

Mid-term review of the Project
“Sustainable Forest Land Management and Forest
Conservation under an Eco-Social Perspective”
GCP/VEN/011/GFF
GEF ID 5410

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

UNITED NATIONS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
EVALUATION OFFICE
July, 2020

Introduction

1. Evaluation contributes to accountability and learning lessons, and should lead to improved management decision making and performance. For evaluation to play its role, as part of a set of measures and procedures, careful consideration of its recommendations is required.
2. Since 2006, FAO's evaluation policy states that all its evaluations should receive a management response (MR) and a follow-up report (FR). Standardized and controlled quality of the responses of the Organization and follow-up reports for the evaluations improve the transparency of the evaluation process and allow for lessons to be drawn from its effectiveness, and compliance with the corporate evaluation policy.
3. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) is also aware that evaluation reports should themselves facilitate decision making by the Administration on recommendations and follow-up. Accordingly, in fulfilling its quality control function, the OED, will strive to ensure that evaluation recommendations are clearly and unambiguously stated.
4. All inquiries about these procedures should be sent to the Director of the Evaluation Office.

Management response

General Response to the Evaluation

The Management highlights the comprehensive review made by the Mid-Term Review (MTR) team to the "Sustainable Land Forest Management and Forest Conservation under an Eco-Social Perspective" Project - GCP/VEN/011/GFF, whose area of intervention is the Imataca Forest Reserve (RFI) located in the southeast of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Similarly, the Final Evaluation Report is welcomed, as it serves as accountability to the donor (GEF) and the national government as counterpart in the implementation of the Project, and at the same time allows to assess the progress made by the Project towards achievement of its objectives and results to date, by identifying the challenges and corrective measures needed to improve the scope of the results and providing information to Project decision makers.

The MTR was carried out by an independent consulting team with the support of the FAO Representation in Venezuela. Its main objective was to review the effectiveness, efficiency, ownership, inclusion of cross-cutting dimensions and prospects for Project sustainability during the first period of its implementation (2016-2019). A ten-day field study was carried out (from February 26 to March 4, 2020). The findings and conclusions obtained at Project mid-term allowed making an overall rating of the Project: Moderately Satisfactory, and a rating of the progress towards the achievement of Project objectives and results: Moderately Satisfactory.

The evaluation is considered to be comprehensive and timely, highlighting within its findings an unexpected result of maximum importance for the success of the Project, its replicability and sustainability. Furthermore, as a result of the efforts made to implement Project actions, a strategic alliance was signed between the Venezuelan State (represented by the People's Ministry for Eco-socialism, MINEC) and the organized communities that created the "Empresa de Propiedad Social Directa Comunal TUKUPU," for the management of 6,487.12 hectares in Unit 3 of the RFI. The alliance stipulates a preponderant participation of the Kariña ethnic group (95%) in the usufruct of the forest resources present in the assigned area.

The report establishes eight (8) recommendations, categorized under five (5) operational recommendations and three (3) strategic recommendations, of which the first six (6), including recommendation eight (8), are accepted in their entirety, since they respond to the challenges identified in the implementation of the Project, and are in line with the actions set out to move on towards achievement of the proposed results and goals. Regarding the strategic recommendations, at the request of the counterpart (MINEC) recommendation

seven (7) is partially accepted, since they considered certain changes in the wording of this recommendation.

Response for each Recommendation

Management Response Matrix¹

Management Response to the Mid-Term Review of the “Forest Land Management and Forest Conservation under an Eco-social Perspective” Project - GCP/VEN/011/GFF GEF ID: 5410					Date July 2020
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
Recommendations of the evaluation	Management Response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management Plan			
		Actions to be taken and/or comments on partial acceptance or rejection.	Responsible Unit	Period	Additional financing required (YES or NO)
1. Operational Recommendations					
To the Project team and partner organizations					

¹ Each column refers to previously identified items.

