Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Terminal evaluation of the project "Sustainable Forest Lands Management and Conservation under an Ecosocial Approach"

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Abstract

This report presents the results of the terminal evaluation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) GCP/VEN/011/GFF project (GEF ID 5410): Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective. The evaluation covered the project from the beginning of its implementation in November 2016 to March 2023. Mixed methods collected relevant information. This included direct observation through a field mission, semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and the review of internal and external documentation related to the project.

The evaluation results highlight the importance of the project for the Venezuelan government. This is due to its forestry economic force, biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest use and the participation of Indigenous Peoples.

The project made a significant contribution to the following: the generation and systematization of information; methodological developments to estimate carbon emissions, reservoirs and sequestration and compile information for the National Integrated Forest Information System (SINIIF, by its Spanish acronym); the strengthening of institutional and community capacities; and the promotion of sustainable forest management practices under a co-management framework. The project aimed to reverse the degradation of forest ecosystems, recover forest areas under degradation processes – mainly in the Imataca Forest Reserve (RFI, by its Spanish acronym) – and promote the institutionalization of these activities in forest management at the national level. Important co-benefits were also generated, such as the creation of the Tukupu Direct Communal Social Property Company (EPSDC, by its Spanish acronym), which is the country's first indigenous forestry company, and the proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forestry Co-management System.

Several factors were identified that make the sustainability of the project's achievements moderately likely. One includes the high appropriation of results by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related entities to ensure the continuity and strengthening of project activities, such as the SINIIF and the developed methodologies. This, however, depends on the availability of external resources. In addition, it is important to highlight the work with indigenous communities and the project's contribution to closing gender gaps during its execution.

The need to strengthen the Tukupu EPSDC is among the main recommendations. This would ensure its compliance with the new administrative, legal, environmental and social responsibilities so that it can generate the expected benefits. The SINIIF should also be strengthened and supported to generate inputs that facilitate planning and decision-making in the forestry sector at the national level.

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Box, figures and tables

Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team is deeply grateful to all those who contributed to this evaluation, which was managed by Daniela Rojas Chaves of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC). Other team members were Teresita Romero Torres, international consultant, and Alba Delgado Cuicas, national consultant.

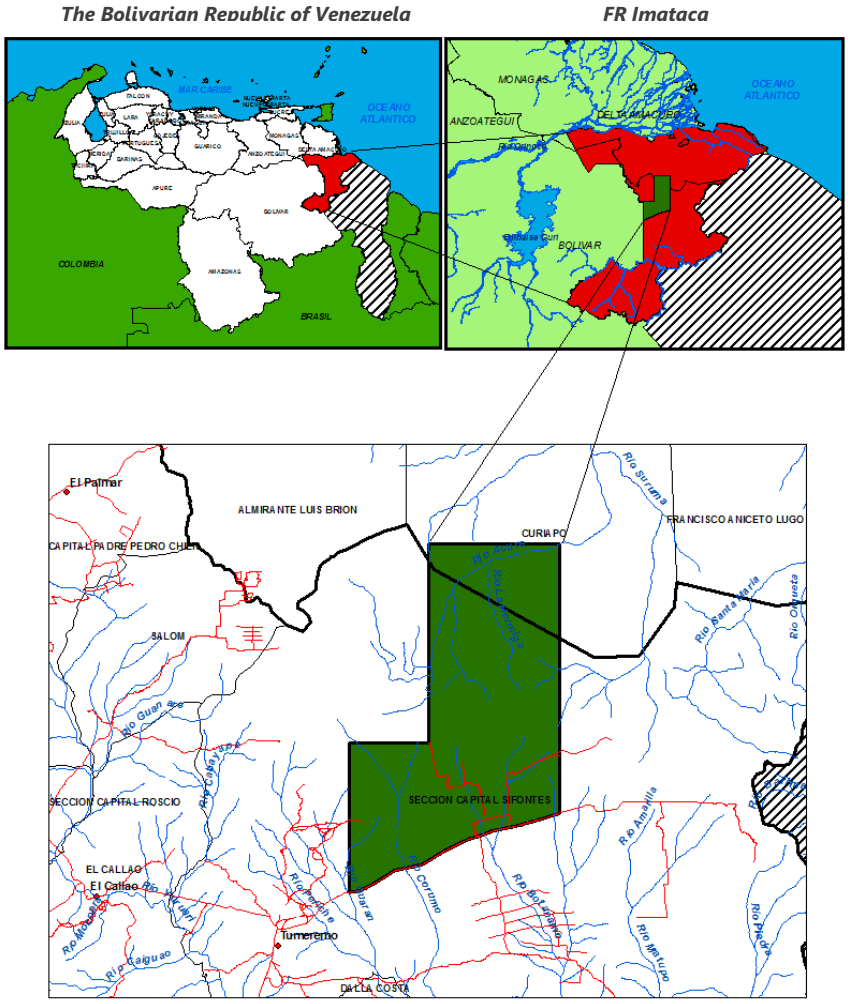
The evaluation was carried out with the valuable support of FAO personnel in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, whose vision, knowledge, support and comments made this report possible. In addition, the contribution of different FAO units involved in the project is recognized. In particular, the Evaluation Team thanks Jesús Cegarra Rodríguez, the project's technical coordinator, and his team – especially Emilio Arcia Gil, who provided necessary support for this evaluation.

The evaluation benefited from the input of many stakeholders, including national and municipal government officials, members of the RFI Indigenous communities, university researchers and professors and staff from international organizations. The Evaluation Team is very grateful for all of their contributions, which were a valuable source of information for this study.

Abbreviations

ABRAE	Areas Under Special Administration Regime, by its Spanish acronym
CONARE	National Reforestation Company, by its Spanish acronym
ENFORESTAL (previously ENAFOR and ENF)	National Forestry Company, by its Spanish acronym
EPSDC	Direct Communal Social Property Company, by its Spanish acronym
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FPIC	free, prior and informed consent
FUNDAMBIENTE	National Environmental Education Foundation, by its Spanish acronym
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	greenhouse gas
IFLA	Latin American Forestry Institute, by its Spanish acronym
INPARQUES	National Parks Institute, by its Spanish acronym
LTO	Lead Technical Officer
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PMU	Project Management Unit
POMF	Forest Planning and Management Plan, by its Spanish acronym
PRODOC	project document
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
RFI	Imataca Forest Reserve, by its Spanish acronym
SINIIF	National Integrated Forest Information System, by its Spanish acronym
TOC	theory of change
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

Map of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



Imataca V, Forest Management Unit

Source: FAO. 2023. *Project Management Unit work map.* Map conforms to United Nations. 2020. *Map of Venezuela*. www.un.org/geospatial/content/venezuela

Executive summary

Introduction

1. This terminal evaluation has a double purpose: accountability and the generation of learning. It therefore serves to render accounts to the donor, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the national and municipal governments, other actors that were counterparts in the project's co-financing or execution, and the beneficiaries. It also generates learning. In fact, results achieved, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and lessons learned were identified during the evaluation in order to sustain, improve and expand the outcomes. This also gives continuity to processes that were started by the project. In addition, the evaluation serves to promote learning. It provides an opportunity for knowledge exchange on results and lessons learned between the GEF and its partners. This forms a basis for decision-making for ongoing or future initiatives. It also aims to improve the performance of the GEF portfolio. Issues regarding Indigenous Peoples and a gender perspective were also evaluated. These aspects, including human rights and environmental and social safeguards, were of strong interest for the project.

2. The evaluated project, Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective, began execution on 15 November 2016 and ended on 30 April 2023. The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela served as the project's main executing partner. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) implemented and executed it. Its overall environmental objective was to integrate biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management and climate change mitigation for sustainable forest management. Its development objective aimed to support government institutions and community organizations in participatory governance, the empowerment of forest communities and multiple mechanisms to recover degraded forest areas in forest ecosystems of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

3. The evaluation covered the beginning of project execution until 30 April 2023. Mixed methods were used to triangulate and validate information from different sources. This gathered evidence that supported the findings, conclusions and recommendations. The methods were: i) the review of the documentation generated by the project and the consultation of technical and legal documents external to the project; ii) direct observation through an evaluation mission, which took place from 6 to 17 February 2023 and involved visits to the city of Caracas and the Imataca Forest Reserve (RFI, by its Spanish acronym); iii) semi-structured individual and group interviews with 93 people (43 women and 50 men); and iv) an online questionnaire to evaluate participants' perception of the training course for sustainable forestry management and co-management capabilities. The questionnaire was sent to 532 people with 136 responses (from 49 women and 87 men).

Main findings

4. **Relevance.** Despite the country's significant political and economic changes that occurred during execution, the project maintained its relevance. In particular, it stayed aligned with the priorities and strategies of the current national government on the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. This included sustainable forest management and Indigenous Peoples' participation. Underscored is the project's contribution to satisfying the basic needs of the RFI Indigenous communities. In fact, the project's main beneficiaries improved their means of subsistence. This involved agroforestry practices for their farming

plots and the direct and large-scale use of their forest resources through the creation of the Tukupu Direct Communal Social Property Company (EPSDC, by its Spanish acronym). The project also maintained its relevance in terms of the GEF-5 focal areas, specifically: Objective 2 on Biodiversity; Objective 2 on Land Degradation; Objective 5 on Climate Change; and Objectives 1 and 2 on Sustainable Forest Management and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+). Together, these strategies address the sustainable use of biodiversity, land improvement and the conservation and promotion of carbon reserves. In addition, the project stayed relevant in terms of FAO's strategies and priorities at the country, regional and global levels. These support the national forestry policy, the development of rural societies and the sustainable use of biodiversity. All of these aims were addressed in the sustainable forest management practices that were promoted by the project. Therefore, the rating for this criterion is **Highly Satisfactory**.

5. **Effectiveness.** The project met its overall environmental and development objectives by integrating biodiversity conservation into forest management through biodiversity characterization. This included the identification of species at risk and the restoration of degraded forest areas in the RFI. In this forest reserve, sustainable land management with reduced impact was integrated through the design and implementation of the Tukupu EPSDC's Forest Management Plan (co-management). The project also incorporated climate change mitigation by establishing a methodological basis, conducting an assessment of carbon flows, stocks and sequestration, and identifying critical carbon areas in the RFI. This was achieved through the participation and training of representatives of government institutions and Indigenous communities, the development of a forest information system, regulatory proposals and the provided equipment. These developments, which provided inputs and knowledge for better decision-making related to forest management – especially in the RFI – are outlined in greater detail.

6. *Component 1. National Integrated Forest Information System.* The project improved the functional capabilities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism on national forest monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This included the use of digital systems like remote sensors. These constitute an effective and necessary methodological tool for digital forest monitoring at the national level. Such capabilities facilitated the M&E of 4 613 431 ha of RFI ecosystems, xerophytic lands and mangroves – the results of which are found in the National Integrated Forest Information System (SINIIF, by its Spanish acronym, formerly the Integrated Forest Information System of Forests of Venezuela). This system contains ecological, social, economic and environmental information about the forests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Although most of the information is limited to the RFI, it is a key output of this component. The SINIIF functions but not as fully as expected by project closure. There is a need to further strengthen the system in order to ensure its usefulness in forest planning and management at the national level. It is also important to highlight the project's contribution to greater knowledge and an appreciation for biodiversity that is associated with forests and critical carbon areas. This was incorporated through the updated Forest Planning and Management Plan (POMF, by its Spanish acronym), which relates to Unit V of the RFI and is another output of the project.

7. *Component 2. Strengthening capacities and innovative instruments for sustainable forest management.* In 2017, direct emissions avoided through forest harvesting activities were estimated at 100 776.06 tCO_2eq (Catalán, 2015). The goal was not reached. However, indirect emissions avoided were estimated at 34 054 940.6 tCO_2eq, and this significantly

exceeded the goal. The project also incorporated 167 320 ha under management and co-management plans. Further, as part of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism's contribution to the project, the ministry created an interinstitutional platform to promote forest governance and the forestry sector through the coordination of actions based on sustainable forest management. The project almost exceeded its goal in terms of the number of people trained in sustainable forest management. According to evidence collected during the evaluation, some beneficiaries noted that their individual capacities had improved. However, this observation cannot be generalized to all participants due to the lack of statistical significance.

8. Important co-benefits were generated under this component. This involved the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC in 2019, which was the country's first indigenous forestry company. The company is led mainly by women and had two concessions granted by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism that cover 54 403.12 ha of the RFI. In February 2023, the first use of 1 000 ha began through the project's support and under the co-management modality. The company has economic benefits based on its legal structure as a community-owned business. This is generated by timber sales and will lead to social benefits for the Indigenous communities. One example is the creation of a school in the RFI. Another co-benefit is the proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System. This is a public policy proposal that seeks to implement co-management at the national level.

9. *Component 3. Restoration, conservation and sustainable forest/land management in areas affected by forest and soil degradation processes*. A total of 1 559 ha of forest were restored through reforestation, agroforestry systems, analogue forestry and passive recovery in the RFI and other areas of the country. This led to the sequestration of 517 377.60 tCO_2eq. Organizational capacities were strengthened by equipping and improving the infrastructure of some government agencies for the restoration of degraded areas. The project came close to meeting its goal in terms of the number of people trained on restoration issues. However, there was not enough evidence to generalize that the capacities of all participants were strengthened. Initial progress was made in the proposal and implementation of alternatives for the marketing of timber products (handicrafts) and non-timber products (Melipona bee honey). Although a proposed financing framework for non-timber products was not implemented, as indicated in the project document (PRODOC), other financing proposals emerged during execution. There were some challenges in the design of the results framework. As a result, compliance with Outcome 2.2 was partially assessed and compliance with Output 2.2.2 could not be assessed.

10. Most of the expected global environmental benefits were achieved based on the project's results. This included a better understanding of the stability, integrity and value of forest ecosystems, particularly in the RFI. In addition, the Tukupu EPSDC's reduced impact forestry use plan, if correctly applied, could also generate local and global environmental benefits through the conservation of habitats. In the medium- and long-term, the SINIIF is expected to improve the information on forest ecosystems at the national level. Among the global environmental benefits that could not be generated are the stabilization of forest species populations through restoration actions and the development and implementation of a national programme of environmental and social safeguards for the production of timber and non-timber products. The progress aimed at obtaining the majority of the project's expected impacts. Given the level of achievement, the project's co-benefits and global environmental benefits make the rating for this criterion **Highly Satisfactory**.

11. **Efficiency.** Overall, the management of project execution was efficient. Despite savings during execution and sufficient resources, the project was implemented over a longer period of time than expected (an additional 18 months). This extension was mainly due to the turnover of high-level public officials and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the project implemented adaptive measures that managed to reduce, as much as possible, the impact of the challenges. In addition, the direct implementation modality allowed for the strengthening of government agencies through their participation in the execution of activities based on letters of agreement. In general, the institutional arrangements were adequate. There are, however, areas for improvement. Technical staff from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism had less active participation and did not consider a permanent on-the-ground team to ensure continuity of the actions. The rating for the efficiency criterion is **Satisfactory**.

12. **Sustainability.** The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its affiliated entities had a high degree of appropriation of the project's relevant outputs. In fact, these are being used to fulfil other government commitments. Other outputs will be used and strengthened through other initiatives. This, however, depends on external resources. For their part, the level of appropriation among Indigenous communities varied due to different means of subsistence and some cultural differences. The Tukupu EPSDC represents the main means to ensure the sustainability of the project's proposed sustainable forest management model. The company should be able to finance its own development based on the economic resources that it will generate. However, its recent creation as the first of its kind means that it still lacks growth. This will allow it to ensure compliance with all administrative, legal, environmental, technical and social responsibilities. The environmental sustainability of forestry initiatives in the project areas depends on the company's actions. The project also strengthened the organizational capacities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its affiliated entities, as well as generating a favourable environment for its implementation. Therefore, the rating for the sustainability criterion is **Moderately Likely**.

13. **Factors affecting performance.** The vertical logic of the project's structure was highlighted in the **quality of design and implementation**. This allowed for the implementation of its activities and the fulfilment of its environmental and development objectives. Greater visibility of Indigenous communities and the role they play in the conservation and sustainable use of forests is needed. The importance of having an expert on issues that face these communities during project execution is underscored. Areas for improvement were also identified in the initial design of the results framework and its adjustment after the mid-term evaluation. In fact, this created a lack of horizontal logic for some goals and made the assessment of some achievements more complex. The project's launch took place eight months after signing the agreement between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO and the inception workshop. The baselines of some indicators were updated, but the results framework was not adjusted – even though areas for improvement were found for some indicators. The delay was due to a lengthy integration of the Project Management Unit (PMU). The rating for this factor is **Moderately Satisfactory**. For **M&E**, the M&E plan was practical and sufficient to fully monitor the project. The implementation of the M&E plan was nearly complete during project execution. The mid-term evaluation lacked reports on most of the monitoring tools. However, for this evaluation, they were completed and only the report on the climate change tool is still pending. Project monitoring and the systematization of information

related to some outcomes and outputs was complex. This made it difficult to assess its compliance. The rating for this aspect is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

14. The **quality of execution** was **Moderately Satisfactory**. FAO, as the executing agency, performed adequately on the project's operation, the management and administration of its resources, and adaptive management – despite some limitations in identifying and reporting new risks. For its part, the executing partner, the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, played an extremely effective role in facilitating project execution and coordinating with its related entities. For example, its support for the creation and operation of the Tukupu EPSDC was crucial. However, there was a high turnover of officials that delayed the project. This delay was also due to limited capabilities among some government agencies in complying with the signed letters of agreement. For its part, the **quality of implementation** was adequate. FAO, as the implementing agency, successfully incorporated the government's vision and priorities into the project's conceptualization. It also provided close and effective technical advice throughout the project with few field visits. This was due, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rating for this aspect is **Satisfactory**.

15. The effectiveness of budget planning and financial management was mainly affected by factors that influenced project efficiency. Almost all of the allocated resources will have been used (99.93 percent) by the closure of the financial intervention. **Co-financing** was 107 percent compliant (USD 27 542 623) and played an important role in mitigating the effects of late disbursements. New co-financing partners like the British Embassy were brought in and contributed to the project's achievements. Support from other partners like the International Organization for Migration has yet to be calculated. **Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement** are rated as **Highly Satisfactory**. The project effectively engaged key partners and counterparts. This resulted in achievements and co-benefits, as well as the aforementioned challenges. In addition, the effectiveness of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism's alliance with FAO is reflected in the fact that FAO currently manages 80 percent of the GEF-funded projects of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. The project's other partnerships with, for example, the International Organization for Migration and a municipal government, are also highlighted. These contributed to the work with Indigenous communities and, consequently, the project's achievements.

