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality, FAO representation have the necessary resources – as a manager of these – to hire an expert in M&E who monitors said projects exclusively and effectively. This would help FAO to have greater control over the project and would also make it possible to resolve the problem of dispersion and lack of systematization of information when there are several co-executors, which made it impossible for the evaluation team to have all of the necessary information to perform the final evaluation of this project.

**Recommendation 5. For FAO and the Ministry of Environment.** Taking into account the changes made to the framework of outcomes and, in particular, the inclusion of productive projects (one of which involves farming a species of oyster categorized as invasive), it is suggested that the project team include a technical justification of the reasons why the project risk category (environmental and social) did not have to be changed after the modification of the framework of outcomes. This justification could be included in the final report of the project.

**Recommendation 6. For FAO Ecuador, the Ministry of Environment and CI Ecuador.** Given that some productive projects selected require changing the legal entity of some fishery organizations and/or the legalization of boats and engines for their use, it is suggested that any activity related to these be interrupted until such are modified or the permits and legalizations required by the competent authorities (e.g. Ministry of Tourism) are obtained.

**Recommendation 7. For the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador, FAO Ecuador and Hivos.** Given that the project website will close and it will not be possible to access the abundant information generated about the fisheries and endangered species that are the object of this study, it is suggested that technical or scientific publications be prepared, to more widely disseminate the knowledge generated and extend its use.

**Recommendation 8. For FAO Ecuador.** It is recommended that the project M&E manager compile and systematize all of the information generated by the project, to avoid the loss of documents and relevant outputs.

**Recommendation 9. For the Ministry of Environment, CI Ecuador and FAO Ecuador.** In order to strengthen the sustainability of the project outcomes, it is recommended that the proposals of regulatory instruments generated in the framework of the project be adopted – regulation of the AMESUC,



regulation for fishery management in MPA and dredging regulation, among others – and that the finalization of plans for the management of beaches and adjacent areas be speeded up to submit them to the decentralized autonomous governments and expedite the possibility of incorporating them into the land use and development plans.

## Bibliography

**Baquero, A., Muñoz, J.P. & Peña, M.** 2008. Identification of nesting beaches for marine turtles in Ecuador's coast and its main threats. First evidence of nesting in some beaches in the country. In: Kelez, S., Van Oordt, F., de Paz, N. & Forsberg, K. (eds.) Second Symposium of Marine Turtles in South Eastern Pacific Book of Summaries.

**Carrasco Zuffi.** 2009. Promoción de un manejo integral de la zona marina con la terrestre del Área Galera-San Francisco. Tesis de grado, Universidad San Francisco de Quito. Quito, Ecuador.

Coordinadora Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones para la Defensa de la Naturaleza y el Medio Ambiente (CEDENMA), Coordinadora Ecuatoriana de Agroecología (CEA), Coordinadora Nacional para la Defensa del Ecosistema del Manglar (C-CONDEM), Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo (IEETM), Campaña Amazonía por la Vida. 2015. Agenda nacional ambiental, en defensa de la Madre Tierra y los territorios. Quito, Ecuador.

**Luna, S. y Campos, F. (eds).** 2008. Estudio de alternativas de manejo para la declaración de la Reserva Marina Galera-San Francisco. Ministerio del Ambiente, Conservación Internacional, The Nature Conservancy, Corporación Instituto Nazca de Investigaciones Marinas. Quito, Ecuador.

**Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador.** 2014. Informe de situación del manglar en el Ecuador. Informe de la Unidad de Monitoreo del Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador. Subsecretaría de Patrimonio Natural. Quito, Ecuador.

**Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador.** 2016. Estrategia Nacional de Biodiversidad 2015-2030. Quito, Ecuador. Primera edición. Ecuador.

**Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador, Fundación de Defensa Ecológica (FUNDECOL).** 2008. Plan de manejo participativo y comunitario del Refugio de Vida Silvestre del Ecosistema Manglar del Sistema Muisne-Cojimíes. Muisne, Ecuador.

**Salm, R.V., Clark, J.R. & Siirila, E.** 2000. Marine and Coastal protected areas: a guide for planners and managers. Third edition. IUCN. Washington DC.

**Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (SEMPLADES).** 2017. Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2017-2021. [https://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/10/PNBV-26-OCT-FINAL\\_0K.compressed1.pdf](https://www.planificacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/10/PNBV-26-OCT-FINAL_0K.compressed1.pdf). Consulted 14 September 2020.