<p>Suggestion 2: Accelerating the installation of servers, ensuring that the minimum conditions of infrastructure, security and maintenance capacity of the equipment are met.</p> <p>Suggestion 3: It would be appropriate to approve the requested extension and even, if possible, depending on the budget, evaluate the possibility of extending the Project between 8 and 12 months. This would provide additional time to get closer to the Project's goals and improve the possibilities of sustainability of the initiative.</p>		<p>Alliance ENAFOR-EPSDC-Tukupu (sub-basin of the La Lagunita Creek, Unit C3 of the RFI). Within those outcomes/activities we can indicate Sustainable forest comanagement (P2.1.3), management and delimitation of operational units (P1.2.2, P2.1.2) and participatory forest monitoring for various purposes (P1.1.6, P2.2.2), market analysis (P3.2.3) and financing schemes (P3.2.5). The work plan was presented in the PIR 2020.</p> <p>Consistent with Recommendation 1 and according to Suggestion 1, the Administration has been working as follows:</p> <p>1) During the implementation of SINIIF, specific system modules have been developed with the existing information. In this regard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The SPECIES module is being developed, specifically on plant species and with emphasis on the taxonomic aspect, since this constitutes the central axis from which 	<p>Technical assistant responsible for Component 1, consultants involved in the implementation of outcomes, CENDITEL, MINEC.</p>	<p>2nd semester 2020 and 1st</p>	<p>N</p>
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		<p>the other attributes of the species are derived (synonymy, vernacular names, uses and ethnobotany, wood anatomy and physical-mechanical properties, and distribution of species).</p> <p>ii. The INDIVIDUAL module is developed, whether arboreal or other biotypes (mainly lianas), and it is derived from the design of multipurpose plots and the dasometric, ecological, phytosociological-structural-floristic surveys, carbon evaluation and phenology, among others. The relation of the module with the species is included, but also its own needs of information processing, inventories, ecological indexes, etc., as well as various reports for the display of results and consultations.</p> <p>iii. The services of the National Centre for Development and Research in Free Technologies Foundation (CENDITEL) have been hired for the development of the system.</p>		<p>semester 2012</p>	
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		<p>2) A communication plan has been carried out (explained in detail in recommendation 2), where a web page is incorporated as a first-order dissemination channel to make the Project's initiatives visible. For the development of this website, a letter of agreement was signed with the National Centre for Development and Research in Free Technologies Foundation (CENDITEL), which is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the website under the guidelines of the Project's Communication and Dissemination Unit.</p> <p>3) Two consultancies have been incorporated to make the preparation of the restoration manuals more dynamic:</p> <p>i. The first consultancy for the design of a manual that applies ecological restoration concepts to the recovery of tropical rainforest in Venezuela, which also includes information for decision making and implementation of restoration measures, as well as a training</p>	<p>Technical assistant responsible for Component 4, M&E team, communication and dissemination team, CENDITEL.</p> <p>CTP, technical assistant responsible for Component 3, hired consultants involved.</p>	<p>2nd semester 2020</p>	<p>N</p>
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		<p>program for the community and institutional stakeholders.</p> <p>ii. The second consultancy, whose objective is the design of a manual that applies ecological restoration concepts to Venezuelan mangroves, also contains information for decision making and implementation of restoration measures, as well as a training program for the community and institutional stakeholders.</p> <p>4) Regarding monitoring plots (with <i>in situ</i> training and adaptation of the current methodology to a more feasible one), progress is made in the design of a multifunctional unit that responds to a basic statistical design, easy to install and have its different components evaluated, which we have called "multipurpose plots." This multifunctional unit provides us with the census and inventory of forest mass, and also allows us to know and evaluate NTFPs, aerial biomass and other carbon deposits, and the phytosociological, structural</p>	<p>CTP, technical assistant responsible for Component 3, national consultants.</p>	<p>2nd semester 2020 -1st semester 2021</p> <p>2nd semester 2020 -1st semester 2021</p>	<p>N</p> <p>N</p>
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		<p>and phenological aspects of the forest, among the most important aspects. For the implementation of this new methodology, SINIIF has designed several cards/forms to be used in field data registration, which are easy to handle and incorporate into the system, as well as detailed guidelines for <i>in situ</i> training in the different aspects and topics that need to be addressed. Training will emphasize the correct use of measuring instruments, the quality of the measurements and the registration of the data.</p> <p>5) Inter-institutional networking has been developed through the signing of agreements with stakeholders involved and/or relevant to forest governance, harvesting, conservation, multiple use and sustainable forest management, in order to build institutional and social networks that allow the effective and efficient exchange of information through their integration into SINIIF. Furthermore, progress is being made in direct coordination</p>	<p>CTP, technical assistants of Components 1 and 2, hired consultants involved in the deliverables.</p>	<p>2nd semester 2020 -1st semester 2021</p>	
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		<p>between the State (through MINEC and ENAFOR) and EPSDC Tukupu, for the implementation of forest co-management in an RFI area.</p> <p>6) Reviewing of indicators and targets for Components 2 and 3.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Coordinating with FAO Regional Office to obtain technical advice to review the design of indicators and targets for Components 2 and 3 (Results 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, and 3.2) ii. The Project team will present to the Project's steering committee a technical justification with the respective proposal. iii. Once approved by the steering committee, the technical justification with the respective proposal will be submitted to the pertinent bodies for approval. <p>Regarding Suggestion 2 on the installation of servers to start up SINIIF, the necessary steps are being carried out to materialize</p>	<p>CTP, Project team, FAOVE Office, FMAM Focal Operating Point, MINEC, ENAFOR, partner organizations, local governments, EPSCD Tukupu.</p> <p>Project team/FAOVE Office, OTL, M&E consultants, FAO Regional Office, steering committee.</p>	<p>2nd semester 2020 -2nd semester 2021</p>	<p>N</p> <p>N</p>
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		<p>the installation of servers in the area designated by MINEC, as it corresponds according to the initial planning, since MINEC is the partner and main co-financier of the Project and the receiver of all materials and equipment of the Project, upon completion of such installation.</p> <p>Regarding Suggestion 3, the Administration appreciates the willingness of the evaluators to approve the requested extension of the Project. The Project team submitted this request to the decision-making bodies in 2019, and achieved an extension that runs from April 2021 to December 2021, with technical closure in October 2021, and administrative closure and final report in December 2021.</p>	<p>CTP, responsible for Component 1, CENDITEL, Technology Office of MINEC.</p> <p>Project team, OTL, steering committee, AFAOR, BH, FLO.</p>	<p>1st trimester 2021</p> <p>December 2020 - January 2021</p> <p>June 2020</p>	<p>N</p> <p>N</p>
To the Project team and FAO Venezuela					