16. The project made an important contribution to the **generation and systematization of knowledge** about the forests of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which is found in the SINIIF and the FAO publications system. This makes its rating **Highly Satisfactory**. However, the effectiveness of the project's **communications** was limited in the first half of the intervention due to the lack of a specialist. Once this gap was filled, the project's visibility improved and considered the Kariña culture. The rating for the communications aspect of the project is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

17. The project included the **gender** approach in its design and execution. It also promoted and facilitated the participation of women in fields that have been traditionally dominated by men. Further, it strengthened the empowerment of women through the creation of the largely female-led Tukupu EPSDC. This reduced gender gaps. Areas for improvement include the lack of a gender plan and the lack of monitoring and systematization of the effects generated on women by the project's actions. The rating for this approach is **Satisfactory**.

18. The principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) was respected. This led to high participation of Indigenous communities and the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC, as well as respect for their culture, customs and their self-governance structure. However, there was a lack of expert advice related to FPIC. This could have strengthened knowledge exchange and the revaluation of ancestral knowledge and customs linked to forest conservation and use. Also, the project did not consider the cultural and livelihood differences between the Indigenous communities involved. Therefore, the rating for **Indigenous Peoples** is **Satisfactory**. In addition, the project promoted a respect for **human rights**, such as the right to adequate food. No instances of discrimination against women, youth or the elderly were identified during project execution. It also made sure to implement mitigation measures to prevent or minimize environmental and social risks. This is why this project, initially classified as Category B (moderate risk), was reclassified as low risk in 2021. The rating for **human rights** is **Satisfactory** and for **environmental and social safeguards** it is **Highly Satisfactory**.

Lessons learned

Indigenous Peoples

Lesson a1. The participation of representatives from Indigenous communities on the project steering committee is a good practice. This facilitates their participation in strategic decision-making related to the project. This lesson learned may be useful for the GCP/VEN/023P/GFF project (GEF Identification Number: 10971).

Design

Lesson b1. The inclusion of calculations to estimate avoided emissions and carbon sequestration as an appendix in the PRODOC is a good practice. This is because it ensured methodological consistency in the calculation of the same estimates upon completion of project execution. This facilitated the comparability of results.

Lesson b2. On the effectiveness of the direct implementation modality for institutional strengthening, the capabilities of government entities need to be assessed during the design phase. Refresher courses can also be offered or the support of an external expert can provide advice at certain moments of execution. In fact, project activities were implemented by government entities through letters of agreement and challenges were faced in terms of their different capacity levels. This lesson may be useful for all of the GEF-funded projects, for example, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF and GCP/VEN/020/GFF with GEF ID: 10678.

Project management

19. These lessons can also be useful for all of the GEF-funded projects, for example, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF and GCP/VEN/020/GFF.

Lesson c1. When beginning the implementation of a project of this type, degraded area restoration must begin as soon as possible to have sufficient time for monitoring and generating more advanced results by project closure.

Lesson c2. The participation of government research bodies and university researchers facilitated the achievement of technical outputs. Also, the development of new alliances with international organizations contributed to the fulfilment of the project's achievements. However, to confirm the effectiveness of work with government partners and international organizations, it is necessary to report the incorporation of all new co-financing partners into the project and calculate the additional co-financing received.

Lesson c3. The use of co-financing to avoid interruptions in ongoing project activities, due to delays in disbursements generated by changes in the country's exchange rate, is a good practice.

Lesson c4. To provide better leadership, organization, monitoring and documentation for the implementation of a project's gender approach, it is necessary to have a gender plan that is based on a robust analysis of the topic.

Lesson c5. It is important that the mid-term evaluation proposes explicit adjustments, if necessary, to the results framework. This maintains its horizontal and vertical logic so that they can be analysed and approved by the project steering committee, the Lead Technical Officer (LTO) and the GEF Liaison Officer. These changes should be minimal and not affect the objective or scope of the project, nor the global goals approved by the GEF. If substantial changes are required, then they will require approval from the GEF before being formalized.

Lesson c6. Although the project's General Strategy on Synergy and Transversality was an effective adaptive measure, care must be taken to ensure that the systematization of information clearly differentiates which achievements are attributable to each specific outcome or output. This avoids linking an achievement to several outputs or outcomes as this made the assessment of compliance with some achievements in this evaluation more complex.

Outputs generated

Lesson d1. The application of the proposed environmental and social sustainability criteria and indicators is a good practice for the project. This is because environmental and social safeguards were in place, human rights were protected, and work was carried out with the active and informed participation of Indigenous communities.

Lesson d2. Although the project's designed and implemented participatory monitoring mechanism was based on a robust conceptual framework, some important lessons were learned: i) ensure a rigorous technical review of the participatory monitoring protocol (booklet) so that its usefulness can be guaranteed in other interventions; ii) a knowledge exchange on each topic to be addressed through participatory monitoring would facilitate the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and practice with technical-scientific knowledge, provide greater meaning to the tasks of Indigenous communities and generate a common purpose with the project team; iii) have local extension agents with experience in rural development contribute to the compatibility of indigenous knowledge with technical knowledge and provide continuity to monitoring actions so that knowledge and its gradual incorporation by the Indigenous communities can be strengthened; and iv) developing educational material and culturally appropriate field guides on participatory monitoring topics with less technical content would be beneficial as it can include the knowledge and vision of Indigenous communities on relevant topics for seamless consultation among those with the appropriate training.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The project's objective and results maintain national and local relevance due to their contribution to the economic forestry engine, which considers the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable forest use and the participation of Indigenous Peoples. It also remains relevant to the GEF and FAO strategies.

Conclusion 2. The project achieved its main global environmental and development objectives. Most of the expected global environmental benefits were obtained. Progress towards achieving most of its expected impacts were also made.

Conclusion 3. The project made significant progress in promoting forest co-management between the government and Indigenous communities through the creation of the first indigenous forestry

company, the Tukupu EPSDC. This was a co-benefit. The proposal of a presidential decree to implement forest co-management at the national level was another co-benefit. This scaled up the approach.

Conclusion 4. Overall, project management was efficient. Some delays led to a project extension. Adaptive measures reduced, as much as possible, the effect of significant challenges faced during execution. The direct execution modality, which involved the participation of government agencies through letters of agreement, was adequate and helped to strengthen their capacities. However, in some cases, this meant a challenge to ensure the technical quality of the outputs generated.

Conclusion 5. The institutional and implementation arrangements were mostly effective. There were, however, limitations in promoting a more active participation among technical staff from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism during the development phase and field activities. This could have improved technical capabilities.

Conclusion 6. Several factors, such as high institutional appropriation, make the sustainability of project achievements moderately likely. There are risks like inexperience of the Tukupu EPSDC in fulfilling its responsibilities. Such risks require mitigation.

Conclusion 7. The project had satisfactory financial management. Co-financing played an important role. New alliances were also generated. These contributed to achieving results and obtaining additional co-financing.

Conclusion 8. The project had a practical and sufficient M&E plan. It was almost fully implemented. Although there were no reports on monitoring tools during the mid-term evaluation, four were presented for the terminal evaluation. Only the report on the climate change tool is still pending. Monitoring the project was complex, as was the systematization of information on some outputs and outcomes. This made it difficult to assess its compliance.

Conclusion 9. The project had a significant contribution to the generation and systematization of knowledge on forests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This is found in the SINIIF and the FAO publications system. However, the usability of the SINIIF can still be improved.

Conclusion 10. The project reduced gender gaps by empowering Kariña women. This was done through the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC and new, participatory spaces for women. However, the generated effects were neither monitored nor systematized.

Conclusion 11. The FPIC process was used in the project areas of Indigenous communities. Some elements, however, could have been better. Further, the project design and execution considered environmental and social safeguards and promoted the protection of human rights.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO. The SINIIF is an important basis for decision-making on forestry matters. Moreover, the forestry sector is key for the national economy and the conservation of biodiversity. It is also important in the fight against climate change and new FAO initiatives (GCP/VEN/020/GFF and GCP/VEN/023P/GFF). Therefore, continue strengthening this system through the generation of a more user-friendly interface. This involves the completion of the National Forest Inventory and its incorporation into the SINIIF so that the use of this instrument for planning and decision-making in the forestry sector can be facilitated at the national level.

Recommendation 2. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and the Tukupu EPSDC. In order to strengthen the Tukupu EPSDC and consolidate its co-management with the government: i) design and implement a plan to strengthen the technical, administrative and

organizational capabilities of the company with a gender approach that includes experience exchanges with other community-owned companies and support from a specialist on social organizations and the communal economic system; ii) ensure support for the company through the Ministry of People's Power for Communities and Social Movements, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; iii) continue the process to replace the company's representatives as soon as possible, as established by law; iv) include, as part of the company's functions, the monitoring and maintenance of reforestation activities within the project's framework; and v) communicate to the members of the Indigenous communities about the objective and use of the goods provided by the project to the company.

Recommendation 3. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO. Strengthen institutional arrangements and their implementation in similar future projects, for example, GCP/VEN/020/GFF, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF and the project on sustainable landscape management in the state of Amazonas, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which is in the conceptualization phase. To do so, strengthen fieldwork and the technical and practical capacities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism: i) appoint officials from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism to monitor the outputs and fieldwork for each component; and ii) hire a local professional team that can constantly monitor and supervise field activities.

20. Also strengthen work with the Indigenous communities: i) make Indigenous communities visible as key actors for forest conservation and sustainable use in project design; ii) carry out a cultural, social and economic analysis (for example, literacy level, main means of subsistence and customs) that allows the Indigenous communities to be characterized and activities to be proposed according to these characteristics; iii) revalue and document the ancestral knowledge and customs of Indigenous communities (for example, dances, ceremonies and songs) related to forest conservation and use and link these to project activities like participatory monitoring for greater appropriation of project activities; iv) strengthen the application of the FPIC process during the project's design or execution by following the steps in the FAO guide and documenting the entire process; and v) involve an expert on issues facing Indigenous communities into the core project team during design and execution to support the aforementioned activities.

Recommendation 4. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO. The project addressed gender gaps. Systematize and document this contribution through the collection and robust analysis of pertinent information that goes beyond the compilation of activities. Also, generate documents and graphic material.

Recommendation 5. For FAO. When considering areas for improvement in project monitoring and adjustments made to the results framework, only a specialist should be in charge of M&E. If required, modifications to the results framework should be done using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound indicators. The vertical and horizontal logic of the framework should be reaffirmed. To this end, a logical framework expert from FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) or FAO headquarters could provide assistance and, where appropriate, support could also be provided through proposed changes from the mid-term evaluation. In addition, the specialist should implement a project monitoring system that is strategic and practical. The members of the project team may provide assistance and, if required, an expert in knowledge management could ensure the necessary inputs for monitoring.

Recommendation 6. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. Approve the technical standard on criteria and indicators for environmental and social sustainability. Also approve the proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System,

which is a national policy proposal on co-management. This is to ensure the sustainability of achievements in the implementation of sustainable forest management in the country and to maintain a favourable environment for using the capacities acquired by officials and Indigenous communities.

Executive Summary Table 1. The GEF evaluation criteria rating table

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Sustainable forest management, co-management and biodiversity conservation are the main strategies to combat climate change, stop the loss of biodiversity and reverse soil degradation at the local, regional and global levels.
A1.1. Alignment with the GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The project aligned with four of the GEF focal areas on biodiversity, land degradation, climate change and sustainable forest management/REDD+, and with an FAO strategic priority in terms of its support for the country's forestry policy.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	Despite the significant political and economic changes that the country faces, the strategic relevance of the project was maintained at the local and national levels. Also, the project contributed to meeting the basic needs of the majority of the beneficiaries linked to their means of subsistence. Adapting to climate change, conserving biodiversity and reversing soil degradation remain global priorities that were addressed by international treaties.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	S	The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, in collaboration with FAO, is implementing the Integrated Management of Multiple-use Landscapes with High Conservation Value for the Sustainable Development of the Venezuelan Andean Region (GCP/VEN/020/GFF) project. This will promote the continuity of various achievements of the GCP/VEN/011/GFF project.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	S	The project generated strategic results: the development of the SINIIF; solid methodological bases and capacities for sustainable forest management; and the restoration of degraded land. In addition, it generated co-benefits such as the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC and a proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System.
B1.1. Delivery of project outputs	S	Most of the key expected outcomes of the project were achieved. There were difficulties in assessing compliance with one of the goals of Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 due to design problems in the results framework.

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
B1.2. Progress towards outcomes and project objectives	S	The project achieved its overall environmental and development objectives and most of its key project outcomes.
- Outcome 1.1	MS	The project improved functional capabilities for national forestry M&E, enabling M&E on 4 613 431 ha of ecosystems. The SINIIF is functioning, but not as fully as anticipated in the PRODOC. There are proposals to continue its strengthening and expansion.
- Outcome 1.2	S	The knowledge and assessment of biodiversity associated with forests and critical carbon areas were improved. This was included in the update of the POMF of Unit V of the RFI.
- Outcome 2.1	HS	As a result of the project, 16 320 ha were under forest management and harvesting plans. The goal in terms of the number of people trained was almost met and there is evidence of the development of capacities related to sustainable forest management of some actors. This, however, cannot be generalized for all participants in the training activities. In addition, relevant co-benefits were generated such as the creation of the first indigenous forestry company in the country and the proposal of the Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System.
- Outcome 2.2	MS	The goal of avoided indirect emissions was significantly exceeded, but the goal of avoided direct emissions was only partially achieved. One goal of this outcome could not be evaluated due to a design issue.
- Outcome 2.3	S	The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, as holder and executing partner of the project, created a platform for interinstitutional dialogue and coordination called the Forestry Cabinet. Nine out of ten interinstitutional agreements were generated that strengthen it.
- Outcome 3.1	MS	The goal in terms of number of people trained was almost met. In the interviews and field visits, it was noted that individual capacities were developed. However, there was not enough evidence to generalize that all of the trained people developed capacities.
- Outcome 3.2	S	The project reported a sequestration of 571 903.40 tCO_2eq on 1 559 ha following restorations through reforestation, analogue forestry, agroforestry and passive restoration.
- Overall rating of progress towards meeting objectives and outcomes	S	The project met its global environmental and development objectives, generating most of the expected global environmental benefits.
B1.3. Likelihood of impact	S	According to the project's theory of change (TOC), the progress made by the project is on track to generate the expected impacts.
C. EFFICIENCY		

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
C1. Efficiency	S	Management during project execution was mostly efficient. This involved the implementation of adaptive measures that reduced, as much as possible, the impact of important challenges faced by the project, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the frequent turnover of high-ranking officials. In fact, this led to an 18-month project extension. The direct execution modality, with the participation of government agencies through letters of agreement, strengthened institutional capacities. Regardless, there were challenges. The organizational structure was adequate, but there could be more active participation from the technical areas of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and local personnel in the intervention area.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT RESULTS		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	Moderate institutional, environmental, financial and sociopolitical risks were identified. These will need to be addressed to achieve the expected impacts of the project.
D1.1. Financial risks	ML	The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related entities still depend on external resources to ensure the continuity of the project's achievements. However, the Tukupu company could finance its needs through its economic benefits from timber sales.
D1.2. Sociopolitical risks	ML	There were frequent institutional changes due to the complex context of economic and sociopolitical instability. Regardless, the forestry issue has remained a priority.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	The level of appropriation of achievements at the institutional level is high. There are projects underway or in the process of formulation that will provide continuity to some of the project outputs and outcomes.
D1.4. Environmental risks	ML	The Tukupu EPSDC is expected to lead the implementation of good sustainable forest management practices acquired during project execution. This includes environmental studies, but there is uncertainty regarding whether the capabilities acquired will be sufficient to ensure the fulfilment of these responsibilities.
D2. Catalysis and replication	ML	The Integrated Management of Multiple-use Landscapes with High Conservation Value for the Sustainable Development of the Venezuelan Andean Region GCP/VEN/020/GFF project and the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Caroní River Basin GCP/VEN/023P/GFF project (in development), and the Management of Sustainable Landscapes for the Conservation of the Forest Biome and Maintenance of Ecosystem Services in the State of Amazonas, Venezuela (Bolivarian

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		Republic of) (in the project identification form stage) will replicate some of the good practices generated by the project. This includes the multipurpose forest. In addition, the proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System, once approved, is expected to boost the expansion of forest co-management in the country.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness	MS	The project design addressed key problems facing the country, and the vertical logic of its structure has allowed for the fulfilment of its environmental and development objectives. The main areas for improvement involve the need for greater visibility of Indigenous communities and their role in the conservation and sustainable use of forests in the PRODOC, and design problems and adjustments to the results framework.
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	The project was adequately conceptualized, effectively supervised and generated spaces for strategic decision-making.
E2.1. Quality of project implementation by FAO (Budget Holder, LTO, Project Task Force, etc.)	S	FAO's role as implementing agency was adequate with the effective incorporation of the vision and priorities of the Venezuelan Government in the conceptualization of the project. This involved relevant and effective technical support but with few field visits due, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic.
E2.2. Project oversight (project steering committee, project working group, etc.)	S	The project steering committee met periodically and fulfilled its oversight and strategic decision-making functions.
E3. Quality of project execution For decentralized projects: PMU/Budget Holder For Operational Partners Implementation Modality projects: executing agency	S	The PMU and FAO Representation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela performed adequately in the operation of the project and the management and administration of its resources, as well as in the implementation of adaptive measures to face challenges. Areas for improvement include reducing limitations for the identification and M&E of some new risks.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	S	The effectiveness of budget planning was mainly affected by the turnover of public officials and the COVID-19 pandemic. Committed co-financing was exceeded (107 percent) and played an important role in mitigating the effects of late disbursements.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	HS	The project was successful in the involvement of government partners and counterparts, which resulted in greater collaboration and an increase in the project portfolio of FAO Venezuela with the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. It also generated new partnerships. The involvement of Indigenous communities was inconsistent due to cultural differences.