**Torres Benavides, M.** 2010. Las mujeres pescadoras y recolectoras del ecosistema manglar del Ecuador. In: Mujeres y medio ambiente: admiraciones e interrogantes. ACSUR-Madrid. Madrid, España.

**Wilson-Grau, R. & Britt, H.** 2013. Cosecha de Alcances (p. 1). Cairo: Fundación Ford.

## Appendix 1. GEF criteria ratings table

The evaluation team must take into account the table shown below as part of the final evaluation process. See the Appendix for guidelines on the ratings systems for each area of analysis.

FAO-GEF ratings table	Rating	Brief comments
<b>1) RELEVANCE</b>		
General reference to the project	MS	There is uncertainty about the alignment of the project with the current policy of the Ministry of Environment. However, the project is aligned with the FAO and GEF strategies.
<b>2) ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PROJECT OUTCOMES (EFFECTIVENESS)</b>		
General evaluation of the project outcomes	MU	The level of fulfilment of the project targets is below 50 percent. A high number of targets could not be measured due to the lack of information and shortcomings in the framework of outcomes.
<b>Outcome 1.1:</b> New marine and coastal “ecologically sensitive zones” (approximately 10 000 hectares) targeted to stabilize or increase the number of protected nests of green turtle, olive ridley sea turtle, hawksbill turtle and leatherback turtle.	IE	It was not possible to evaluate the level of fulfilment of the target due to the lack of information.
<b>Outcome 1.2:</b> Biodiversity conservation integrated into the management of at least 96 000 hectares of mangroves with AMESUC and others with community groups by means of the sustainable management of red crab and black ark clam resources	S	The approximate level of fulfilment of the target is 72 percent but other agreements are in the process of authorization that will make it possible to almost completely fulfil the target.
<b>Outcome 2.1:</b> Sustainable rights-based management of fisheries implemented in MPAs (REMACAM, REMGSF, RMEP, REMACH and REVISMEM) and in areas with AMESUC, which strengthens the sustainable management of red crab, black ark clam, lobster, Pacific bearded brotula and octopus resources.	MS	The fishery guidelines of the five MPAs planned were submitted. However, it has not been possible to demonstrate their level of implementation.
<b>Outcome 3.1:</b> Conservation measures for the sustainable use of coastal marine biodiversity mainstreamed in regulatory framework for fisheries in MPA and internal regulations for fisheries in AMESUC.	MU	60 percent fulfilled. It has not been possible to access some of the draft regulations or regulatory documents drafted.
<b>3) EFFICIENCY, IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT</b>		
General quality of the adaptive management and implementation (implementing agency)	MU	The lack of experience of FAO Ecuador in implementing projects under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality and in close

FAO-GEF ratings table	Rating	Brief comments
		technical monitoring led to delayed disbursements, an atmosphere of tension and a delayed change in the framework of outcomes. In other words, there was no effective adaptive management.
Quality of execution (executing agencies)	MU	The co-executors, including FAO Ecuador, saw successes in their work and areas of opportunity that affected the sustainability and impact of the project.
Efficiency (including the cost-effectiveness ratio and punctuality)	MU	There were enough resources, however, the outputs obtained cannot be compared to the original outputs, in addition to the fact that many of them were not achieved.
<b>4) MONITORING AND EVALUATION</b>		
General quality of M&E	MU	Although the project monitoring and evaluation plan was entirely fulfilled, the monitoring has important shortcomings.
M&E design at the start of the project	S	The design covers the requirements requested by GEF.
M&E implementation plan	MS	The plan was fulfilled but there was no effective strategy for the implementation of the project monitoring.
<b>INVOLVEMENT OF THE STAKEHOLDERS</b>		
General quality of the participation of the interested parties	MS	Relevant and diverse local stakeholders were involved by means of participatory processes, some of which were successful. The inclusion of a gender-sensitive approach was effective to different degrees due to the lack of a strategy. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries did not participate.