<p>Recommendation 2: Developing mechanisms to improve the flow of internal and external communications (general public and consultants) of the Project, as well as facilitating access to relevant information by Project partners.</p> <p>Suggestion: Systematizing, editing and publishing the material (scientific research, social, economic and cultural benefits of the approach, experience with the company TUKUPU, methodologies, manuals, etc.) generated by the Project.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The management accepts Recommendation 2 because it is aligned with the steps that are being taken in the Project, as a Communication and Dissemination Plan (PCyD) already in place whose communications objectives are focused on showing the progress, results, good practices and lessons learned and achieved by the Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Objective 1:</u> Developing communication products that will allow the general public to understand the scope and objectives of the Project. <u>Deliverables:</u> Quarterly newsletters, Project catalogue, spots and a documentary about the Project, Infographics about the Project, publications for RRSS. A presentation in Power point (or similar program) to be used in institutional and/or community meetings. - <u>Objective 2:</u> Creating appropriate dissemination channels. <u>Deliverables:</u> Four digital social networks (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, 	<p>CTP, technical assistant responsible for Component 4, M&E team, communication and dissemination team, FAOVE communications assistant.</p>	<p>From April 2020 to July 2021</p>	<p>N</p>
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		<p>YouTube), bilingual program (Spanish/Kariña) of Radio Comunitaria, close to the RFI, for an exchange of experiences and community participation. Podcast with relevant information on the progress, good practices and lessons learned from the Project. Web page for the dissemination of informative/training contents of the Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Objective 3</u>: Making visible the role of women in the Project. <u>Deliverables</u>: Interviews, news reports and spots about indigenous women leaders who participate in the Project. Bilingual Podcast production to promote women's participation in the Project. - <u>Objective 4</u>: Showing a wide audience how SINIIF works. <u>Deliverables</u>: General infographics of SINIIF, infographics of each of the modules that compose it, interviews and in-depth reports with those responsible for SINIIF, as well as with the beneficiaries and institutions that participate in the gathering of information. 			
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Objective 5</u>: Making visible community participation initiatives in sustainable forest management. <u>Deliverables</u>: Article on the Social Property Company TUKUPU, the National Network of Forest Seeds, the survey of ethnobotanical information where communities and project components participate in the different channels where it is relevant (Project Website, FAO Publications.) - <u>Objective 6</u>: Maximizing the dissemination of the various publications that have emerged from the Project. <u>Deliverables</u>: Publication of eight documents resulting from different Project components in various channels where it is relevant (Project Web Page, FAO Publications.) - <u>Objective 7</u>: Developing communication products to showcase the innovative strategies contributed by the project for forest restoration. <u>Deliverables</u>: News articles, spots, publications in RRSS about community restoration 			
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		<p>initiatives in degraded forest areas.</p> <p><i>In line with the suggestion presented in communication objective 6, maximum dissemination will be given to the various publications that have emerged from the Project. We are currently in the process of editing for publication eight documents resulting from different Project components in various channels where it is considered relevant (Project Website, FAO's automated documentation and information system).</i></p> <p>Major communication effort to diffuse the results of the interaction with indigenous communities, which led to the creation of the Direct Communal Social Ownership Company (EPSCD) "TUKUPU" that will co-manage with the Venezuelan State a forest area assigned in the RFI.</p>			
To the Project team					
<p>Recommendation 3: Implementing a</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Management accepts Recommendation 3 and appreciates that the evaluation</p>	<p>CTP, technical assistant for Component 2, EPSCD Tukupu/hired consultants.</p>	<p>December 2020 – July 2021</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>comprehensive training program for leaders of the TUKUPU company, with a gender perspective, inclusion of young people and emphasis on the development of management skills.</p> <p>Suggestion: Taking advantage of this space to level expectations regarding the economic and social benefits that the company will have in participating communities.</p>		<p>has highlighted the importance of a leadership training program, whose response is strengthened by the implementation of the Human Talent Training and Local Knowledge Sharing Dialogue Program currently underway at RFI as part of the Project's work plan. The program for training human talents and dialogues for the exchange of local knowledge is being implemented. This program will strengthen the technical and administrative capabilities of the leaders to assume strategic roles in the management of the indigenous social property company TUKUPU, already constituted.</p> <p>The programmatic content of the courses to be taught refers to topics such as: Participation (inclusion, conflict management and opportunities to participate); productive participation (supporting indigenous communities in the implementation of community development projects); agroforestry training, beekeeping and animal protein production; organization for the use and exploitation of forest goods and</p>			
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		<p>services; forests as a potential resource to generate products and services; wood characteristics and properties; units of measurement most currently used in carpentry and handling of carpentry basic tools.</p> <p>All these workshops are conceived with a gender focus and planned with the participation of the youth of the indigenous community.</p> <p><i>The suggestion is considered pertinent</i>, since the level of expectations among communities in relation to the economic and social benefits that will be provided by the EPSDC Tukupu, are relatively high. In this regard, with the implementation of the training program, we expect levelling off leaders and guiding them on the generation of the real economic income and social benefits that they can obtain with good management of the EPSDC Tukupu.</p>			
To the Project team and FAO Venezuela					
<p>Recommendation 4: Enriching team structure with profiles</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p><i>The Management deems Recommendation 4 positive</i>, for the strengthening of the Project team and the Country Office; we</p>	<p>Project team, FAOVE Office.</p>	<p>March - December 2020</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>in social sciences and communications (e.g., anthropology or sociology with experience in gender), for the teams to provide cross-cutting support to the 4 Components of the Project.</p>		<p>have moved on regarding this subject with the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To strengthen the formation of the Project team, we have incorporated consultants in the area of social sciences and in the communication and dissemination team (an anthropologist specialized in communications; a specialist in writing and literature to take care of editing and documentation, and a specialist in graphic design); the monitoring and follow-up area has been strengthened with the incorporation of two specialists in the social area (a Bachelor in International Studies and a Bachelor in Administration, both trained in the area of project planning and monitoring). - We approved the incorporation of a consultancy to consolidate the attention to gender equality (conceived as a cross-cutting dimension), with a profile in the area of social sciences, education or similar, with complementary studies in gender. 			
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To the FAO Regional Office					
<p>Recommendation 5: Strengthening technical support in the management of the GEF project cycle and the inclusion of cross-cutting perspectives.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Management supports Recommendation 5 and expresses its willingness to coordinate, as necessary, with the FAO Regional Office to strengthen the capabilities of the teams responsible for the formulation and implementation of national projects, as a way to reinforce technical knowledge, particularly with regard to result-based management, gender and indigenous peoples mainstreaming, and other topics of interest stated by national teams.</p>	<p>FAO Regional Office</p>	<p>October 2020 - September 2021</p>	<p>N</p>
2. Strategic Recommendations					
To the Project team, partner institutions and FAO Venezuela					
<p>Recommendation 6: Designing and implementing an exit strategy aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the effects and processes driven by the Project. This</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Management welcomes Recommendation 6, and in this regard advances the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Hiring of a consultancy to put forward a proposal of technical norms for Criteria and Indicators (C&I) of 	<p>Project team, FAOVE Office, GEF Operational Focal Point, MINEC, ENAFOR, partner organizations, local governments/ EPSCD Tukupu</p>	<p>From November 2020 to March 2021</p>	<p>N N</p>