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
E6. Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products	S	The project facilitated the generation and systematization of knowledge with the creation of a forestry information system and various publications on the FAO platform. Communications was not very effective during the first half of the project but improved in the second half using various means such as a local radio programme.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MS	The implementation of the M&E plan was almost completed in its entirety. Areas for improvement were identified in the lack of reporting of monitoring tools during the mid-term evaluation and the complex monitoring that was carried out during the project.
E7.1. M&E design	S	The M&E plan was practical and sufficient to meet the GEF requirements for project monitoring.
E7.2. M&E implementation plan (including financial and human resources)	MS	The monitoring plan was almost completely implemented in its entirety. The reporting of monitoring tools during the mid-term evaluation is among the areas for improvement. However, these were presented during the terminal evaluation with only the climate change tool still pending. The project monitoring system was complex, as was the systematization of information on some outputs and outcomes, which made it difficult to assess compliance. The resources were sufficient to allow for the hiring of several support staff.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	S	The impact of these factors was reduced and the effects were mitigated, which allowed for the achievement of most of the expected project results.
F. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S	The inclusion of the gender approach was considered during project design and execution. This contributed to closing some gender gaps, but the project did not provide follow-up or systematize these advances and did not develop a gender plan.
F2. Human rights issues	S	The project promoted human rights, such as the right to food. It did not cause any type of discrimination against women, youth or the elderly.
F3. Indigenous Peoples	S	The project implemented an FPIC process, which facilitated interaction with Indigenous communities and respect for their customs, rules and self-governance structure. It was possible to establish the Tukupu EPSDC, which is managed by representatives from the Indigenous communities. This will generate benefits for the local communities. The lack of an analysis that would have allowed for a better characterization of these communities and their

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		visibility as key actors in forest conservation was noted. Further, there was a lack of support from an expert in Indigenous communities to more robustly promote the revaluation of their customs and traditions linked to the conservation and use of the forest, and strengthen the application of the FPIC.
F4. Environmental and social safeguards	HS	The project's risk level was classified as Category B, meaning that the project could have adverse yet not significant environmental or social impacts that could be prevented or mitigated. However, due to the mitigation measures implemented by the project, the risk decreased to low. This means that the project had no or minimal potential negative environmental or social impacts.
Overall project rating	HS	**Working with Indigenous communities is complicated. Although the project did not have an expert to provide support to this area, it achieved important, unexpected results like the creation of the first indigenous forestry company. This led to forestry activities in one of the project areas and will be key in ensuring sustainability of the good practices in sustainable forest management and the forest restoration carried out in the RFI. Social benefits will also be generated for Indigenous communities. In addition, the project generated a broad methodological framework and information to strengthen knowledge related to the forests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and improve their M&E.**

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

1. The project's terminal evaluation was considered in the project document (PRODOC) based on the requirements of the financial partner, the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The evaluation has a dual purpose: accountability and the generation of learning. It serves to be accountable to the donor, that is, the GEF, the national and municipal governments, and other actors that were counterparts in the co-financing or execution of the project. In addition, this evaluative exercise generates learning. In the process of assessing the achievement of results (effectiveness and progress towards the expected impact), relevance, efficiency, sustainability and lessons learned were identified to sustain, improve and expand the results and to provide continuity to the processes initiated by the project. The evaluation will also serve to: promote learning; provide an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge on results and lessons learned between the GEF and its partners as a basis for decision-making for ongoing or future projects, programmes, programme management, policies and strategies; and improve the performance of the GEF portfolio. In addition, environmental and social safeguards, the gender approach and issues regarding human rights and Indigenous Peoples were evaluated.

Box 1. Project overview

Title: Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective GCP/VEN/011/GFF
The GEF ID project code: 5410
Recipient country: Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
The GEF-5 focal areas: Biodiversity (Objective 2); Land Degradation (Objective 2); Sustainable Forest Management/Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+) (Objectives 1 and 2); and Climate Change (Objective 5)
Funding partner: The GEF
Executing agency: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Co-executing agency: FAO
Co-executing partner: Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism (formerly Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Water)
Project start date and expected end date: from 15 November 2016 to 30 April 2023
Total project budget: USD 33 979 316 including committed co-financing of USD 25 730 000
Mid-term evaluation date: May 2020

1.2 Beneficiaries

2. The intended users of this evaluation are shown in Table 1 with the intended uses.

Table 1. Users and uses of the evaluation

User	Potential uses
Project steering committee	It will be able to use the findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation to: jointly agree on sustainability options for the project results with the national implementing entities and the donor; expand the impact in successive phases; strengthen the design and implementation of similar projects in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and build on and share good practices and technical outputs from the project.
Executing/implementing organizations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, Misión Árbol, National Forestry Company [ENAFOR, by its Spanish acronym], National Reforestation Company [CONARE, by its Spanish acronym], Latin American Forestry Institute [IFLA, by its Spanish acronym], National Foundation for Environmental Education [FUNDAMBIENTE, by its Spanish acronym], National Parks Institute [INPARQUES, by its Spanish acronym], Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities, local governments, other partners)	They will be able to use the findings and lessons learned to improve the design and implementation of future interventions in the country or region. This includes ongoing projects in similar areas or potential areas of work. They will also be able to use the conclusions and lessons learned to improve and strengthen the scope of the results, and to provide continuity to the processes initiated by the project.
FAO Venezuela and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC)	They may consider the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned in their strategic planning and in the design and execution of future similar proposals for the GEF or other funding agencies.
FAO-GEF Coordination Unit	It is expected that the results can be used to report back to the GEF on compliance with the project's objectives and indicators. In addition, they will be able to use the evidence to improve the implementation of the FAO-GEF portfolio at the national, regional and global levels in relevant thematic areas.
The GEF	It will be able to use the results as evidence to assess compliance with its own indicators and to strengthen the implementation of its portfolio.
Other donors and interested organizations	They will be able to use the results, recommendations and lessons learned to develop similar projects funded by their own organizations and to support the sustainability of the achievements generated by this project through new initiatives.
Beneficiaries and other national actors	They will be able to use the evidence to analyse and support the viability of future interventions that serve to enhance and give continuity to the project results.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

3. The planned scope of the evaluation is as follows:

   i. **Temporal scope.** The terminal evaluation assesses the project execution period from November 2016 (beginning of implementation) to the end of the research phase (March 2023).

   ii. **Geographic and population scope.** Regarding geographical coverage, the evaluation covers some regions where the project was implemented. In particular, the city of Caracas, located in the Capital District, was visited. This included a visit to the Waraira Repano National Park. In addition, various communities and areas of the Imataca Forest Reserve (RFI, by its Spanish acronym), Unit V, were visited in the state of Bolívar, where the main actions of the project were implemented.

   iii. **Scope by components.** The evaluation covers all project components and provides a comprehensive and systematic view of the project's performance by evaluating its design, implementation and the achievement of its objectives. The evaluation also examines the achievements and difficulties that the project faced in its execution and implementation at the national and local levels.

1.4 Objectives

4. The general objective was to evaluate the results achieved by the project in each of the dimensions or evaluative criteria established in the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects (GEF, 2017). This considered national needs and priorities and their contribution to the Global Environmental Benefits. The specific objectives are outlined in the following points.

   i. Learn from this project about what should be done to improve work with Indigenous communities, especially women, in Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)-GEF projects. In particular, this involves achievements and challenges in relation to co-management with Indigenous Peoples and their institutional capacity for forest management.

   ii. Learn from this project about the implementation of participatory forest monitoring mechanisms, forest co-management, and the application of environmental and social sustainability criteria and indicators, which can be used by other FAO-GEF projects.

   iii. Learn about the need to implement digital forest monitoring systems that allow for evidence-based decisions to be made for the best planning, management and use of forests.

   iv. Learn about the experiences of this project in terms of forest conservation and restoration and the sustainable use of timber and non-timber forest products.

   v. Enhance the development of three similar projects that are being formulated and implemented in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GCP/VEN/020/GFF, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF, Sustainable Landscape Management for the Conservation of the Forest Biome and Maintenance of Ecosystem Services in the State of Amazonas).

Table 2. Evaluation questions for each of the GEF criteria

Relevance (score to be assigned)
1. How are the project results aligned with: the focal areas and strategic objectives of the GEF operational programme; FAO strategic objectives and priority areas; the FAO Country Programming Framework; the Sustainable Development Goals; and beneficiary needs? a) Have there been any changes in the relevance of the project since it was designed, such as new national policies, plans or programmes that affect the relevance of its objectives and goals? How effective was the project's responsiveness in addressing these changes? 2. To what extent have the project activities been complemented by other existing interventions in the country?
Effectiveness (score to be assigned)
3. To what extent has the project achieved each of the project outcomes within each component? a) What opportunities and/or challenges contributed to or limited the achievement of the results? Why did it work and why did it not work (include the technical capacity of the partner to lead Component 1 and the involvement of FAO headquarters to support Component 1)? b) To what extent did the results achieved contribute to the achievement of the environmental and development objectives of the project? c) What unintended results (additional, positive and/or negative) has the project achieved? To what extent did these contribute to the achievement of the project's environmental and development objectives? 4. What preliminary impacts can be identified by the project contribution and to what extent can they be attributed to the project? Are there any barriers or risks that could prevent progress towards long-term impacts?
Efficiency (score to be assigned)
5. How have the following elements contributed to or hindered the achievement of the project results and objectives? a. direct execution modality b. the institutional structure c. financial resources and procedures d. technical resources e. programmatic and operational procedures 6. To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently and cost-effectively? To what extent has it been able to adapt to any changes in conditions (government and/or policy changes, the COVID-19 pandemic, project team changes, etc.) to improve the efficiency of project delivery?
Sustainability (score to be assigned)
7. How sustainable are the results achieved to date at an environmental, social, institutional and financial level? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project's achievements? a) What aspects/actions are considered key to give continuity to the processes initiated by the project (include structures created that ensure sustainability without the presence of the project leader)? b) What risk factors or difficulties could affect the sustainability of the results achieved by the project? What measures were taken (or are being taken) to minimize the incidence (prevention) and/or impact (response) of these risks on the sustainability of the project? 8. To what extent did capacity development activities have an integrated approach (individual, organizational, enabling environment level)?

a) What evidence supports that the beneficiaries have acquired greater capabilities in ecosystem restoration issues (highlight training and results in the management of saplings [natural regeneration collected in the forest] and their treatment and establishment in nurseries, highlighting the case of species with a high degree of difficulty for reproduction by seeds. This is in addition to recognition in the field through training by experts of the area and the management of mycorrhizae by Indigenous Peoples)?
b) Is there evidence that these capacities have permeated institutions at the community and regional levels?
9. What level of appropriation did the beneficiaries have regarding the project results?

Factors affecting performance (score to be assigned)

Quality of design and implementation

10. To what extent was the project design appropriate to achieve the expected results? (Include geographic coverage, components, partners, relationship with local stakeholders, project intervention logic, objectives and components are clear, practicable, and viable within the timeframe available.)
a) To what extent was the project well-designed? (covering the importance of a national information systems in co-managed forestal projects; the importance of the socioeconomic component that was not initially part of the design, components one and two should be combined in new projects or it makes sense to keep them separate?)
11. What factors in the project design affected the ability for it to start as planned?

Implementation

12. To what extent has the project identification, conception, evaluation, preparation, approval, launch, control, and supervision been fulfilled?
a) What has been the quality of monitoring, supervision, and guidance?
b) How effective was the context analysis and risk identification (in design, implementation, during implementation, and at closure)? How effective was risk management to mitigate risks?

Execution

13. To what extent have the functions and responsibilities related to project management and administration been effectively fulfilled?

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) (Design)

14. To what extent have the design and implementation of the M&E plan been efficient and contributed to achieving project results?
a) To what extent has the project systematically collected information using appropriate methodologies?
b) How was the M&E plan designed?

Was the M&E plan, at the time of approval, practical and sufficient?

- Did it have baseline data?
- Did it have clear objectives and appropriate indicators to measure environmental, gender, and socioeconomic results?
- Did it have an appropriate methodological approach?
- Did it specify the practical organization and logistics of M&E activities, including the schedule and responsibilities for data collection, and an adequate budget for M&E activities?

15. How was the M&E plan implemented?

- Was the M&E system implemented according to the plan?
- If necessary, was the M&E plan reviewed in a timely manner?
- Was information on specified indicators and relevant FMAM focal area monitoring tools systematically collected?
- Were appropriate methodological approaches used to analyze the data?
- Were the resources for M&E sufficient?
- Has information from the M&E system been used appropriately to make timely decisions and promote learning during project execution?

Financial Management and Co-Financing

16. To what extent has the planned co-financing been realized, and how has the level of co-financing—lower or higher than expected—affected project results? **Project Partnerships and Stakeholder Participation** 17. To what extent did the level and quality of participation and involvement of key partners and counterparts enable proper implementation and affect project results? a) How has the participation level of other actors—such as civil society, indigenous populations, or the private sector—in the design or implementation of the project affected project results? b) How has the dissemination of project-related information with stakeholders been? **Communication, Knowledge Management, and Knowledge Products** 18. What is the quality of communication, knowledge management, and knowledge products generated by the project? 19. How is the project evaluating, documenting, and sharing its results, lessons learned, and experiences? (attention to indigenous issues) a) To what extent can communication products and activities contribute to the sustainability and expansion of project results?
Environmental and Social Safeguards
20. To what extent have environmental and social concerns been taken into account in the design and implementation of the project?
Gender
21. To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project? a) Was the project implemented in a way that guaranteed gender equity in participation and benefits, contributing to the empowerment of women? b) How appropriate and relevant was the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the actions to account for the results on gender issues?
Human rights issues
22. How were local communities taken into account in the design and implementation of the project (focus on the consultation process, obtaining consent, initial analysis and adaptation to culture and empowerment, in addition to human resources in the project team)?
Indigenous Peoples issues
23. How were Indigenous Peoples taken into account in the design and implementation of the project (focus on the consultation process, obtaining consent, initial analysis and adaptation to indigenous culture and needs and empowerment, in addition to human resources in the project team)? 24. What are the achievements and challenges related to co-management with Indigenous Peoples (for example, this involves sustainability due to institutional capacity and greater income)?
Lessons learned
25. What knowledge or evidence has been generated from results and experiences that has value and potential for broader application, replication and use at the local, national and regional levels? 26. What lessons can be learned from the design, management and implementation of the project that can be useful to provide continuity to the processes initiated by the project in current interventions and in the design and implementation of future interventions, as well as for strengthening the GEF project portfolio?

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

1.5 Methodology

5. The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards (UNEG, 2005), the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects (GEF, 2017) and the FAO Office of Evaluation project evaluation manual for decentralized offices (FAO, 2019), which aligned with the UNEG norms and standards. In addition, the criteria were assessed and the requirements established by the GEF for the terminal evaluation were met in accordance with the terms of reference of this evaluation. In particular, the process was implemented in close collaboration with FAO Venezuela and key project partners and counterparts.

6. Consultations with stakeholders followed ethical guidelines to ensure the safe, non-discriminatory and respectful participation of all parties. Special attention ensured that women and Indigenous communities in general were consulted following their customs and rules. This included advice from the Project Management Unit (PMU) and the support of a social manager who worked with the project and, in some cases, introduced the Evaluation Team to the people to be interviewed. A translator from the community also provided support to translate from the Kariña language to Spanish and vice versa, when required. Participation was voluntary and all information was treated confidentially.

7. The evaluation followed a theory of change (TOC) approach with an emphasis on the results chain. Through the TOC, the evaluation sought to capture the causal relationship between inputs, expected outputs detailed in the project results framework and results to which these should contribute and conditions under which they should occur. The TOC was used to determine progress towards the expected impacts and analyse the level of achievement of the project considering the factors that drove or limited it and the fulfilment of the assumptions. The description and TOC map of the project is presented in Section 2.1.

8. The information collection phase covered the period of 1 February to 31 March 2023. The methods used are outlined in the following points.

   i. **Review of documentation.** An exhaustive review of the documents generated by the project was carried out, including: the semi-annual and annual progress reports; the technical, regulatory and communications products from the direct work of the PMU and the contracted consultancies; the mid-term evaluation; annual operational plans; project steering committee minutes; the GEF monitoring tools; the monitoring system developed by the project; national planning and legal documents; and other external documents that were relevant to the evaluation and are listed in the bibliography section of this report. As a result of this review, inputs (notes) were obtained. These fed into the analysis of each evaluative criteria, which is reflected in the evaluation report.

   ii. **Semi-structured interviews.** To obtain the opinions, perspectives, data and observations on project implementation from the executors and implementers, beneficiaries, and other national and local actors, semi-structured individual and group interviews were carried out (face-to-face and virtual). The criteria for selecting the interviewees were based on: i) having a representation of each category of people who participated in the project (national and local government, PMU, beneficiaries, consultants, international organizations, researchers); ii) identifying key informants according to the role they played in the project; and

iii) the availability of time for collecting information in accordance with the evaluation's terms of reference. To achieve this objective, the Evaluation Team carried out a mapping of actors based on the PRODOC, the project progress reports and other information generated by the project. This list was compared and complemented with a list of relevant actors provided by the PMU. It was then possible to create a map of actors made up of 105 people and an unspecified number of beneficiaries from five Indigenous communities. This is because the number would depend on their availability to participate in the interviews. The aforementioned selection criteria were applied to this list of people with the support of the PMU. This resulted in a list of 60 people and two groups to be interviewed, with the first group corresponding to trained personnel from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the second group made up of beneficiaries from Indigenous communities. For each stakeholder category, a general interview protocol was developed with a questionnaire. This was adjusted according to the person to be interviewed. A total of 93 people were interviewed (43 women and 50 men), which included beneficiaries from five Indigenous communities (for more details, see the direct observation method). The list of people interviewed is provided in Appendix 1. For each interview, a note was generated during or after the interview, which included useful and relevant information to answer the evaluation questions. This information was included in a data matrix in Microsoft Word, which was structured based on each evaluative criteria and the main evaluation questions. It was also used to triangulate the information and answer the evaluation questions.

iii. **Interview questionnaire with a focus on capacity development.** An online questionnaire was designed and applied to learn about the perception of people trained in forest management and co-management regarding the development of their capacities in these topics and to obtain information to analyse the fulfilment of Outcomes 2.1 and 3.1 linked to the strengthening of capacities. The project recorded 1 136 people who received training. In order to cover a larger number of people than in the interviews, the questionnaire was sent to participants who had a registered email: 532 people total. The questionnaire was submitted using Google Forms and 136 people responded to it. The responses were collated in a Microsoft Excel sheet and analysed by identifying and grouping similar responses to determine the most common responses. This information was triangulated with evidence obtained from direct observation, a desk review and interviews.

iv. **Direct observation.** The project involved Unit V of the RFI, which covers 169 249 ha and other areas of the country that cover a total 763 ha. To gather evidence of the work carried out in these areas, and taking into account the large magnitude of the project area, locations to be visited were selected. These were representative, relevant and with easy or moderately easy accessibility. In the first instance, the Indigenous communities to be visited were selected. The project selected ten Indigenous communities of the RFI[1] based on the following criteria: the number of activities carried out in each community; the number of successful results (this implicitly includes unsuccessful results since the matrix [Table 3] rated communities with low successful results, that is, they had a high number of unsuccessful results); and accessibility to the communities considering the time to carry out the

[1] These are Botanamo, El Cafetal, El Palmar, La Esperanza, La Fortaleza, La Iguana, Matupo I, Matupo II, Pozo Oscuro and Río Negro.

evaluation mission. For applying criteria, a matrix was prepared in which criteria and their level of compliance were included. This was filled out by the PMU (see Table 3).