FAO-GEF ratings table	Rating	Brief comments
<b>5) SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
General sustainability	MU	The sustainability of the outcomes is limited particularly due to the institutional and financial weakening of the Ministry of Environment and the low level of institutional appropriation of the outputs developed.
Institutional sustainability	MU	The weakening and instability of the Ministry of Environment substantially limit the institutional sustainability of the project achievements, although the official approval of Book V of the COA Regulation contributes to this sustainability.
Social sustainability	ML	The appropriation of sustainable practices by the fishers and members of the community is high in some targeted areas and low in others. Some of the project actions will have continuity by means of other projects based on international cooperation.
Environmental sustainability	MU	The ecologically sensitive zones are not, <i>per se</i> , a conservation instrument and some guidelines and management plans have not been formalized and adopted.
Financial sustainability	MU	The sources of financing to give continuity to the project achievements have decreased and their availability is uncertain in the medium- and long-term.
<b>6) IMPACTS AND LESSONS LEARNED</b>		
Progress towards impact	U	The modification of the framework of outcomes was delayed and the changes made – above all in Component 1 – have also drastically reduced the impact of the project.

## Appendix 2. Ratings table<sup>16</sup>

### PROJECT OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

The project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which the objectives were achieved. A scale of six points is used to rate the general outcomes:

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	"Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations or there were no shortcomings".
Satisfactory (S)	"Level of outcomes achieved was as expected or there were no or minor shortcomings".
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	"Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected or there were moderate shortcomings".
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	"Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected or there were significant shortcomings."
Unsatisfactory (U)	"Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings".
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	"Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved or there were severe shortcomings."
Impossible to Evaluate (IE)	"The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements".

*It is possible that during the implementation of the framework of outcomes some projects will be modified. In cases where the modifications of the impact, the outcomes and the outputs have not reduced their general scope, the evaluator must rate the achievement of the outcomes based on the framework of outcomes. In those cases where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has reduced, the magnitude and need of the reduction will be taken into account, and despite having achieved the outcomes in line with the revised framework of outcomes, a lower rating will be assigned to the effectiveness of the outcomes where relevant.*

### IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT

*The quality of the implementation and of the execution will be rated separately. The quality of the implementation is related to the duties and responsibilities carried out by the GEF agencies that have direct access to the GEF resources. The quality of the execution is related to the duties and responsibilities of the country or of the regional counterparts that have received GEF funds from GEF agencies and have completed the financed activities on the ground. The performance will be rated on a scale of six points:*

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of <b>implementation/execution</b> exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of <b>implementation/execution</b> meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of <b>implementation/execution</b> more or less meets expectations.
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of <b>implementation/execution</b> somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of <b>implementation/execution</b> substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of <b>implementation/execution</b> .
Impossible to Evaluate (IE)	<b>The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation/execution.</b>

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The quality of the project M&E will be assessed in terms of:

---

<sup>16</sup> See the instruction provided in Annex 4: Rating scales of the "GEF agency guidelines for the completion of Final Evaluations of Large Projects", April 2017.

- Design
- Implementation

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> exceeds expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> more or less meets expectations.
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> .
Impossible to Evaluate (IE)	The available information does not enable an assessment of the quality of <b>M&amp;E design/M&amp;E implementation</b> .

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

*The sustainability will be assessed taking into account the risks related to the sustainability of the financial, sociopolitical, institutional and environmental outcomes of the project. The evaluator will also be able to take into account other risks that could affect sustainability. The general sustainability will be rated on a scale of four points:*

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk to sustainability.
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks to sustainability.
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks to sustainability.
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks to sustainability.
Impossible to Evaluate (IE)	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