<p>should include the following lines of action at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incidence aimed at the institutional anchoring of the effects and processes promoted by the Project through decrees, regulations, public programs, etc. - Inter-institutional networking (work tables, coordination spaces, among others.) - Agreements for the maintenance and permanent updating of SINIIF and other Project outcomes. - Alternatives for subsequent financing. <p>Suggestion: Maintaining the active support of the FAO Representation in Venezuela in the design</p>		<p>environmental and social sustainability of the forest heritage. This will allow us to establish the bases of a national program of certification for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) by the People's Ministry with environmental competence. The SFM will give added value to the products and services of the forest heritage. The proposal for regulation of the criteria and indicators of environmental and social sustainability of the country's forest heritage will be submitted for review and approval by the pertinent stakeholders and institutions.</p> <p>ii. Hiring of a consultancy to prepare a Reduced Impact Harvesting Manual for Sustainable Forest Management in Venezuela that will contribute to the education and training of both the technical personnel from government agencies who will be responsible for supervising forests use, and the people</p>		<p>November 2020</p>	<p>N</p>
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		<p>through the development of a common agenda for the institutional, social and economic sustainability of forest resources.</p> <p>vi. The FAO Representation in the country is making the necessary efforts to promote coordination spaces to support the design of public policies.</p>		Permanent	
To the Project team, partner institutions and FAO Venezuela					
<p>Recommendation 7: Compiling or generating information to make an economic, environmental and social assessment of the potential of the Imataca Forest Reserve, and put together a proposal to obtain financing mechanisms in line with the country's strategic interests.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p><i>The Management partially accepts this recommendation, since partner institutions (MINEC) agreed to make the following modification to the wording of Recommendation 7:</i> Compiling or generating information to have an economic, environmental and social evaluation of the potential of the Imataca Forest Reserve, and developing a financing mechanism proposal aligned with the strategic interests of the country, always maintaining the national principle of non-participation in Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM).</p>	<p>Technical assistant responsible for Component 1/ hired consultants involved/partner organizations, MINEC, FAOVE Office.</p>	<p>From December 2021 to June 2021</p>	<p>N</p>