Table 3. Matrix for site visit selection

Criteria/level of compliance	High	Medium	Low
Activities carried out	Botanamo community La Esperanza community Pozo Oscuro community La Fortaleza community	Matupo I community El Cafetal community Rio Negro community	Matupo II community La Iguana community Los Waikas community
Accessibility of the communities	Botanamo community La Esperanza community La Iguana community La Fortaleza community	Matupo I community Matupo II community Cafetal community	Rio Negro community Los Waikas community Pozo Oscuro community
Successful results	Botanamo community La Esperanza community Matupo I community	Cafetal community Pozo Oscuro community La Fortaleza community	Los Waikas community La Iguana community Rio Negro community Matupo II community

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

9. According to the time available for the mission, the PMU indicated that five Indigenous communities could be visited. With this consideration, and based on the information in Table 3, the communities of Matupo I, Botanamo and La Esperanza were selected as communities with important participation in the project given their successful results and accessible location. To observe and learn about the experiences that were not so successful and that presented a smaller number of implemented activities, with easy or medium accessibility, the La Iguana and Matupo II communities were selected. However, during the evaluation mission, it was not possible to visit the Matupo II community since it had problems with the Matupo I community. It was then replaced by the Pozo Oscuro community, which had similar characteristics to Matupo II. Besides interviews, the nurseries were observed, and one or two family farming plots and restored areas near them were visited. The Tukupu I and Tukupu II forestry production areas and the Amazon Forest Inventory Network (RAINFOR, by its Spanish acronym) plot were also visited, which is where the forest monitoring was conducted. Of the restored areas outside the RFI, the Evaluation Team visited only the Waraira Repano National Park in Caracas due to time restrictions and easy accessibility. During these visits, notes and photographs were taken of the work carried out. These served as inputs to triangulate the information and answer the evaluation questions.

1.6 Limitations

10. As mentioned, the project was supported by a social manager and a bilingual guide who served as a translator in interviews with members of the Indigenous communities. Despite these measures, it was difficult to obtain testimonies from some of the Kariña Indigenous women because they were not used to talking with unknown people outside of their community. This was partially resolved during fieldwork with the accompaniment of the local Indigenous captains who encouraged the women to dialogue.

11. Areas for improvement in the results framework made it difficult to assess the level of compliance of some outputs and outcomes. This led to the lack of their assessment in some cases and translated into a lesson learned.

1.7 Structure of the report

12. Following this introduction, Section 2 of the report presents the background and context of the project, including the TOC. Section 3 presents the main findings of each evaluation question. Conclusions and recommendations are included in Section 4 and lessons learned in Section 5.

2. Background and context of the project

13. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a country which, due to its biogeographical position, presents a wide diversity of biomes. This places it among the 17 megadiverse countries. It ranks fourth in the world in amphibian diversity, sixth in birds, eighth in mammals and higher plants, and ninth in reptiles (Rodríguez and Rojas, 2008). This great diversity has merited effective and permanent protection by the State through the constitution of Areas under Special Administration Regime (ABRAE, by its Spanish acronym), supported by the Organic Law for Territorial Planning (Congress of the Republic, 1983). Currently, the ABRAE areas cover a total area of 96.8 million ha, which represents 68.4 percent of the country's land area (Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, 2023).

14. One of the types of ABRAE are Forest Reserves (National Assembly, 2013), which are forest heritage areas intended for the permanent production of forest products without prejudice to their protective, recreational and scientific functions. One of the most important is the RFI (National Assembly, 1963), a territory with great natural (including forest resources) and cultural wealth, and vast mineral resources (gold, kaolin, dolomite, diamond, iron, bauxite, manganese, copper). The RFI was designated an area of intervention for the project under evaluation because it met various criteria, among which are the following: a) important forest ecosystem area; b) a high level of biodiversity and endemism; c) important carbon reserves; d) the presence of fragile soils; e) the presence of factors that promote deforestation and the degradation of forests and land; and f) the presence of vulnerable groups dependent on the forest, highlighting the Warao, Kariña, Pemón, Akawaio, Arawaco and Sanema ethnic groups, among others.

15. Citing (Berroterrán, 2003),[2] the PRODOC points out that, of the total surface area of the RFI, 8 percent was intervened in 2003. Mining had the most extensive use with 53 percent of the intervened area, followed by forestry use at 39 percent and agriculture at 7 percent. These productive activities generated degradation processes as a consequence of unsustainable forestry exploitation, resulting in the estimated loss of 1 443 365 tCO_2eq over a period of 15 years. In addition, it is noted that mining causes the contamination of soil and water. This affects the health of miners and the existence of threats of expansion of agricultural and mining activities on the forests of the RFI.

16. According to the PRODOC, forestry activity in the RFI began in 1982 under forestry concessions that had been granted to private companies that were mainly interested in the selective extraction of species with the greatest economic value. Under this arrangement, a decrease in the forest area of 1 580 ha was estimated for Unit V of the RFI between 1987 and 2013, with the consequent loss of 1 443 365.73 tCO_2eq due to non-sustainable forestry harvesting practices.

17. In 2010, the National Forestry Company (ENAFOR) was created (Presidency of the Republic, 2010). This led to the private concessions in the RFI being revoked and handed over to this state-owned company, through which the concept of sustainable forest management is promoted. Despite these advances, the use of conventional techniques still continues with environmental impacts on understory biomass and the loss of stored carbon.

[2] This is the latest study conducted on the RFI in relation to land use, which was carried out at a wide view (1:250 000) using satellite images.

18. Among the barriers that impede sustainable forest management mentioned in the PRODOC, the following should be highlighted: i) gaps in technical capacities for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of forest ecosystems and the production of timely information; ii) the lack of knowledge and valuation of forest biodiversity; iii) the lack of integration of information systems for the adequate monitoring of forest ecosystems, biodiversity, carbon reserves and land use changes; iv) weaknesses in interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination to implement the new vision of sustainable forest management; v) weak operational capacity for sustainable community forest management and forest territorial planning; and vi) the lack of instruments and technical capacities for the conservation, management and sustainable use and restoration of forest ecosystems and associated ecosystem services.

2.1 Objectives and scope of the project

19. To overcome these barriers, the Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective project was proposed. It had the global environmental objective of integrating biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management and climate change mitigation into forest planning for sustainable forest management. In addition, the proposed development objective was to support government institutions and community organizations in the application of innovations in information management, incentive schemes, participatory governance, the empowerment of communities related to forests and multiple mechanisms for the recovery of forest areas under degradation processes in representative forest ecosystems of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. To meet both objectives, the project strategy was structured into four components, which are outlined in the following points.

i. **Component 1.** This would promote the implementation of an Integrated Forest Information System for the forests of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (now National Integrated Forest Information System – SINIIF, by its acronym in Spanish) to facilitate national forest M&E. This would complement the National Forest Inventory with geospatial and socioeconomic information, and with tools for monitoring forest reserves, stored carbon, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and biodiversity with a participatory approach involving local communities. This would strengthen knowledge and ensure access to improved information on the state of forest resources and their ecosystem services as a basis for forest planning and management.

ii. **Component 2.** This would focus on strengthening the operational and technical capacity to implement planning instruments, forest land use planning and sustainable forest management with a high level of involvement of community actors and the national and state governments. In addition, it would support the formulation and implementation of forest territorial planning and community sustainable forest management plans that incorporate the generation of global environmental benefits. It would also promote the development of a system of environmental and social sustainability standards for sustainable forest management.

iii. **Component 3.** This would promote investment in forest restoration and rehabilitation in areas with the greatest potential to generate global environmental benefits based on information generated by the SINIIF and in close coordination

with local governments and communities. Also, an ecosystem approach would be applied to prioritize the multifunctionality of the forest.

iv. **Component 4.** This would focus on the M&E of the project's progress, compliance with indicators, the monitoring of risk mitigation measures and the identification of new measures to face unforeseen risks, as well as extract lessons learned from project implementation. It would be disseminated throughout the region and in the rest of the world, and would serve to implement projects in similar regions.

20. The project would be executed through the direct execution modality in which it would be technically executed by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism with the participation of the National Forestry Company (ENFORESTAL, by its Spanish acronym – previously known as ENAFOR and ENF),[3] the National Reforestation Company (CONARE, by its Spanish acronym), the Latin American Forestry Institute (IFLA, by its Spanish acronym) and Misión Árbol. FAO would be the project's implementing and executing agency with the responsibility of supervising and providing technical advice to the implementing partners. The Organization would also be responsible for the financial and operational execution of the project. The project resources come from the GEF grant of USD 8 249 316 and the co-financing of USD 25 730 000 for a combined total USD 33 979 316.

2.2 Theory of change

21. During the mid-term evaluation, the project's TOC was reconstructed and the new version was reviewed and endorsed by the project team. The reconstructed TOC was reviewed by the terminal Evaluation Team as part of the activities to prepare the evaluation's initiation report. The Evaluation Team verified the relevance of the reconstructed TOC at the beginning and end of the terminal evaluation. Only minimal adjustments were made to its contents. The TOC narrative and its map are presented in Figure 1.

22. The TOC had two change strategies. These corresponded to the main intervention axes of the project and, therefore, provided guidance and interacted during the pathway of change. The two strategies are outlined in the following points.

23. **Change strategy 1.** This involves capacity development and promotion of the multifunctional use and management of forests by community social actors.

24. **Change strategy 2.** This involves research, institutional strengthening, the development of capacities and tools for forest M&E, as well as the promotion of the multifunctional use and management of forests among public officials.

25. The changes expected in the short term, which correspond to the changes that would occur as a result of and during the course of project execution, are in the following points.

26. **Changes in the short term:** as initial outputs of the aforementioned strategies, knowledge would be generated through research, and awareness and capacity development would be strengthened in community social actors and government officials. These advances would allow the people who live in the intervention area to develop planning tools and sustainable forest management practices with the support of trained officials and improved

[3] The acronyms ENF and ENAFOR are just two different forms of ENFORESTAL (National Forestry Company) and correspond to the same institution under different governments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

access to information on biodiversity. Additionally, they would be able to produce, access and monitor information on forests in the RFI. For their part, State institutions and officials would use the knowledge and capabilities developed to support the communities and develop and use criteria and indicators of environmental and social sustainability for sustainable forest management. This would be done alongside the construction and implementation of procedures for collection, processing and the analysis of forest information.

27. Changes in the medium term, understood as direct and achievable effects once project implementation is complete, are outlined in the following points.

28. **Changes in the medium term:** for the pathway of change to be effective, the community social actors should have the opportunity to market the products derived from sustainable forest management, verifying at the same time that the developed good practices reduce pressure on the RFI. Thus, in the medium term, the Venezuelan Integrated Forest Information System (now the SINIIF) should be functioning, which would increase the operational and technical capacity of the institutions in the application of tools for land planning and sustainable forest management. This would also ensure the availability of and access to systematic and updated information on reserves, GHG emissions, forest carbon flows, deforestation and degradation. These are key inputs for the design and implementation of planning and decision-making processes by the institutions responsible for the forestry sector.

29. Intermediate stages are the necessary conditions that must be met to achieve the desired long-term change or impact. These are outlined in the following points.

30. **Intermediate stages:** to move towards the desired impact, the number of community social actors that implement good practices of sustainable forest and land management should be multiplied, and monitoring activities of forest ecosystems and their ecosystem services should be maintained over time. Further, State officials should be able to promote sustainable forest management using information generated by the SINIIF. In this regard, public policies (local, regional, national) and an institutional framework aimed at promoting sustainable forest management is necessary alongside the provision of incentive mechanisms for the rehabilitation and restoration of forests.

31. Long-term changes – defined as impacts to which the project would contribute under the hypothesis that the expected effects and assumptions materialize – are outlined in the following points.

32. **Long-term changes:** if the aforementioned changes materialize, then this would reverse the degradation trends of forest ecosystems. It would promote the conservation of biological diversity, productivity and the capacity for regeneration and forest conservation, while improving their health and capacity to fulfil essential ecological, economic and social functions. This includes climate change mitigation at the local, national and global scale without causing harm to other ecosystems.

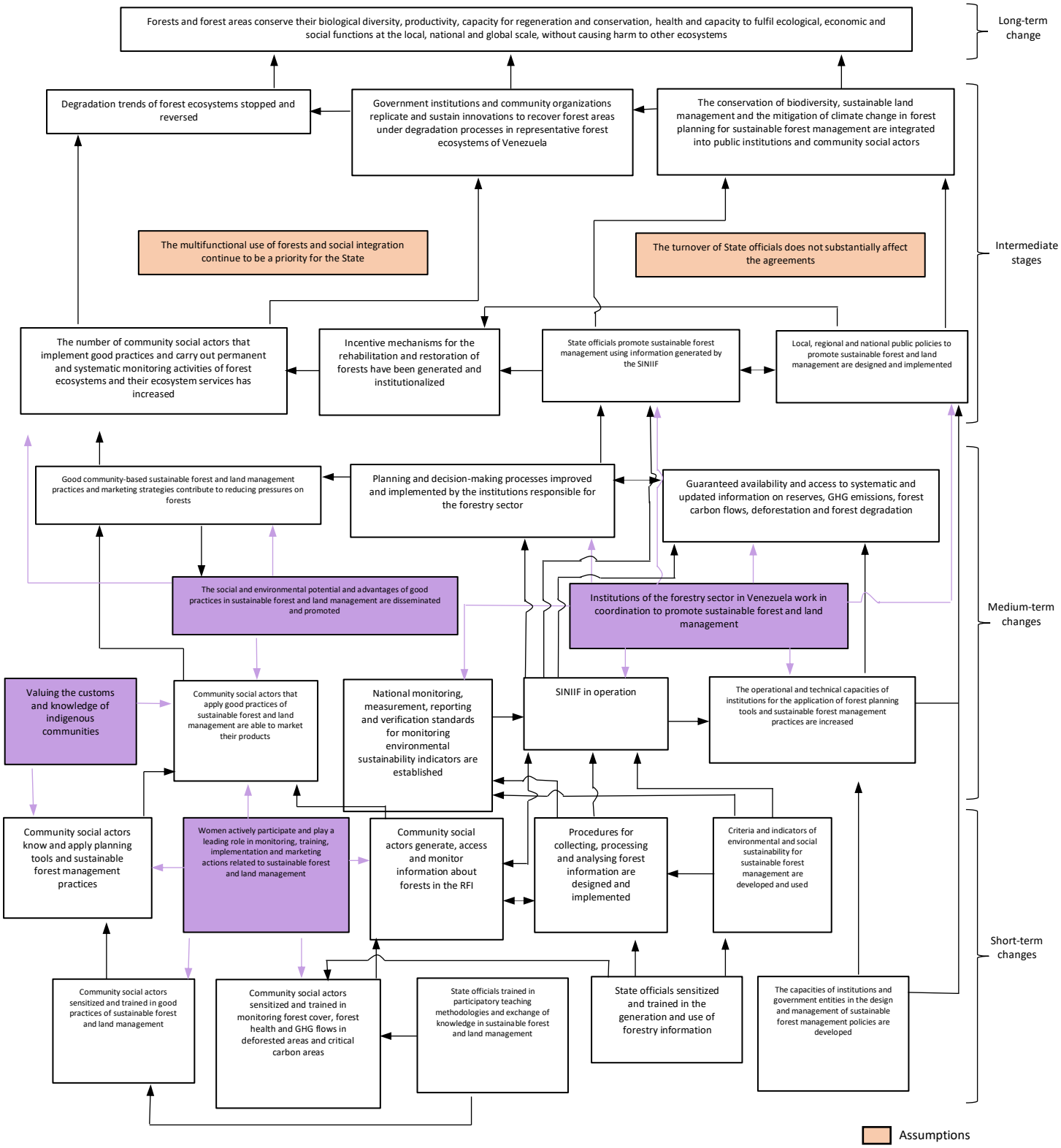
33. The assumptions on which the TOC is based are defined as important external factors or conditions that influence the final realization of the results and impacts of the project. They are, however, beyond the immediate power or influence of the initiative.

34. **Assumptions:** the proposed changes will occur if the turnover of State officials does not substantially affect the agreements reached within the framework of the project. This is also under the assumption that the multifunctional use of forests and social integration continue to be a priority for the government.

35. The drivers are important conditions that, if present, can achieve the project's effects and impacts. The aspects in which the project would (or could) have some degree of control or influence over are detailed in the following point.

36. **Drivers:** the different links of change will be strengthened if: i) women actively participate in the monitoring, training, implementation and marketing of products derived from sustainable forest management; ii) the value of the customs and knowledge of Indigenous communities is recognized and recovered; iii) the potential social and environmental benefits of good practices of sustainable forest management are disseminated and promoted; and iv) the institutions of the forestry sector in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela work together to promote sustainable forest management.

Figure 1. Theory of change adapted to the project



Strategy 1: Capacity development and the promotion of the multifunctional use and management of forests among community social actors

Strategy 2: Research, institutional strengthening and the development of capacities among State officials for forest evaluation and monitoring, and the promotion of multifunctional forest use and management

Source: Based on the TOC reconstructed in the mid-term evaluation.

3. Main findings

3.1 Relevance

Finding 1. Although there were political and economic changes during execution, the project's relevance was maintained. It aligned with the priorities and strategies of the current national government on the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, including sustainable forest management and the participation of rural inhabitants and Indigenous Peoples.

3.1.1 National level

37. The project aligned with Articles 120, 127 and 128 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (National Constituent Assembly, 1999), which had established the protection of the environment and biological diversity by the State. It had also established territorial planning in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and public participation, and the use of natural resources in Indigenous communities through the free, prior and informec consent (FPIC) of the communities.

38. In addition, the project, particularly Components 2 and 3 linked to sustainable forest management and the restoration of degraded areas, is framed within the strategic guidelines of the Homeland Plan 2025 (Presidency of the Republic, 2019) – especially Objective 5 on preserving life on the planet and the salvation of the human species through the rational, optimal and sustainable use of natural resources. This also involves the establishment of a sustainable forest management policy that includes Indigenous Peoples in forest management plans, among other aspects. Moreover, the project found support in the current legal framework on forest conservation, the rights of Indigenous Peoples and communities, and the formation of socioproductive organizations of communal social property. Among these regulatory instruments is the Forest Law (National Assembly, 2013), the Organic Law of Indigenous Peoples and Communities (National Assembly, 2015) and the Organic Law of the Communal Economic System (National Assembly, 2010).

39. The project also aligned with the National Reforestation Plan (Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, 2022), to which it contributed to meet the reforestation goal. This was done through: its plant production activities in nurseries; technical training in the production of vegetative material; and the establishment of seed trees for multipurpose forests. It is important to highlight that the forestry sector constitutes one of the main drivers ("forestry engine") to boost the national economy.

40. In addition, the project was consistent with the Management Plan and Regulation of Use of the RFI (Presidency of the Republic, 2004) in terms of its three guidelines. These aimed at: enhancing the RFI in terms of protection, conservation, and the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources; defining compatibility with the RFI objectives; and encouraging active participation among its inhabitants with their support for project management and monitoring. This plan was the basis for the creation of the Forest Planning and Management Plan (POMF, by its Spanish acronym) in Unit V of the RFI, and the forest management and operational plans in the areas under alliance with the Tukupu Direct Communal Social Property Company (EPSDC, by its Spanish acronym).