## Appendix 3. People interviewed

Surname	Name	Sex	Position	Entity	Region/zone
Alejo Chávez	Juan	M	Project manager	CI	Guayaquil
Altamirano	Laura	W	Subsecretariat of Natural Heritage and National Project Director	Ministry of Environment	Quito
Alvarado	Sebastián	M	El Pelado Marine Reserve Department Head	Ministry of Environment	Santa Elena
Balón	Ángel	M	Chairman	Association of Balao Fishers and crab gatherers	Gulf of Guayaquil
Branda Pinillo	Nover	M	President of REDAUMSLEA	REDAUMSLEA	Esmeraldas
Briones	Alfredo	M	Ministry of Environment fisheries support technician	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Briones	Kerli	M	Vice-President	Fundación Contamos Contigo	Crucita
Cabrera	Grindell	M	Head of the department of Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve.	Ministry of Environment	Galera San Francisco
Caceres	Vanessa	W	FAO administrative assistant representative	FAO	Quito
Caicedo	Tatiana	W	Director of the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve	Ministry of Environment	Galera San Francisco
Calles	Juan	M	FMAM portfolio coordinator	FAO	Quito
Carabajo	Sonia	W	Director	Bioeducar	Guayaquil
Carchi	Xavier	M	Focal point of the Ministry of Environment in fisheries	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil, Province of Guayas
Cardenas	Narcisa	W	Focal point of the Ministry of Environment in the integrated coastal management of Esmeraldas.	Ministry of Environment	Esmeraldas
Cedeño	Fernando	M	Churute Mangrove Ecological Reserve Technician	Ministry of Environment	Churute, Province of Guayas
Chalen	Xavier	M	Director of the Marine and Coastal Programme of CI	CI	Guayaquil
Chocho	Víctor	M	Marine and coastal affairs coordinator	Ministry of Environment	Quito
Coloma	Andrea	W	Consultant	Instituto de Ecología Aplicada	Quito
Condo Tamayo	Fanny	W	Technician	Ministry of Tourism of Guayas	Guayaquil
Cordova	María Verónica	W	Former National Project Director	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Cortez	María Fernanda	W	Former integrated coastal management specialist	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Crespo	Gustavo	M	Communication technician	CI	Quito



<b>Surname</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Entity</b>	<b>Region/zone</b>
Dazzini	Mónica	W	Teacher	Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador	Quito
Díaz	Maria Isabel	W	Director of Operations of CI	CI	Quito
Elao	Rafael	M	Integrated coastal management specialist	CI	Guayaquil
Flores	Alejandro	M	Lead technical officer	FAO	
Gaibor	Nikita	M	Scientific deputy director of IPIAP	IPIAP	Santa Elena
Gaibor Paredes	Kennedy	M	Technician	Municipality of Santa Elena	Santa Elena
Gallegos	Geovanny	M	Head of the department of Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve.	Ministry of Environment	Galera San Francisco
Gonzabay Sánchez	Gina	W	Chairperson	Asociación de Usuarios Ancestrales de Pesca Artesanal Campo Alegre	Gulf of Guayaquil
González	Hernán	M	Donor liaison officer	FAO	
Granado	Fernando	M	Manager	Socio Bosque Programme	Quito
Granizo	Tarsicio	M	Former Minister	Ministry of Environment	Quito
Hidalgo	David	M	Tourism Services Provider	Ocean Freaks, Silver Island	Santa Marianita
Icaza	Caroline	W	Focal point of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries in productive projects	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Indacochea	Luz	W	Technician	Ministry of Tourism	Guayaquil
Jaramillo	Fernando	M	Project M&E technician	FAO	Guayaquil
Jiménez	Gabriela	W	Operations Officer	Hivos Ecuador	Esmeraldas
Jurriu	Irma s	W	Technician of the Procambio II Programme	German International Cooperation Agency GIZ	
Lapo	Héctor	M	Chairman	Cooperativa Hualtaco-Huaquillas	Jambelí
León Castro	Paulina	W	Technician	Ministry of Tourism	Guayaquil
López	Fausto	M	Technician	Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja	Loja
López	Christian	M	Technician	Ministry of Tourism of Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Martínez	Porfirio	M	Former technician of HIVOS, Lagarto, Province of Esmeraldas	Hivos Ecuador	Esmeraldas
Medina	Juan Carlos	M	Technician	Instituto Nazca	Santa Elena