		<p>The strategies to be followed will be aimed at making studies.</p> <p>The pertinent studies for the environmental and economic evaluation of different direct use values (extractive, non-extractive), indirect use values (biodiversity conservation, environmental services), and legacy and existence option values (threatened and endangered species) of the Imataca Forest Reserve, will be made.</p> <p>These studies will feed the SINIIF database, and we hope that they can provide the basis for decision making on RFI conservation.</p>		<p>1st semester 2021</p>	<p>N</p>
To FAO Venezuela					
<p>Recommendation 8: Devise an internal training plan to promote the development of institutional capabilities on the inclusion of the gender dimension during the cycle of projects being implemented and to be implemented.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Administration welcomes Recommendation 8, as we need to have technical tools that will facilitate the incorporation of the gender perspective in institutional settings and in participatory processes with rural communities.</p> <p>In this regard, the Representation Office in Venezuela (FAOVE) is strengthening its work teams in</p>	<p>FAOVE Office</p>	<p>From September 2020 to July 2021</p>	<p>S</p>

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		<p>this area, coordinating with the Gender Officer of the FAO Regional Office and its team, as well as with the Gender Focal Point (GFP) assigned in the representation to identify good practices in gender mainstreaming and effective practices for strengthening the capability of women to equally participate in all FAO projects. Also, work is being done on a plan for the promotion and awareness raising of gender equality that will take into consideration FAO's gender policy and allow the development of capabilities to address gender issues with the available FAO tools.</p> <p>Furthermore, specialist consultants have been integrated into the FAOVE team associated with projects where gender equality is systematically addressed and women's empowerment is the main objective of specific activities that have been commissioned to the FAOVE team for implementation. These specialists, together with the PFG, will collaborate in the necessary coordination to plan and implement an internal training</p>	<p>Project team, hired consultants.</p>	<p>September 2020</p>	<p>N</p>
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		<p>plan, as proposed in the Mid-Term Review.</p> <p>Also, the project team, responding in a specific and timely manner to the challenges presented in the Mid-Term Review on the subject, hired a specialist who will be responsible for working at project level developing a detailed program of gender care focused on the Kariña forest-dependent indigenous communities living in the Imataca Forest Reserve. This will be done by applying methodologies to analyse the equitable participation of women and men in decision-making in community organization and in the formulation of initiatives, standards, programs, laws and policies (gap analysis). This specialist will also work in the design and implementation of a specific strategy to address the gender dimension aimed at contributing to gender equality objectives in the project.</p>			
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