41. Further, the project aligned with the biodiversity conservation policy within the Biological Diversity Management Law (National Assembly, 2008), which had established Article 41 on

the importance of compiling or updating information on biological diversity. Here, there is an emphasis on species that are vulnerable, threatened or in danger of extinction. Article 28 also had established the promotion of Indigenous community participation in the conservation of biological diversity. The project generated inventories of flora and fauna in the RFI, including its conservation status and the identification of species at risk. It also promoted actions for the conservation of the harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) with the Kariña community.

42. This national framework remained in force during project implementation. This means that the project maintained its relevance. However, political and economic changes occurred that required the application of adaptive measures. These are addressed in the adaptive management section.

3.1.2 Local level

Finding 2. The project addressed the needs of the Indigenous communities involved. This included improving their livelihoods through food production on their farming plots, and the direct and large-scale use of their forest resources for the benefit of their own communities.

43. All representatives from the five interviewed Indigenous communities stated that the project met their needs, especially those linked to their means of subsistence. This involved food production on their farming plots, which is the land where they grow their food for self-consumption and the sale of surplus production. In particular, the project trained them in establishing agroforestry systems, using fruit trees chosen by the communities. Through an alliance with the International Organization for Migration, they were provided with vegetable seeds to be planted on the farming plot and basic equipment to improve the production of cassava bread, which is one of their main foods. The project also addressed the need to strengthen their capacities in sustainable forest management to carry out forest restoration and take advantage of their forest resources through the Tukupu EPSDC, which is owned by the Indigenous communities that will directly benefit from the economic and social resources that are generated.

Finding 3. The project maintained its alignment with the GEF-5 focal areas – especially Objective 2 of the Biodiversity strategy, Objective 2 of the Land Degradation strategy, Objective 5 of the Climate Change strategy, and Objectives 1 and 2 the Sustainable Forest Management and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+) strategy.

44. The proposed regulations on environmental and social safeguards, the project's training for both officials and beneficiaries, and the proposals for the commercialization of timber and non-timber products aligned with Objective 2 of the GEF Biodiversity strategy. This involved strengthening the capacities of the public sector in the management and regulation of biodiversity use, as well as supporting the production of biodiversity-friendly goods and services and the proposal of relevant regulations. In addition, the good practices transferred for sustainable forest management and the use of technologies and information systems provided by the project aligned with Objective 2 of the Land Degradation strategy. As a whole, these actions and results of the project also contributed to the conservation and promotion of carbon reserves. This is why they aligned with Objective 5 of the Climate Change strategy and Objectives 1 and 2 of the Sustainable Forest Management and REDD+ strategy, including the certification of timber and verification of the supply chain.

Finding 4. The project aligned with FAO strategies and priorities at the country, regional and global levels to support national forestry policy, the development of rural societies, the sustainable use of biodiversity, and sustainable and resilient agriculture.

45. During the design and execution stage, the project aligned with the 2013–2016 FAO Country Programming Framework for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (FAO, 2013), which was extended until the end of 2022. Among the national priorities established by the Country Programming Framework in terms of climate change adaptation, FAO would provide risk management and environmental conservation in order to strengthen government entities linked to the implementation of the Forest Law and the formulation of the National Forestry Policy. The project contributed to this priority, including its proposal of a presidential decree for forestry co-management. In addition, the strengthening of national capacities was prioritized for the establishment of agroforestry systems and multiple-use plantations in poor communities. This aligned with the agroforestry work with Indigenous communities in the RFI.

46. At the regional level, the project aligned with the Prosperous and Inclusive Rural Societies initiative. This includes programmes on family farming and the Hand-in-Hand initiative as part of the overall objective of promoting economic development together with the sustainable use of biodiversity and social inclusion. It also aligned with the Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture initiative. It is important to highlight the project's work on the farming plots of the Indigenous communities. This promoted the production of various foods – the surpluses of which can be sold at the Kariña market.

47. At the global level, the project aligned with the 2022–2031 FAO Strategic Framework. This identifies a key challenge of ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and habitat restoration. In addition, the project is consistent with the better environment principle, which focuses on protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of ecosystems.

48. The rating for the relevance criteria is **Highly Satisfactory**.

3.2 Effectiveness

3.2.1 Contribution to project objectives

49. The project achieved its overall environmental objective by integrating biodiversity conservation into forest management through the characterization of flora and fauna, the identification of species at risk and the restoration of degraded areas in the RFI. In addition, it integrated sustainable land management through the design and implementation of integrated forest management plans with reduced impact. It also incorporated climate change mitigation by estimating carbon stocks and flows and identifying carbon hotspots, as well as avoiding emissions and facilitating carbon sequestration through project actions in the RFI.

50. It also achieved its development objective by supporting government institutions to develop an information system which, once operational and strengthened, will allow for informed decision-making on forest management and the development of regulatory instruments and capacities to establish participatory forest governance. In addition, it supported the empowerment of Indigenous communities through the generation of capacities for better food production and forest restoration and the formation of the first indigenous forestry company (Tukupu EPSDC).

51. The most important project achievements by component are described in the following points, as well as the factors that facilitated their realization and those that hindered it. The details of the achievements related to each output and outcome of the project are presented in the results matrix (see Appendix 5).

3.2.2 Component 1. National Integrated Forest Information System

Finding 5. The project improved the functional capabilities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism through the development of tools and the generation of information for national forestry M&E. This allowed for the M&E of 4 613 431 ha of ecosystems. The knowledge and valuation of biodiversity associated with forests and critical carbon areas also improved. This was included in the POMF of Unit V of the RFI.

Finding 6. The SINIIF was developed, which is one of the main outputs of this component. It contains relevant information on forests. However, most of it is limited to the RFI, so statistical inferences have yet to be made at the national level. The system is functioning, but not as fully as anticipated in the PRODOC.

52. Regarding compliance with Outcome 1.1, there was an improvement in the functional capacities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism in terms of national forest M&E. This is because it now has thematic maps of biodiversity and methodologies and procedures that facilitate the M&E of 4 613 431 ha of ecosystems in the RFI, on xerophytic lands and in mangroves.

53. In general, most of the outputs from this component were achieved satisfactorily – except for Output 1.1.1 in the SINIIF. This was developed and is functioning, but not as fully as anticipated in the PRODOC since migration and management at the central level by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism is still pending. Currently, the SINIIF contains information generated by the project and extracted from other sources. The information relevant to climate change mitigation is mainly limited to the RFI and other ecosystems. Therefore, the SINIIF does not have information to make decisions at the national level. It is also important to note that, since the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism will be the administrator of the SINIIF, the project improved its technological capacity by preparing a room and equipping it with computers and a server to host the SINIIF and enable the processing of satellite images. It also provided training for the personnel who will be responsible for managing the system.

54. Another output worth highlighting in Component 1 is the proposed methodology for updating and monitoring national forest cover by using images from remote sensors (Output 1.1.2). This was published through the FAO Publications Workflow System (FAO, 2021). It is considered that the use of these digital forest monitoring systems represented an important step in establishing robust methodological bases which, through some adjustments, could eventually support their use at the national level. Output 1.1.6, which involved the design and implementation of a participatory monitoring mechanism in the RFI, was satisfactorily completed and had a solid conceptual foundation based on consultation with different, relevant sources of information. Some areas for improvement were identified in the proposed mechanism linked to the methodology used and its implementation, as well as in the material generated. These are detailed in the lessons learned section. Outputs 1.1.3, 1.1.4 and 1.1.5 were 100 percent achieved and provided a robust methodological basis for the M&E of forest ecosystems.

55. On Outcome 1.2, it was observed that the knowledge and valuation of the biodiversity associated with forests and critical carbon areas were also improved. This knowledge was included in the update of the POMF of Unit V of the RFI. This plan includes data and information that characterizes forest health with measures for the conservation of biodiversity and the valorization of ecosystem products and services. Community participation in decision-making was also highlighted and guidelines for forest operations plans were included.

56. Additionally, the outputs related to this outcome (Outputs 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3) were fully achieved. Together, this provided the methodological bases to integrate the POMF and generate information for the SINIIF.

57. Among the factors that facilitated the achievements of the outputs of Component 1 is the participation of research institutions such as IFLA and researchers from various universities like the University of the Andes. The broad participation of Indigenous communities in participatory monitoring is also highlighted.

58. Project design presents a challenge that needs to be improved since the system could have been developed in the first year of project execution. According to the interviews, this was unrealistic due to the number of tasks for that year, such as the hiring and formation of the project team and the development and implementation of protocols and methodologies to compile the information that would feed it. This included the conceptualization and development of the system per se. Another challenge was the lack of updated knowledge and capabilities of staff from the National Centre for Research and Development in Free Technologies who were responsible for the development of the SINIIF and the project website. This delayed output achievement and led to the hiring of external consultants to continue system development in 2022. Other challenges, which apply to all project components, were hyperinflation and the foreign exchange deficit. This caused delays in the availability of resources for the execution of activities.

3.2.3 Component 2. Strengthening capacities and innovative instruments for sustainable forest management

Finding 7. The project estimated direct emissions avoided of 100 776 06 tCO_2eq, even though the established goal was not met. However, 34 054 940.6 tCO_2eq of indirect emissions avoided were estimated. This significantly exceeded the goal. In addition, a total area of 167 320 ha was covered under management and co-management plans. A technical standard was proposed and people were trained on these topics, but capacity development cannot be generalized for all those who received training.

Finding 8. Due to design issues, Outcome 2.2 was partially assessed and the fulfilment of Output 2.2.2 could not be assessed. In addition, there were indicators that included targets with several subtargets. This also made it difficult to assess their fulfilment.

59. Outcome 2.1 included two goals, which refer to the number of people trained and the strengthening of the capacities of government personnel and Indigenous communities in forest management and co-management. Regarding the first of these, the goal was almost met in terms of the number of people trained. However, it is important to mention that the systematization of the training information carried out by the project was not the most appropriate and complicated the assessment of progress. This is discussed in greater detail in the M&E section.

60. Regarding capacity building, the project did not monitor its level of achievement. However, as a result of the evaluation, it is noted that some people perceive that their capabilities were developed. According to the results of the interview questionnaire, the majority of respondents mentioned that the training activities were very useful. This is mainly because they had strengthened or updated their knowledge. Others indicated that the activities were very useful because they could then apply their new knowledge to their work area. For example, one participant noted: "They allowed me to actively participate in the design of a proposal for financing (the Imataca Environmental Fund)."

61. This is consistent with the interviewed public officials from ENFORESTAL and CONARE, who indicated that their capabilities, both technical and functional, were developed by the project. One interviewed official said: "The level of learning and interaction tools are excellent (…) this is a contribution to our professional growth." Through field visits to the Indigenous communities, the nurseries developed by Indigenous Peoples and their forest restoration activities were observed, as well as the agroforestry practices on their farming plots. However, these observations cannot be generalized for all training participants. This is because the evidence does not have statistical significance to carry out an extrapolation. It is not possible to indicate that all participants developed their capabilities, which means that the goal was only partially met.

62. The second goal achieved since the project – related to the area under management and co-management plans – covered an area of 167 320 ha. However, the similarity of this indicator with the goal of Outcome 1.2 complicated the assessment of the level of achievement of Outcome 2.1. This is analysed in more detail in the design section.

63. In relation to Outcome 2.2, a design problem was also noted for one of its goals. This was generated during the updating of the results framework since the description of the result was not consistent with its indicator and goal. The description of the result refers to having a national programme for the application of sustainability standards, while one of its indicators and its goal focus on having a demonstration area in which sustainability standards are applied. The goal also included participatory monitoring actions, which would be carried out under Output 2.2.2. However, this output could not be assessed. It is appropriate to mention that, although the project did not generate the programme, it did make a proposal for a Strategic Plan for Sustainable Forest Management. This seeks to generate a favourable institutional environment for the application of the technical standard that is described in the following points. However, the plan has yet to be socialized or approved by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism.

64. In addition, it is important to highlight the avoided direct and indirect emissions that were reported in the other goal of Outcome 2.2. Based on the use of the forest reserve carried out in 2017 on 1 668 ha, the project estimated that 100 776.06 tCO_2eq of direct emissions were avoided. The Catalán methodology (2015) was used to assess this. The goal, however, was not met. Regardless, it is highlighted that the intensity of production was lower than expected, reaching 6.74 m^3 per hectare compared to the 10.08 m^3 per hectare proposed in the PRODOC. For its part, the indirect emissions goal was exceeded, with an estimate of 34 054 940.6 tCO_2eq avoided in an area of 149 832 ha that were conserved.

65. In addition, this result highlights the creation of the technical standard on criteria and indicators for socioenvironmental sustainability (Output 2.2.1) in sustainable forest management. This is relevant to the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism since it

establishes the bases for the certification of timber and non-timber forest products. The technical standard is in the review and approval process. The standard contains five criteria and 560 associated indicators, which can be refined once experience with their application is gained.

66. It was not possible to assess compliance with Output 2.2.2 since it was difficult for the Evaluation Team to discern what achievements could be attributed to this output and which to Output 1.1.6 – which also includes participatory monitoring. This is because the project generated shared documents and actions. Therefore, the achievements on this topic were attributed to Output 1.1.6.

67. Outcome 2.3 was partially fulfilled by creating, through the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, a platform for interinstitutional dialogue and coordination called the Forestry Cabinet. This had more than 15 institutions, but evidence (documents and interviews) was available for only 6 of these. This indicated the development of their technical and functional capabilities. This platform is led by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism to promote the country's forestry engine. Nine out of ten agreements were also created between the government entities that make up the cabinet and the universities (Output 2.3.2). These alliances are important for the sustainability of achievements, as discussed in the sustainability section.

Figure 2. Tree marked to ensure its permanence in the harvesting area for seed generation

Finding 9. The project generated relevant co-benefits such as the creation of the first indigenous forestry company, Tukupu EPSDC, in 2019. This began forestry production in the granted areas in February 2023 through project support. Another co-benefit was the proposal for a Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System, which is a public policy proposal for the application of co-management at the national level.

68. A relevant co-benefit was generated under Component 2. This involved the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC in 2019. In fact, this is the country's first indigenous forestry company led by women. Currently, it has two concessions granted through a strategic partnership with the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and ENFORESTAL (co-management) that cover 54 403.12 ha of the RFI. At the time of this terminal evaluation (February 2023), the

Tukupu EPSDC had begun developing 1 000 ha through the signing of a contract with a private company, and they already have a buyer for the timber. The project, besides supporting the creation of this company, developed its two operational plans for forestry production (Output 2.1.2). Only one, however, is being implemented. The project also developed the pilot co-management framework (Output 2.1.3). It also signed a letter of agreement with the company to advance forest restoration work in the RFI and to facilitate the creation and operation of nurseries. Also, it donated ten motorcycles to the Tukupu EPSDC to support the mobility of its members and other members of Indigenous communities in case of an emergency. However, this use is not clear to some community members, who have yet to be clearly informed about their purpose. The project also repaired two trucks that now transport members of the Indigenous communities to the city of Tumeremo, where they sell products from their farming plots at the Casa Kariña market. This was created as a result of the project. Further, the construction of a carpentry workshop is underway at Casa Kariña for the production and sale of timber products.

69. Another relevant co-benefit generated by the project was the proposal of a Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System. This is a public policy proposal to implement co-management at the national level in forest areas inhabited by Indigenous communities. The proposal was presented to the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and is under review.

Figure 3. Some of the women who manage the Tukupu EPSDC company

70. Factors that influenced the achievements of Component 2 were: i) the existence of a legal framework that promotes the participation of Indigenous communities in forest management plans; and ii) previous work carried out by ENFORESTAL with the affected Indigenous communities that had already generated awareness about forest conservation and management and the intention to establish an indigenous forestry company. Among the challenges faced by the project were cultural differences and varying means of subsistence that exist among the ten affected Indigenous communities. The project did not consider this. The participation of some communities in sustainable forest management activities was limited. The COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of fuel were other challenges that led to virtual training sessions. Also, a challenge faced by this terminal evaluation was the impossibility of assessing the fulfilment of two outcomes and one output due to design problems.

3.2.4 Component 3. Restoration, conservation, and sustainable forest and land management in areas affected by forest and soil degradation processes

Finding 10. A total of 1 559 ha of forest were restored through reforestation, agroforestry systems, analogue forestry and passive recovery. This led to the sequestration of 517 377.60 tCO_2eq in different areas of the country.

Finding 11. Progress was made in the proposal and implementation of alternatives for the marketing of timber products (handicrafts) and non-timber products (Melipona bee honey), but progress is still incipient. A proposal for a financing framework for non-timber products was also made but not implemented.

71. The design of Outcome 3.1 presented areas for improvement. These are described in detail in the results matrix (see Appendix 5) and in the M&E section. However, an estimate of the project's level of fulfilment was done to make the work visible. In this regard, it was found that the project almost met its goal in terms of the number of people trained. For Outcome 2.1, however, capacity strengthening was not measured. Through interviews and field observation, evidence was found of the strengthening of capacities of some participants in the training activities. However, this evidence was insufficient to support the conclusion that all trainees had strengthened their capabilities. Compliance with the result was therefore partial. Among the outputs in Outcome 3.1, the methodological base and strategy to carry out forest restoration were developed (Outputs 3.1.1 and 3.1.2), and the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers was integrated and put into operation. This was latent during the evaluation due to the country's socioeconomic conditions.

72. The project reported a sequestration of 571 903.40 tCO_2eq over an area of 1 559 ha (Outcome 3.2 and Output 3.2.1) due to restorations through reforestation, analogue forestry, agroforestry and passive restoration. This slightly exceeded the goal of 512 985.68 tCO_2eq on 1 440 ha.

73. Other important outputs to highlight that were almost completely achieved correspond to studies to assess the marketing potential of timber and non-timber products of the RFI (Outputs 3.2.2 and 3.2.3) and the proposal of four community marketing plans, some of which were implemented (Output 3.2.4). As for Output 3.2.5 on financing, this plan was designed but still needs to be implemented. However, other funding proposals have emerged, such as a microfinance proposal for the Kariña communities. These are moving forward positively.

Figure 4. Restored nursery in the Waraira Repano National Park, Caracas

74. Factors that promoted the achievements of Component 3 were: i) the implementation of the National Reforestation Plan by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism; and ii) the broad participation of Indigenous communities in seed collection, plant production and restoration actions. The main challenges were restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of fuel, which affected the logistical aspects of the project activities, and the limited capacities of some government agencies like ENFORESTAL and Misión Árbol in complying with commitments from the letters of agreement.

3.2.5 Progress towards the expected impact

Finding 12. Changes expected in the short-term were generated with some areas for improvement. Some changes expected in the medium-term are now evident. This indicates progress in achieving the project's expected impact in the long term.

75. In accordance with the TOC, the project is on track to obtain its expected impact. It focuses on promoting biodiversity conservation and regeneration capacity in forests, while generating ecological, social and economic benefits at the local, national and global levels. The project achieved almost all of the expected changes in the short term, including the generation of knowledge from research and awareness raising, and capacity development among community social actors and government officials on sustainable forest management. This was generated through the application of tools like participatory monitoring and good practices on sustainable forest management and restoration. However, the application of some of these practices still requires the guidance of an expert, for example, measurements on trees to determine carbon fluxes and stocks. Also, one driver that was not fully realized was the valorization of Indigenous community knowledge and customs due to the lack of an expert to lead the process.