## Appendix 3. People interviewed

Surname	Name	Sex	Position	Entity	Region/zone
Mejillones Chalen	Alonso	M	Chairman	Cooperativa de cangrejeros Producción Pesquera Artesanal Nuevo Porvenir	Gulf of Guayaquil
Mendoza	Jessica	W	Financial manager	Hivos Ecuador	Esmeraldas
Mendoza Zambrano	Gabriel	M	Focal point	Municipality of Portoviejo	Portoviejo
Menoscal	Gonzalo	M	Focal Point	Municipality of Santa Elena	Santa Elena
Mora Ramírez	Diego	M	Project officer	HIVOS Ecuador	Esmeraldas
Moreira	Fidel	M	Secretary	Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales, Cangrejeros y Afines Sabana Grande	Gulf of Guayaquil
Moreira	Ariel	M	Partner	Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales, Cangrejeros y Afines Sabana Grande	Gulf of Guayaquil
Moreira Solórzano	Felipe	M	Chairman	Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales, Cangrejeros y Afines Sabana Grande	Gulf of Guayaquil
Murillo Voelcker	Iván	M	Focal Point	Municipality of Manta	Manta
Núñez	Angélica	M	Fishery technician	CI	Guayaquil
Olmedo Baque	Karola	W	Legal consultancy technician of the former SGMC	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Ortiz Barona	Doris	W	Hivos Representative in Ecuador	Hivos Ecuador	Esmeraldas
Palomino Becerra	Esther	W	Head of the Esmeraldas River Estuary Wildlife Refuge	Ministry of Environment	Esmeraldas
Ponce	Heber	M	Chairman	Comuna Las Tunas	Ayampe
Ramirez	Lisette	W	Sea turtle department professional	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Rengel	Paola	W	Former gender specialist	Ministry of Environment	Guayaquil
Rodríguez	Carlos	M		Asociación de pescadores El Pelado	Santa Elena
Samaniego	Jorge	M	Oceans and coasts programme officer	Worldwide Fund for Nature	Santa Elena
Sánchez	Martha	W	Central zone mangrove technician	CI	Guayaquil
Silva	Ana Cristina	W	Project agreements and contracts specialist	CI	Quito

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Entity</b>	<b>Region/zone</b>
Solís	Manuel	M	Former technician of Hivos, Lagarto, Province of Esmeraldas	Hivos Ecuador	Esmeraldas
Solorzano	Iliana	W	Focal point of integrated coastal management of Manabí	Ministry of Environment	Manabí
Suaréz	Luis	M	Vice-President and Executive Director of CI	CI	Quito
Tejada	Bezcaida	W	Former Chairperson	Asociación de Mariscadores Autónomos y Afines Los Isleños	Jambelí
Tigrero Del Pozo	Jefferson	M	Chairman	Asociación de Prestadores de Servicios Turísticos de Olón	Olón
Valarezo	Yanine	W	Financial administrative assistant	CI	Guayaquil
Vasconez	Oscar	M	Focal point of integrated coastal management of Guayas.	Ministry of Environment	Guayas
Vera	Mayra	W	Productive undertakings technician of the project	FAO	Quito
Vicario	Alejandro	M	Chairman	Fundación Contamos Contigo	Crucita
Vivas Montenegro	Antonina	W	Director of Tourism	Municipality of Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Yagual González	David	M	Focal point	Municipality of Playas	Playas de Villamil
Zambrano	Néstor	M	Chairman	Asociación de Salvavidas de San Vicente	San Vicente
Zambrano Román	Fabricio	M	Focal point	Municipality of San Vicente	San Vicente

## Appendix 4. GEF co-financing table

Partners	Co-financing pledged (USD)		Co-financing materialised (USD)(a)	
	In kind	In cash	In kind	In cash
Ministry of Environment	4 609 744	4 914 854	4 294 127	1 023 820
INP		263 787	190 844	0
CI		1 881 171	0	1 881 239
National Environmental Fund of Ecuador	192 796	610 000	0	0
NAZCA	100 000	0	No evidentiary information	No evidentiary information
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries	1 500 000	500 000	0	0
GUAYAS concessions	1 095 044	798 392	228 743	111 455
ESMERALDAS concessions	862 920		461 200	0
Hivos	72 000	478 900	0	561 682
GUAYAS Provincial DAG		300 000	0	0
WILDAID	125 000	125 000	No evidentiary information	No evidentiary information
Ecuadorian Centre for Alternative Studies and Development	115 000	35 000	237 667	72 333
Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Refugees	77 000	0	0	0
FAO	175 000	75 540	145 452	93 817
German International Cooperation Agency GIZ	250 000	250 000	0	386 000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9 174 504</b>	<b>10 107 644</b>	<b>5 558 033</b>	<b>4 130 346</b>

## **Annexes**

Annexes are only available in Spanish.

Annex 1. Evaluation questions

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb4075es/cb4075es.pdf>

Annex 2. Comparative analysis of the original framework of outcomes and the modified framework of outcomes

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb4076es/cb4076es.pdf>

Annex 3. Comments on the modified framework of outcomes

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb4077es/cb4077es.pdf>

Annex 4. Effectiveness table

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb4078es/cb4078es.pdf>

Office of Evaluation  
[evaluation@fao.org](mailto:evaluation@fao.org)  
[www.fao.org/evaluation](http://www.fao.org/evaluation)

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**  
Rome, Italy