76. For their part, some changes that should occur in the medium term which, according to the TOC should be evident upon project closure, were realized as a result of the progress achieved through the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC. Therefore, it is expected that the good practices learned about sustainable forest management will be applied and the environmental, social and economic benefits generated will be obtained. However, it was also expected that the SINIIF would be operational by project closure. This would increase the operational and technical capacity of the institutions in the application of tools for sustainable forest and land management. In this regard, the development and

strengthening of the SINIIF must continue so that it can generate the necessary inputs for the design and implementation of planning and decision-making processes by the institutions responsible for the forestry sector.

77. Based on the achievements described, it can be noted that most of the expected global environmental benefits were obtained. Others, however, were not achieved. Among the benefits obtained are: a better understanding of the stability, integrity and value of forest ecosystems, particularly the RFI; improving capacities and methodologies to monitor degradation, deforestation and land use changes and their impacts in the RFI, on xerophytic land and in mangroves; the contribution to the conservation of habitats of endemic forest species; the restoration of 1 559 ha of forest; the Tukupu EPSDC's reduced impact forestry harvest plan which, if correctly applied, will also contribute to generating local and global environmental benefits through the conservation of habitats; improvement in the perception of the value of forests due to information from the SINIIF; and the proposal for a national forestry co-management policy that has yet to be approved. It is also expected that, in the medium and long term, the SINIIF will contribute to improving information on forest ecosystems at the national level.

78. Targets that were linked to other expected global environmental benefits were replaced and, consequently, not achieved due to the modification of the results framework after the mid-term evaluation. These benefits were the stabilization of populations of forest species through restoration actions, and the development and implementation of a national programme of environmental and social safeguards for the production of timber and non-timber products. However, only a proposed strategic plan for sustainable forest management was developed.

79. The rating for the effectiveness criteria is **Highly Satisfactory**.

3.3 Efficiency

Finding 13. The direct implementation modality was adequate with mostly efficient project management. This happened despite delays that led to the project's extension and with the implementation of adaptive measures that managed, as much as possible, to mitigate the effects of important challenges faced during execution.

80. The Venezuelan Government does not have a roadmap to direct non-reimbursable resources directly to the ministries. This means that the direct implementation modality of the project was the most appropriate. With the Operational Partners Implementation Modality there was a risk that the resources would remain in central banks and not reach the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. However, most of the project's resources were concentrated in government institutions through the signing of letters of agreement with FAO.

81. It is appropriate to mention that this is the first project executed by FAO Venezuela and financed by the GEF. Therefore, the central offices at FAO headquarters in Rome provided training to FAO Venezuela for the administration of this type of project, which was effective. However, the project faced important challenges, specifically those linked to the context of economic and sociopolitical instability in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In fact, these led to hyperinflation, the depreciation of the local currency (VES) against the USD and a constant turnover of high-level officials.

82. According to administration at FAO Venezuela, exchange losses of 1.13 percent are estimated. However, the project was generally executed efficiently since the resources were sufficient to allow for the project's execution. This was achieved through cost savings. For example, USD 70 000 were saved in the tender process for the development of the carpentry workshop.

83. The project was executed over a longer period than anticipated (an additional 18 months). It was extended on three occasions due to the delay in the achievement of outputs identified in the mid-term evaluation and following this review. An important cause for this delay was the change of Minister in 2018. This significantly delayed the signing of letters of agreement and, therefore, the execution of resources. Another important cause was the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 6). However, as will be seen later, the implementation of adaptive measures managed to reduce the impact of these challenges as much as possible.

3.3.1 Institutional arrangements and interinstitutional coordination

Finding 14. The institutional arrangements were mostly effective in achieving the project results. However, some areas for improvement in the implementation arrangements are identified due to limitations in promoting a more active participation of the technical staff of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and a greater presence on the ground.

84. FAO served as the implementing and executing agency, and the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism was the executing partner. According to the implementation arrangements, the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism was responsible for the execution of project activities through letters of agreement – the benefits and complications of which are addressed in the quality of execution section – and a project steering committee was created to oversee and coordinate implementation. The participation of representatives from the Kariña communities in the committee meetings is highlighted. According to the minutes, the project steering committee met nine times and fulfilled its assigned responsibilities regarding strategic decision-making (for example, facilitating the approval of letters of agreement and approving requests for project extensions) and approval of the annual workplans and their respective budgets.

85. A PMU was also established as part of the implementation arrangements. This included a technical coordinator for the project and technical managers for Components 1, 2 and 3, whose technical and operational capacity was recognized in the interviews. For example, one interviewee said: "The technical capacity of the team and the leadership of the technical coordination greatly facilitated progress in the project." Even so, according to the interviews, these arrangements can be strengthened since closer interaction with the relevant areas of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism is limited. For example, there was no technical space (technical committee) in which officials from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism could participate in technical discussions during the development of outputs. This would have helped to apply and strengthen the knowledge acquired during training. In fact, this is because they only received the finished outputs for review. For example, the information technology department of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism was not involved in the development of the SINIIF. Another interviewee said: "As an institution, we would like to have greater participation." Also, the on-the-ground presence of officials from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism was limited. The lack of PMU personnel with a constant presence in the intervention area was also recognized. This meant that no local staff could provide follow-up to the project activities since the PMU was based in Caracas.

86. After the mid-term evaluation, additional staff were hired to support M&E. The M&E responsibilities were then divided among several people, even though this affected project monitoring. More details are in the M&E section.

3.3.2 Adaptive management

Finding 15. The project implemented adaptive measures or actions that were generally effective in facing the economic, political and health challenges.

87. The project showed great resilience given the national political and economic context that prevailed during its execution. Indeed, there was hyperinflation and depreciation of the local currency, as well as mobility restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The adaptive measures that generated this resilience are outlined in the following points.

i. The co-financing provided by the executing partners focused on supporting the planned project activities and not affecting their execution. This was due to a delay in disbursements and the receipt of a smaller amount of money due to the exchange rate. This co-financing allowed project activities to continue.

ii. The design and implementation of the General Strategy on Synergy and Transversality to facilitate the fulfilment of several related outputs, virtual training courses, and sessions in the RFI for a longer duration (three months) addressed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

iii. Researchers were hired directly due to the complexity of signing contracts with universities.

iv. The project team adhered to the FAO Volunteer Programme to continue activities during the six-month break. The team was entitled to the break since they had already worked 900 continuous days.

v. Letters of agreement were prepared with increasingly detailed guidelines on outputs to be delivered. This was due to the difficulties of some government agencies to fully comply with their commitments and the high turnover of officials at the strategic level.

vi. The administrative department generated savings.

88. The rating for the efficiency criteria is **Satisfactory**.

3.4 Sustainability

3.4.1 Institutional sustainability

3.4.1.1 National level

Finding 16. There was a high degree of appropriation of relevant project outputs by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its affiliated entities. This is because these institutions had significant budget cuts and the project contributed to the fulfilment of some of their policies.

89. The project's achievements had a high level of appropriation by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. This is due to the project's contribution to ensuring compliance with the policies on forestry, Indigenous Peoples and biological diversity, and the reduction of ministerial budgets given the country's economic and sociopolitical instability. For

example, the methodologies for calculating carbon emissions and absorptions[4] and the information from the SINIIF are being used to prepare the Third National Communication on Climate Change and the First Report on Transparency linked to the update of the GHG inventory and carbon sequestration. Project inputs also contributed to supporting the formation of the Sustainability Fund and the National Climate Change Fund, and to creating the National Observatory on the Climate Crisis. The Mangrove Restoration Manual is also being used to train coast guard members under a project executed by the United Nations Development Programme.

90. In addition, projects in progress or in the conceptualization phase of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism will continue some of the actions initiated by the project and will use and strengthen some of the outputs generated. For example, the Integrated Management of Multiple-use Landscapes with High Conservation Value for the Sustainable Development of the Venezuelan Andean Region (GCP/VEN/020/GFF) project, which began execution in 2022 and is financed by the GEF, will use and strengthen the SINIIF. At the same time, it will continue to strengthen the capacities of officials from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and use the same web platform generated for this project. Also, it is expected that the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Caroní River Basin project, which is in the design process, will use and adapt the project methodology for the use of demonstration forests, as well as use the SINIIF and strengthen the institutional capacities of the Ministry.

91. The technical norm on environmental and social safeguards will not be approved or institutionalized. This is identified as an institutional risk. In fact, it was not achieved during execution. It is expected that adjustments to the system will have to be carried out by external information technology staff. This is because the information technology staff from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism was not involved in the development of the SINIIF and only reviewed its test versions. This could create a dependency on external support for the continuous improvement of the SINIIF.

Finding 17. The project contributed to strengthening the organizational capacities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its affiliated entities, and to generating a favourable environment for its implementation.

92. The project contributed to improving the equipment and materials of the government institutions with which letters of agreement were signed. For example, CONARE indicated that it required tools for reforestation and that there was a need to improve its nurseries. In this regard, seven nurseries were reactivated and their plant production increased from 90 000 to 2.5 million seedlings. One of the interviewees said: "The contribution of the project gave us a much needed boost (…) we increased the number of nurseries and plants (…) last year. We provided 40 percent of the plants in the National Reforestation Plan."

93. Further, the project facilitated agreements between the entities related to the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism to promote the exchange of information and with universities to strengthen technical capacities (further details are provided in Output 2.3.2 of the effectiveness section). In addition, the project led to a proposal on a technical norm

[4] This includes the carbon reservoir study of the project regarding emissions and absorptions in the RFI. Indeed, this repesents an unprecedented approach in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that can be applied to other forest areas in the country with the necessary adaptations and adjustments.

of environmental and social safeguards for sustainable forest management and a policy proposal for co-management.

94. Therefore, the project contributed to strengthening the capacities of the involved organizations by supplying equipment and improving their infrastructure. Also, it contributed to generating a favourable environment through the proposal of the aforementioned technical standard, the proposal of a presidential decree on co-management and the generation of interinstitutional agreements. There is evidence that some interviewees who responded to the questionnaire recognized the development of their capacities in sustainable forest management and co-management. Also, interviewees from ENFORESTAL and CONARE highlighted the strengthening of their individual capacities. Further, direct observation showed the application of skills acquired by some families in the Indigenous communities affected by the project.

3.4.2 Social sustainability

Finding 18. The level of appropriation of the project's achievements was high in some communities and low in others. This was due to the different means of subsistence in these communities and their cultural differences.

95. As indicated in the relevance section, the project addressed the subsistence needs of the Indigenous communities of the RFI through agroforestry activities implemented on the farming plots of Indigenous families. This gave them the possibility of producing varied foods and contributed to their food security. It also allowed them to sell their surpluses at the Kariña market and generate income to buy essential goods, such as salt and soap. One interviewee said: "Being able to grow their own food is a great advance (...) the Indigenous Peoples have their farming plots where they grow their food." Also, the carpentry workshop was of great importance for the communities. Another interviewee said: "[The Indigenous Peoples in the course] have a collective vision. They came to learn and teach their community."

Figure 5. Wooden chairs made by Indigenous Peoples trained in the carpentry course

96. The project's promoted practices that relate to these topics had a high degree of appropriation among the Kariña communities of the Tumeremo-Bochinche Highway Axis, which are deeper in the forest (Matupo I and II, La Esperanza, and Botanamo communities). There was also the transfer of knowledge acquired between people and relatives from the same community. One of the interviewees from this area said: "The project has been very good." In this regard, no risk was identified that these practices could be abandoned once the project ends. However, the degree of appropriation of communities that are not in this

area – which are located on the periphery of the RFI and include members of other cultures and Creole people – was low. This is because the subsistence of these communities in peripheral areas is more linked to mining. As one interviewee pointed out: "Here, many people work in the mines, selling cigarettes or food." Therefore, the lack of continuity in applying the practices learned in these communities represents a high risk.

97. In addition, seed collection, nursery creation, degraded forest restoration and the revaluation of medicinal plants generated a strong sense of belonging in the Kariña community of Bochinche. This was due to closer links between these communities and the forest. Regarding forest restoration, one interviewee said: "We want to have the trees back like they were before." The risk in these communities is the lack of monitoring and maintenance of restorations due to the lack of coordination and support for these activities. In peripheral communities, this risk is greater because their subsistence does not depend entirely on the forest. In this regard, officials interviewed from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO mentioned the need to strengthen the capacities of Indigenous communities and provide close support. For example, one of the interviewees said: "The process of assimilating new knowledge takes time."

98. Other knowledge and practices such as biomass measurement, geopositioning techniques, and the establishment of plots and forest censuses were incorporated by a smaller number of people. They are mainly linked to the EPSDC Tupuku.

Finding 19. The Tukupu EPSDC represents the means to ensure the sustainability of the sustainable forest management practices promoted by the project. However, given its recent creation and being the first indigenous forestry company, it still lacks the capability to ensure compliance with all of its administrative, legal, environmental, technical and social responsibilities.

99. The registration of the EPSDC Tupuku as a socially owned company and legal entity, and the government grant of 54 403 ha of the RFI for its use, was a significant achievement for the sustainability of project results. This involved important social benefits for Indigenous communities. In this regard, one interviewee said: "The idea is that they [private forestry and mining companies] do not harm our fishing, our farming plots." Added to its sustainability is the agreement reached with the national government for the availability of fuel to carry out forestry activities, and the agreement between the EPSDC Tupuku and the National Experimental University of Guayana to continue strengthening capacities, especially in carpentry. The production of Melipona bee honey will also provide continuity to the marketing of forest products. This activity will be supported by the Small Grants Programme from the United Nations Development Programme.

100. According to the operational plan, the EPSDC Tupuku will: comply with the project's promoted actions to ensure sustainable forest management for forestry activities in the RFI; carry out a research component to ensure a balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects; monitor and protect the project area; and implement a social component for improving the life quality of the inhabitants and strengthening interinstitutional ties for the provision of basic services to the community (for example, health care and education).

101. There is a risk that the EPSDC Tupuku alone will not be able to fulfil all of these responsibilities. This is due to the company's recent creation, its still basic capabilities, the key responsibilities acquired and the fact that the generation of economic resources will be significant. Indeed, this risk could lead to social and institutional conflict. For example,

during the evaluation mission, the Evaluation Team learned of some disputes between the Matupo I and Matupo II communities due to the start of forest harvesting. Also, in the interviews, a lack of clarity was detected regarding the purpose and use of the goods donated by the project to the Tukupu EPSDC. In particular, this involved the use of ten motorcycles (more details can be found in the description of Component 2 in the effectiveness section).

3.4.3 Financial sustainability

Finding 20. The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related entities are still dependent on external economic resources to provide continuity to some of the project's achievements. For its part, the Tukupu EPSDC will generate sufficient economic resources for its own development.

102. Economic and sociopolitical instability and hyperinflation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reduced the budget allocated to the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. This is why there is a presidential directive to take advantage of non-reimbursable international resources. Although this strategy strengthens the capacities of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, it also generates a dependency on external economic resources for the continuity of the project's results. In fact, this may affect its financial sustainability. The identified risks are as follows: i) the possible lack of monitoring and maintenance of reforestation carried out in the country by institutions dependent on the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, such as CONARE, due to the lack of financial resources; ii) the lack of appropriation, operation and maintenance of the SINIIF; and iii) the lack of monitoring of forestry activities of the Tukupu EPSDC by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. This is because the person in charge of this task is hired on a consultancy basis and the lack of resources could end their contract at any time.

103. However, it is expected that the generation of economic resources by the Tukupu EPSDC will ensure its own economic sustainability and generate sufficient resources for its technical, organizational and administrative strengthening. Also, since ENFORESTAL will receive 5 percent of the timber produced by the company, it will continue providing support for the technical and inspection aspects.

3.4.4 Environmental sustainability

Finding 21. The project created fundamental instruments for the environmental sustainability of forestry production in the RFI. The identified risks involve the possibility of non-compliance given the level of innovation of these instruments and the lack of experience in their application.

104. Since the project's environmental objective is the integration of biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management and climate change mitigation into forest management, its implemented activities had criteria and practices to protect biodiversity and promote the rational use of forest resources. This was mainly reflected in operational plans for forestry production by the Tukupu EPSDC and had a research component that includes, for example, forest monitoring and the restoration of areas degraded by farming plots. The project contributed to raising awareness among Indigenous communities of the conservation of the harpy eagle. They were afraid of this species and identified their nests, which are monitored frequently. One interviewee noted: "Now we have this knowledge, and we will continue using it."

105. Another component of the operational plan is silvicultural. This involves the combination of passive and active management of the natural forest[5] as a sustainable forest management strategy and maintaining the biological diversity of the ecosystem. Also, the forestry harvesting strategy has a reduced impact approach, which seeks a balance between what the Tukupu EPSDC can harvest and the capacity of the forest. The operational plan also includes a component of protection and surveillance to prevent illegal mining and the monitoring of forest fires, among other aspects.

106. Environmental sustainability is considered probable in the RFI. However, there are risks that may affect it. One involves the operational plan, which may not be executed as anticipated. The use of resources is not sustainable. This is due to a lack of strengthening of the technical capacities of the Tukupu EPSDC and limited monitoring by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and ENFORESTAL. During the evaluation mission, it was confirmed that production had begun in the Tukupu I concession, but there was no evidence of formation for the protection and monitoring units.

107. Another risk involves the lack of leadership and coordination in the ten participating Indigenous communities for the monitoring and maintenance of the forest restorations outside the Tukupu EPSDC's concession area. This activity was not reflected in the company's operating plan.

108. The rating for the sustainability criteria is **Moderately Likely**.

3.5 Factors affecting performance

3.5.1 Quality of design and execution

Finding 22. The project design addressed central problems that face the country. The vertical logic presented by its structure allowed for the implementation of its activities to contribute to the fulfilment of its environmental and development objectives.

Finding 23. Areas for improvement in this phase relate to the lack of greater visibility of Indigenous communities and their role in the conservation and sustainable use of forests. In addition, the design and adjustment to the results framework can be improved.

109. The design of the project was carried out through a participatory process in which relevant actors were involved. Among them were entities related to the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, Indigenous communities and universities. This made it possible to identify priority problems in the country. In turn, the project could maintain its relevance. Regarding the structure of the project, its vertical logic ensured that the proposed activities were appropriate to comply with the project outputs and that these were then adequate to achieve the expected results that contribute directly to the fulfilment of the project's environmental and development objectives. In addition, the outcomes and outputs address the barriers identified in the project design phase.

110. There was no robust analysis of the Indigenous communities. This could have been better. For example, the PRODOC indicates that for participatory monitoring, a plan for the distribution of tasks should be developed. Men could take the measurements, and women

[5] Passive management is where only the harvesting of trees in the assigned forest areas is permitted. This is in accordance with the regulation on minimum diametres for cutting with the monitoring of the remaining forest. Active management includes the recovery of affected areas through the establishment of intensive forest plantations or assisted natural regeneration.

could note the measured values. However, since a high percentage of community members – especially women – cannot read or write, the lack of characterization of the affected communities was evident. Also, the role of Indigenous communities as actors of change to strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of the forest was not highlighted in the project design. Another opportunity for improvement involves the lack of an expert in addressing Indigenous communities as part of the project team.

111. The planning of project activities marks another area for improvement. Having an information system like the SINIIF up and running in the project's second year and providing inputs to other outputs (for example, Output 2.1.2 on operational plans) was unrealistic. This is because its creation required hiring the project team and consultants to develop the procedures to collect the information that would feed it, as well as those who would conceptualize and develop the system.

112. The design of the results framework reflects the project's vertical logic, but its structure could be improved. In particular, the results framework in the PRODOC lacked a description of indicators for the outputs or, in some cases, the description was included in the targets column. This made it unclear. Also, for some project outcomes (for example, Outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 2.2), there was no clear relationship between indicator and target. That is, more than one indicator was included for a given outcome. This is because indicators from the monitoring tools were included but with a single target. Also, the PRODOC did not specify the differences and complementarity between similar outputs, as was the case for Outputs 1.1.6 and 2.2.2. This led to the project developing materials and documents that shared both outputs. Therefore, only the achievement of Output 1.1.6 was counted in the evaluation due to difficulty in separating achievements in the two outputs. In addition, the description of Outcome 2.1 includes a target that was not included in the targets column.

113. The results framework was adjusted after the mid-term evaluation. This involved changing indicators and targets for five outcomes. It is noted that some of these changes were due to the late start of the restorations since they focused on the stabilization of forest species populations. This was also difficult to achieve given the short duration of the project. Indicators of the monitoring tools for the Sustainable Forest Management and REDD+ strategy were also exchanged.

114. Although this helped to make the results framework more specific and measurable, it also generated, in some cases, the lack of horizontal logic between the description of the outcome or output and its indicator and target (for example, in Outcomes 1.2, 2.2 and 3.1). The description of Outcome 3.1 was also altered, which focused on generating tools and support documents for restoration and underscored the strengthening of individual capacities. In addition, adjustment to the target generated a similarity with that of Outcome 2.1, which also related to capacity strengthening. This caused the project to link training workshops to both outcomes. In addition, similar indicators were included (for example, between Outcomes 1.2 and 2.1), which caused confusion for the assessment of achievement. Targets with several subtargets were also included. This made estimating their fulfilment more complex (for example, Target 2 of Outcome 2.1). Further, there were still areas for improvement on some outcomes that had multiple indicators with a single target – even after the modification of the results framework.

115. Regarding the project's launch, the initiation workshop was held from 15 to 18 November 2016. This generated important results such as updating the baselines

of eight indicators. Recommendations were also made on the need for experts to support consultations with Indigenous communities and establish appropriate approaches that serve the Indigenous and Creole communities. However, as indicated in the social sustainability section, the project's support to address these recommendations was insufficient since all communities were addressed under the same strategy.

116. Thus, the project began operations in November 2016, eight months after the signing of the cooperation agreement between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO in March 2016. At that time, the project team was hired and received training on implementation processes through letters of agreement.

117. The rating for project design and implementation is Moderately Satisfactory.

3.5.2 Monitoring and evaluation

Finding 24. The project's M&E plan was practical and sufficient to completely monitor the project with baselines and methodological robustness.

3.5.2.1 Design

118. The project's M&E plan met the requirements outlined in the GEF monitoring policy, which provided the necessary elements for a complete M&E of the project. The inclusion of the report on the estimation of avoided emissions and carbon sequestration as an appendix in the PRODOC is highlighted. Its methodological robustness meant that the project could use it to make the same estimates based on the activities. This made it possible to maintain methodological consistency and compare results.

3.5.2.2 Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system

Finding 25. It is highlighted that the M&E plan was almost fully implemented. Reports on most of the monitoring tools were lacking during the mid-term evaluation. The final reports on four of these tools were shared during the terminal evaluation. The report on climate change is still pending.

Finding 26. The project monitoring system was complex. It was based on multiple tools and documents with the participation of several people. The systematization of some results and products was also complex. This made it difficult to assess compliance.

119. During the project's initiation workshop, the M&E plan was presented and validated. The baselines of eight indicators were updated with the most up-to-date information available. However, the aforementioned areas for improvement in the design and implementation section were not identified.

120. The M&E plan was almost fully implemented. The initiation workshop was held and its minutes were prepared and approved. The project's technical coordinator, those responsible for the components and the person responsible for M&E carried out field visits to assess the effect of the work on the ground. Co-financing was monitored and technical reports of the project's relevant results were prepared for publication. The mid-term evaluation was held in May 2020. The project also complied with the reporting of annual and semi-annual progress reports.

121. The implementation of the plan lacked reporting on the monitoring tools for the Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Climate Change focal areas during the mid-term evaluation. This can be improved. The only tool that was reported in that period was the

Sustainable Forest Management and REDD+ strategy, and its final report was also shared during this evaluation. This assessment identified that the tool included general estimates of what the project could achieve in terms of carbon emissions. However, in its final presentation, more precise and robust estimates of what was achieved by the project were shown. In particular, the goal of indirect emissions avoided was significantly exceeded. However, the target of direct emissions avoided was not met. The reporting of direct and indirect emissions must be clearly separated. This is an area for improvement. The tool also showed progress in strengthening the regulatory framework.

122. Monitoring tools in the focal areas of Biodiversity and Land Degradation were shared during the assessment phase of this report. The biodiversity indicators were met. However, for the land degradation tool, the project was expected to cover a larger area with sustainable forest management practices in degraded areas. For its part, the report on the climate change monitoring tool was not shared.

123. In terms of project monitoring, an exclusive and ad hoc monitoring system was not developed for the project, as indicated in the PRODOC. Instead, the FAO Field Programme Management Information System was used. In addition, matrices were prepared in Microsoft Excel sheets to monitor compliance with the letters of agreement, the national consultants and the annual workplan, in which the progress and challenges identified for compliance were reported. The semi-annual progress reports also indicated in their problems or risks section the delays facing each output and outcome and the actions to address them. It is therefore noted that the monitoring of the project, based on multiple tools and documents, was complex.

124. The systematization of information generated by the project was also complex. Although the General Strategy on Synergy and Transversality allowed for the joint development of several activities and advanced the fulfilment of project outputs and outcomes, some of its results were systematized together. This was the case for the systematization of the training, which was linked to several outputs of the same component or other components of the project. In fact, this made it difficult for the Evaluation Team to discern what percentage of a workshop could be counted as capacity building for each output or outcome. Consequently, only workshops that were exclusively linked to an output or outcome were considered in the evaluation. This situation was similar for Outputs 1.1.6 and 2.2.2. Despite different outputs, shared materials and documents were developed. This made it difficult to determine which corresponded to each one.

125. The decision to have one person in charge of M&E, and the communication and dissemination of project information was also considered problematic. Arrangements for the implementation of this type of large project usually include a person specialized in each topic, given the demanding nature of the work required by each of them. Further, after the mid-term evaluation, the project team was strengthened and additional staff were hired. Responsibilities were shared for monitoring activities, so project monitoring was segmented and there was no single repository to receive all of the information generated by the project.

126. In monitoring the project, tasks were carried out that corresponded to other areas like monitoring the letters of agreement and the work of the national consultants. This should have been done by the project's technical managers, in terms of the review of the products

generated, and by those responsible for monitoring the administrative and financial aspects.

127. The allocated M&E budget was sufficient. This is based on interviews and the lack of difficulty in hiring additional personnel to provide support for this area.

128. The rating for M&E is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

3.5.3 Quality of implementation and execution

3.5.3.1 Quality of execution

Finding 27. FAO, as the executing agency, performed adequately on project operation. It also adequately managed and administered its resources, as well as implemented adaptive measures to face project challenges. The identification and reporting of some new risks can be improved.

129. FAO was the executing agency. According to interviews and a review of the relevant documents, FAO operated the project and managed the timber resources adequately. The annual planning of project activities used a results-based management approach, and the hiring of personnel and the acquisition of goods were carried out in accordance with the rules and procedures established by FAO. The PMU, led by the project's technical coordinator, had a group of professionals with vast experience in the topics addressed and a great commitment to the project. Further, its location in the offices of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism facilitated a flow of information with those officials in charge of the areas linked to the project.

130. Risk monitoring by the PMU was carried out through the semi-annual and annual progress reports. However, as mentioned in the section on M&E system implementation, the semi-annual progress reports were used more for monitoring the results framework. New risks were also identified, such as the health risk from the COVID-19 pandemic, which was also reported in the respective annual progress report. However, other risks were not reported. This includes the possible paralysis of the project's execution for six months because the members of the PMU, including the project's technical coordinator, had worked 900 continuous days – warranting a six-month break in accordance with FAO regulations. This was resolved through their hiring as part of the FAO Volunteer Programme for six months.

131. In addition, the extension of the project was not identified as a risk due to the limited capacities of some government agencies in developing the products required (for example, the National Centre for Development and Research in Free Technologies). Although this situation was not reported as a risk, the PMU did implement adaptive measures like the supervision and permanent monitoring of the different products.

132. Another adaptive measure implemented by the project, which was effective in mitigating some effects created by the COVID-19 pandemic, was the implementation of the General Strategy on Synergy and Transversality. This made it possible to address several related outputs simultaneously in the field. In turn, this allowed for the effective fulfilment of some outputs.

133. Although some risks were reported in the semi-annual progress report, there was no follow-up regarding mitigation. Additionally, some risks reported in the semi-annual progress report were not reflected in the annual progress report. This involves the risk of

extending the project execution time due to delays created by administrative and financial processes, including late disbursements and delays of up to a month or more in signing letters of agreement.

Finding 28. The execution of project activities by government institutions was adequate in most cases. This highlights the facilitating role of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. However, in cases where it did not work (for example, limited capacities of some responsible entities), this generated important impacts for the project such as delays in obtaining products to ensure their quality.

134. The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, as executing partner, was in charge of the National Project Directorate and closely monitored the project. It facilitated execution through coordination and fluid communication with those in charge of the relevant technical areas. In addition, it is important to highlight the crucial support for the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC and the granting of a concession of more than 54 000 ha in the RFI for company use. In addition, the Ministry provided its facilities for the establishment of the PMU and coordinated work with other government entities linked to forestry issues.

135. However, as a government entity, it was subject to political changes. This led to changes in management. For example, the person in charge of the Ministry changed five times and the National Project Directorate changed nine times. This high turnover of authorities slowed down the project's progress since it had an impact on decision-making times.

136. When considering changes in the leadership of the National Project Directorate, it is difficult to draw conclusions about its performance. However, based on the current National Project Directorate, it was observed that the management carried out its role of supporting the project's actions within the policy framework of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and coordinated with other government agencies in the forestry sector through the Forestry Cabinet. Although the strategic decisions related to the project were made through the project steering committee and direct consultations with the National Project Directorate, the supervisory role of the project's technical coordinator by the National Project Directorate was rarely exercised. This is because a periodic report with information on the project's progress was not required and the National Project Directorate did not participate frequently in decision-making for daily activities that were relevant to the project.

137. According to the PRODOC, the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related entities would be responsible for the execution of project activities through the signing of letters of agreement with FAO. As mentioned in the sustainability section, this method of execution strengthened the capacities and equipment of some government institutions such as IFLA, the National Parks Institute (INPARQUES, by its Spanish acronym), the National Foundation for Environmental Education (FUNDAMBIENTE, by its Spanish acronym) and CONARE.

138. However, institutional changes affected the participation of other government institutions such as ENFORESTAL, which was expected to play a key role in interacting with the Indigenous communities of the RFI. Staff and budget reductions meant that this institution stopped playing a lead role in the project. Consequently, the PMU had to interact directly with Indigenous communities. This was not planned. Also the products generated by the National Centre for Development and Research in Free Technologies had some limitations

in terms of their quality. This generated a significant delay in the development of the SINIIF. A similar situation arose with Misión Árbol.

139. The rating for the quality of execution is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

3.5.3.2 Quality of implementation

Finding 29. FAO's performance as implementing agency was adequate. It successfully incorporated the vision and priorities of the Venezuelan Government in the project's conceptualization under close and effective technical supervision. There were, however, few field visits. This was partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

140. FAO, as the implementing agency, incorporated the vision and priorities of the Venezuelan Government in the conceptualization and design of the project. This helped to maintain the relevance of the project without being affected by the political, social and economic changes that occurred throughout implementation.

141. Technical supervision was carried out by three Lead Technical Officers (LTOs) and a Lead Technical Consultant, who supported the last LTO in their supervisory role. Together, the LTOs and the Lead Technical Consultant provided advice and technical assessment of the outputs and outcomes. In some cases, they warned about the need to improve their quality and provided close supervision, through virtual meetings, of some key products like the SINIIF. They even requested support from experts at FAO headquarters. They also ensured the quality of the documents that were published or will be published. Although technical supervision was continuous, it did not allow for timely alerts about the delay of relevant products like the SINIIF. There is evidence of two technical field visits: one to participate in the project initiation workshop and another for supervision carried out between October and November 2022, almost at the end of the project. In 2018, the LTO on duty only participated in one technical workshop for the project. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, no on-site supervision was done. It is understood that the COVID-19 pandemic restricted visits in 2020 and 2021, and that the LTO visit took place in 2022 once health conditions permitted.

142. Regarding the identification and proposed mitigation of risks in the project design phase, it is considered that important institutional, political and social risks were identified. A risk linked to project execution delays was not included. This can be improved. In fact, this issue was due to changes in managers and authorities of key entities for the project at the national level. This risk materialized with institutional changes at ENFORESTAL, which minimized its participation and led to a change in the project's strategy to directly address Indigenous communities.

143. The rating for the quality of implementation is **Satisfactory**.

3.5.4 Financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing

3.5.4.1 Financial management

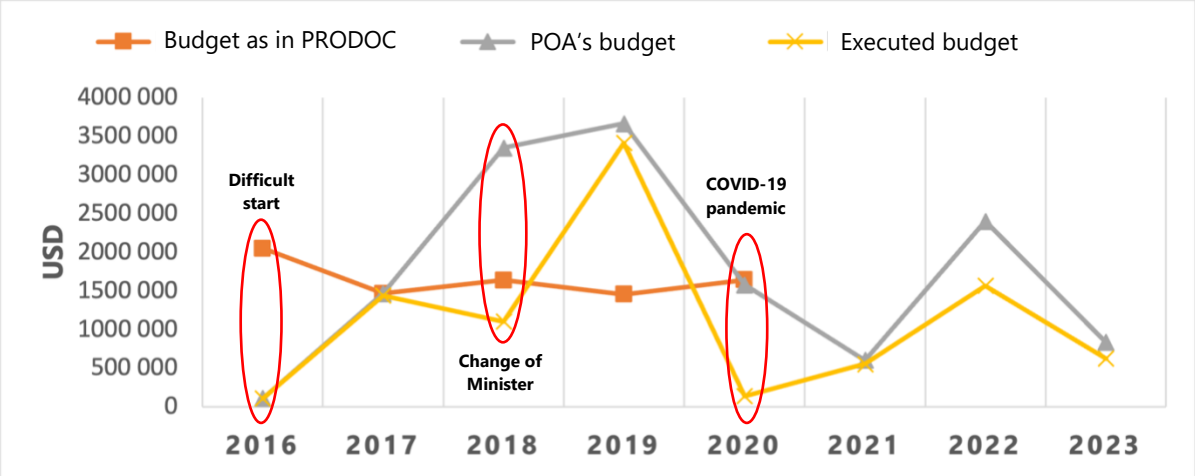
Finding 30. Upon project closure, almost all of the allocated resources will have been used with a budget execution of 99.93 percent. The effectiveness of budget planning was affected mainly by the turnover of officials and the COVID-19 pandemic.

144. The project received a GEF contribution of USD 8 249 316 for its implementation. This was added to the committed co-financing, which totalled USD 25 730 000, bringing the total

project amount to USD 33 979 316. According to data provided by FAO Venezuela, the projected expense upon project closure will be USD 8 243 364.

145. Regarding budget planning and financial management, Figure 6 shows the distribution of the annual budget established in the PRODOC (original budget), the budget planned by the PMU each year – included in the annual operational plans – and the budget executed annually. As seen in Figure 6, the original budget was adjusted according to the needs and situations that the project faced during execution. In the first instance, it is necessary to point out that the project began its operation eight months after signing the cooperation agreement between the Venezuelan Government and FAO, which was finalized on 29 March 2016. The project, however, began operations on 15 November 2016. The cause of this late start was the time required by the administrative processes to hire the PMU members. Therefore, the budget in the 2016 annual operating plan and the budget executed show a significant difference compared to the original budget. Another big difference was in 2018 when the PMU considered an annual budget of USD 3 663 424 to boost project execution. However, the change of Minister in the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism delayed the signing of letters of agreement, so only a third of the budget could be spent. In 2019, the planned budget was almost fully spent. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic paralyzed the planned field activities and forced the closure of letters of agreement (for example, with ENFORESTAL). Therefore, only 8.8 percent of the planned budget for that year was used. In subsequent years, the used budget had slight variations to what was planned in the annual operating plan. This involved an 18-month extension, as reported in the efficiency section.

Figure 6. Budget planning and annual spending



Note: POA refers to plan operativo anual (annual operations plan).

Source: Own elaboration with information provided by the administrative department of FAO Venezuela.

146. In total, there were five budget reviews approved by the project steering committee. Among the main ones was the modification of the budget in 2018 to adapt it to direct execution, but through letters of agreement with government entities. This was an effective measure to support the strengthening of their capacities. Another reason for the budget reviews was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the project's subsequent extensions.

147. Table 4 presents the variations in budget planning with respect to the PRODOC and budget revisions at the results level. The budget for Outcome 1.2 shows an increase that was slightly greater than 100 percent. This is because the PRODOC considered that the POMF would be carried out by the PMU team, which was considered unfeasible since the personnel per se were limited to the execution of the entire project. In the case of Outcome 2.3, the budget increase was due to greater support for community work, which involved, for example, the contracting of the Tukupu EPSDC for restoration actions and plant production in nurseries. Changes in the other results are due to project savings, the underestimated cost of some activities and recommendations in the mid-term evaluation to strengthen the PMU with Communications and M&E Specialists.

Table 4. Budget variation between the budget established in the PRODOC and the revised budget (in USD)

Outcome	PRODOC budget (USD)	Latest budget as of 2022 (USD)	Executed budget (includes the most up-to-date figures, projected at closing) (USD)	Variation between PRODOC budget and revised budget
Outcome 1.1	1 917 921	1 727 995	1 727 969.79	-10%
Outcome 1.2	285 747	603 025	602 933.61	111%
Outcome 2.1	380 173	593 767	593 035.93	56%
Outcome 2.2	414 264	489 388	489 110.30	18%
Outcome 2.3	241 664	511 024	510 802.72	111%
Outcome 3.1	465 389	784 562	784 391.06	69%
Outcome 3.2	3 713 359	2 488 600	2 488 441.46	-33%
Outcome 4.1	437 974	651 552	647 473.17	49%
Project execution expenses	392 825	399 403	399 206.39	2%

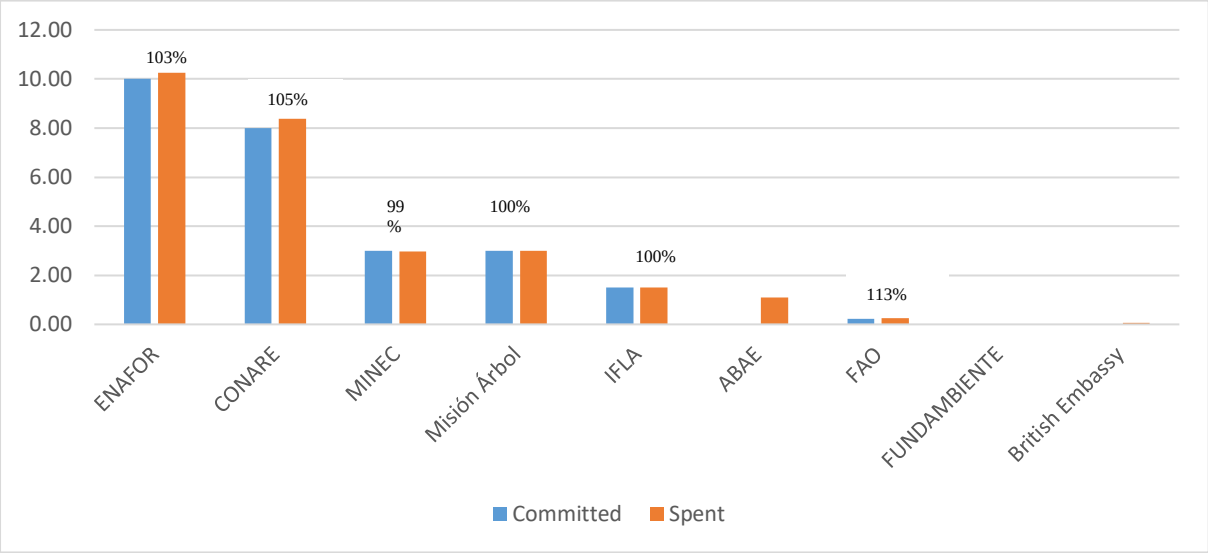
Source: Administrative department of FAO Venezuela. Projected budget upon project closure.

3.5.4.2 Expected co-financing mobilization

Finding 31. Committed co-financing was exceeded by 107 percent (USD 27 542 623) and played an important role in mitigating the effects of late disbursements due to the country's economic situation and foreign exchange deficit. New co-financing partners were identified and most of their contributions were accounted for.

148. According to the PRODOC, the committed co-financing corresponded to USD 25 730 000. To determine the co-financing materialized each year, the PMU prepared a form that was delivered to the co-financers and provided them with training to fill it out. Thus, the co-financing reported as of December 2022 totalled USD 27 542 623. This corresponds to 107 percent of the committed co-financing, so the goal was exceeded. Figure 7 shows that the compliance percentage of the co-financing partners was fully met. There were also new co-financers that joined during project execution: the Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities; FUNDAMBIENTE; and the British Embassy. The report is still pending on support that the project received from the International Organization for Migration, which donated cassava bakeries and seeds to the Indigenous communities of the RFI, and from INPARQUES.

Figure 7. Committed and materialized co-financing



Note: MINEC refers to Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and ABAE to "Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities."

Source: FAO Venezuela project team. Data as of December 2022

149. It is worth mentioning that co-financing mitigated the impact of the delay in disbursements made by FAO due to the country's economic situation. Project activities were allowed to start, even without receiving the first payment. This let activities continue even if payments were not received on time. It also cushioned the effect of receiving a smaller amount as a result of the exchange rate.

3.5.5 Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement

Finding 32. The project effectively engaged key partners and counterparts. This facilitated the achievement of results and the generation of co-benefits, but it also presented challenges that slowed down project execution.

Finding 33. The effectiveness of the alliance between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO resulted in the creation of cooperation agreements between both entities for the implementation of other projects financed by the GEF. Currently, FAO Venezuela manages 80 percent of the GEF project portfolio with the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism.

150. The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism proposed the development of this project to FAO. It actively participated in its design, along with its related entities directly linked to forest management: CONARE; Misión Árbol; and IFLA. During project execution, the PMU maintained effective communication and consultation flows with senior managers from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and organized project steering committee meetings, during which the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related entities participated in strategic decision-making. The related institutions that participated in the project are CONARE, Misión Árbol, ENFORESTAL, IFLA and the Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities. Other institutions were included during project execution, such as INPARQUES and FUNDAMBIENTE, which provided additional co-financing.

151. The effectiveness of the partnership between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related institutions with FAO facilitated the implementation of the project and the achievement of additional co-benefits, such as the creation of the Tukupu

EPSDC and the concession of 54 430 ha for forestry use by the company. Regardless, the frequent turnover of high-level officials in these institutions also slowed down project execution.

152. Based on implementation arrangements, the government agencies were responsible for executing project actions through letters of agreement. This made it possible to strengthen their capacities and infrastructure (for example, having more nurseries and equipment for satellite image processing). However, this approach also represented challenges for the project because some entities had limited capacities to develop the assigned work with the required quality. Despite this, the involvement of university researchers through service contracts strengthened the technical quality of the outputs.

153. The effectiveness of the partnership between FAO and the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism was also shown through the signing of cooperation agreements between both entities. This involved the implementation of other projects financed by the GEF.

Finding 34. The project achieved new alliances with international organizations and a municipal government. This contributed to the fulfilment of outputs linked to work in the Indigenous communities. It also increased the project's co-financing.

154. As part of the project's outputs, nine collaboration agreements were generated between government agencies, universities, Indigenous communities (through the Tukupu company) and municipal governments. These contributed to the achievement of the project results and will contribute to its sustainability (Output 2.3.2). For example, the Framework Cooperation Agreement between ENFORESTAL and the mayor's office of the municipality of Piar, in the state of Bolívar, facilitated the training of municipal officials within the project's framework, as well as ENFORESTAL's work and the project in the municipality. The agreement has a duration of five years until the end of 2023, so the collaboration will continue once the project is complete.

155. The project also effectively involved the Indigenous communities, which were the main project beneficiaries. This was done through the FPIC and communication strategies that aligned with their culture (for example, the participation of translators and the development of a dictionary of terms in the Kariña language) during both in the design phase and project execution. These topics are addressed in greater detail in the communications and Indigenous Peoples sections.

156. New alliances were also established with international organizations that contributed to the achievement of results. In particular, the project partnered with the International Organization for Migration, which donated seeds, tools to grow them and instruments to make cassava bread (*budare* plates, grill, water containers) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These activities contributed to the project's agroforestry work. One interviewee said: "Since FAO was there [in the RFI], that gave us confidence. Otherwise, we would not have gone." The project also achieved a cooperation agreement between FAO and the British Embassy, which resulted in the implementation of a small-scale project with financing of USD 60 000. This aimed to strengthen the capacities of the Kariña communities through participatory monitoring and restoration on 40 ha of forest. In addition, the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela promoted the incorporation of the Tukupu EPSDC at the Venezuelan Business Sustainability Forum and the adoption of the Women's Empowerment Principles of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

157. The rating for the project partnerships and stakeholder engagement criteria is **Highly Satisfactory**.

3.5.6 Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products

3.5.6.1 Knowledge management and products

Finding 35. The project made an important contribution to the generation and systematization of knowledge on forests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This is found in the national forest information system and the FAO publications system.

158. The generation and systematization of knowledge was a central aspect of the project through the development of the SINIIF. This hosts databases with information on the flora of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, thematic maps of biodiversity, and the social, cultural, ethnic and economic situation of the Indigenous communities of the RFI that was collected by the project, among other relevant information.

159. Further, the project generated many technical and outreach documents that were published through the FAO Publications Workflow System. To date, nine documents were published (see Table 5), and three are in the process of review and editing.

Table 5. Documents published in the FAO Publications Workflow System

Name of publication	Link
First project newsletter "Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective"	www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/CB2832ES/
Second project newsletter	www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cc0872es
Third project newsletter	www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cc4961es
Technical guide to good community practices for the selection of seed trees and the handling of forest seeds	https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3668es
Technical guidelines for the certification of forest seeds	https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3918es
Handbook: make your own forest nursery	www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cb6704es
Proposal for a protocol to update and monitor national forest cover using images from remote sensors	https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7322es
Manual: restoration of the xerophytic forest in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cc3819es
Manual: restoration of the tropical humid forest in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cc1987es

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

160. Additionally, it is expected that the project website, bosquesdevenezuela.com, will host the reports of 20 technical studies carried out within the framework of the project. It will also include informative posters, procedures (for example, the procedure for photogeographic classification in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), and the proposed regulations and co-management decree generated by the project.

161. With the information generated by the project, a peer-reviewed scientific article was published on a methodological approach to study forest degradation and carbon emissions using remote sensors (Pacheco-Angulo *et al.*, 2021). Articles were also published in the IFLA magazine. Additionally, a researcher from the Central University of Venezuela reported the preparation of three bachelor's theses and one doctoral thesis as a form of

project participation. According to the interviews, an exchange of experiences between the Kariña communities is planned upon project closure.

3.5.6.2 Communications

Finding 36. The effectiveness of project communication was limited in the first half of project execution. This was due to the lack of a specialist on the subject. Once this gap was filled, the project's visibility improved by considering the Kariña culture.

162. There was no communications expert to support this activity upon project launch, so the effectiveness in transmitting the project's objectives, progress, results and key messages was limited. However, in response to a recommendation made during the mid-term evaluation, a specialist was hired in 2020 to develop the Communications and Dissemination Plan.

163. As a result of its implementation, the dissemination of the project began through social networks with key messages, infographics, videos and spots. A community radio programme was created close to the RFI in Tumeremo. It was called "The Kariña Voice: Planting for Humanity." Here, both the Kariña and Spanish languages were spoken. The captain of the Kariña community participated in the programme on several occasions, sharing their experiences with the project and acting as a moderator. Those responsible for the project components and members of the local community also participated. One of the interviewees pointed out: "They listened to a radio programme for the first time in Kariña." Learning and informative material was generated for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community in accessible and culturally relevant formats.

164. Subsequently, work was done on the development of materials to disseminate the project's progress and results, such as publications[6] and newsletters. The development of the website, which was significantly delayed, was then expedited to provide project information and communicate its progress. The website is located on a server from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. The uploaded information was reviewed and approved by the ministry. Both the development of the website and the preparation of the newsletters were communication goals in the results framework. These goals were met. In addition, the developed materials like photos, videos and spots showed the participation of Kariña women in the project.

165. There was not enough time to implement the communications plan. This means that publications and materials are still being developed and uploaded to the website. There was also little interaction with the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism to disseminate joint messages about the project. However, it should be noted that project visibility improved after the mid-term evaluation. This was also due to the mass dissemination of the Tukupu company as the first indigenous forestry company promoted by a Kariña woman.

166. A co-benefit generated by the project was the strengthening of the government agency, FUNDAMBIENTE, which was included as a new partner during project execution. It received support through a letter of agreement to strengthen its editorial capacity and equipment. One interviewee said: "The work carried out with FAO is crucial (…) we have raised the level of quality, and we have produced more updated literature for the country than ever."

[6] The generated publications are reported in the section on knowledge management and outputs.

167. The rating for knowledge management is **Highly Satisfactory**. For communications, the rating is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

3.6 Cross-cutting issues

3.6.1 Gender

Finding 37. The project included a gender approach in its design and execution, as well as promoted and facilitated the participation of women in fields dominated by men. It also strengthened the empowerment of women by supporting the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC, which had seven female representatives. This contributed to reducing the identified gender gaps.

Finding 38. An area for improvement is the lack of monitoring and systematization of the effects on women generated by the project's actions.

168. Although the gender approach was not mandatory in the GEF-5 projects, the PRODOC established that the project include it throughout its cycle. This was based on the premise that, besides ensuring the participation of women and their organizations in project-generated spaces, there would be the effective empowerment of women as social actors. To this end, the project should consider the ethnocultural characteristics of the communities in the RFI and have specific activities for women. This can involve training based on their needs or a credit line just for women through a financial fund. The approach also included goals for women's participation in training and some project activities.

169. As part of project execution, the Protocol for the Collection of Socioenvironmental Spatial Information with a Gender Approach for the Characterization of Communities and Indigenous Peoples Associated with or Dependent on Forests was carried out in 2017. As part of this protocol, three gender gaps were identified (see Table 6). However, an analysis of the needs of women and men and a plan to address them while complying with the provisions of the PRODOC were not done. The gender approach was therefore implemented in an incipient way during the first half of project execution. This focused on giving visibility to the captain of the Kariña community, promoting the participation of women in project activities, and making timely registration and monitoring of their participation.

Figure 8. Kariña Indigenous woman

170. Consequently, the mid-term evaluation recommended strengthening the inclusion of the gender approach. However, the time for a robust collection of data was limited. There were no resources allocated for this purpose, so a gender analysis was done. This identified project actions with a gender focus. In addition, basic training on including the approach was provided to the project team in 2022. The Project Coordinators received training from FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) experts on gender mainstreaming for large-scale projects in 2021.

171. Table 6 presents the gender gaps that were identified in the aforementioned protocol and the project activities that were designed to address these gaps. Regarding women's limited capacity for action in decision-making and the generation of their own income, it is important to highlight the project's contribution through support provided for the creation of the Tukupu company. In fact, the company is led by a female Kariña along with seven women who are among its 12 representatives. This strengthened their empowerment.

172. There was a gap linked to the low capacity of both women and men for action in forest governance and restoration. However, the project helped women to participate in spaces that were exclusively for men and promoted their participation in other areas of action. For example, 6 women (out of 16) were trained in basic carpentry. This had been an activity for men only. In addition, the fact that the training course was translated into the Kariña language facilitated access for women since more women than men do not speak Spanish. A translated manual and a glossary of terms in Kariña were also prepared. This made it possible to highlight the role of women in the production of cassava and cassava bread for self-consumption and sale. Further, the role of women as seed and plant collectors was emphasized, as well as the important role they could play in the community nurseries. An interviewed Indigenous woman who had participated in the creation of the nurseries and forest restorations said that she would continue "because I see that [the forest] looks beautiful." Another Indigenous woman noted that: "More women are giving their time. They teach in nurseries to train young people."

173. Certainly, an important factor in these actions was the fact that the Kariña communities had a female captain. This selection was independent of the project, but she broke the tradition of patriarchy and made it easier for women to actively participate in the project. This exceeded the goals for women's participation in training activities. It is underscored that the participation of women was greater than men in eight courses. Also, the level of female participation in the training courses at public institutions (45 percent) was significant.

174. On the third gap, the project took actions to reduce the workload of women. However, there is still no evidence on the effect that these actions had. Further, one limitation of this evaluation is that Kariña women are not used to giving their opinions. This is because their community structure is patriarchal and they need confidence to speak with strangers. Despite professional support on social management, interviews during the evaluation made it difficult to ascertain the opinions of women about the project's impact on them.

Table 6. Gender gaps and project actions designed to address them

Gap	Actions carried out
Limited capacity of women to participate in decision-making and generate their own income	Support for the formation of the Tukupu company, which includes seven female representatives
Limited capacity for action on forest governance and restoration among both women and men	- The project reported that the participation of women in training activities on participatory monitoring reached 35 percent. - The local component of the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers had women from ten Indigenous communities who traditionally carry out the collection, exchange, conservation and planting of seeds for agricultural and fruit species on their farming plots.
Women have a greater workload since they are responsible for productive activities (maintaining the farm) and reproductive activities (caring for children)	- Farming tools (pickaxes) were provided for work on the farming plot. Bakeries were provided to facilitate the preparation of cassava bread, which is one of the main foods of the Kariña people.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

175. Another fact that is important to highlight is that the Tukupu EPSDC is recognized by the Community Principles of Empowerment of Women of Venezuela[7] for promoting gender equality at work and in the communities. It should also be noted that, as a result of the project, a gender focal point was created in the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism.

176. The gender rating is **Satisfactory**.

3.6.2 Human rights

Finding 39. The project promoted compliance with human rights, such as the right to adequate food. No type of discrimination against women, youth or the elderly was identified.

177. Based on the human rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated by the United Nations in 1948, it is noted that the project promoted respect for human rights. This included: the right to free opinion and expression through the application of the FPIC and consultations with Indigenous Peoples in communities affected during project design and execution; and the right to free peaceful association by supporting the formation of the Tukupu company.

178. It also promoted the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to an adequate standard of living that ensures food and healthcare. This was promoted through the establishment of agroforestry systems and the planting of a greater diversity of crops on the farming plots of Indigenous Peoples in order to provide greater food availability to the communities. This was also achieved through the formation of the Tukupu company, which was expected to provide social benefits like the creation of schools or health clinics to the Kariña communities.

179. No type of discrimination towards community members was identified by the project. In the project activities, open calls were made. Women, youth and the elderly were invited to participate.

[7] These principles for women's empowerment were established in 2010 by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations Global Compact.

180. The rating for human rights is **Satisfactory**.

3.6.3 Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Finding 40. The Indigenous communities were consulted during project design and execution. Their culture, customs and self-governance structure were respected at all times.

Finding 41. There was a lack of expert advice in addressing Indigenous communities. This would have strengthened the exchange of knowledge and promoted the revaluation of ancestral knowledge and customs linked to forest conservation and use.

181. The project was implemented in ten Indigenous communities: Botanamo; Matupo I; Matupo II; La Iguana; Pozo Oscuro; Río Negro; La Fortaleza; Los Waicas; El Cafetal; and La Esperanza. These belong mainly to the Kariña Indigenous Peoples. However, in the communities of La Iguana and Pozo Oscuro, for example, there is a mix with other Indigenous Peoples such as the Wuarau and Guyanes, plus Creole people. According to interviews, these communities were consulted during project design to understand their needs. This focused on strengthening their capacities for sustainable forest use. In addition, they expressed their interest in monitoring the project's activities.

182. In the project's initiation phase, particularly on 13 December 2016, a consultation was carried out to obtain the FPIC from the Indigenous communities of Botanamo, Matupo I and La Esperanza. The captains of these communities participated in the meeting, with representation from their respective communities. Subsequently, there were other consultations with the communities of Matupo II, La Iguana, Pozo Oscuro, Río Negro, La Fortaleza, Los Waicas and El Cafetal. The consultations consisted of explaining the objective, scope and activities of the project, as well as the benefits that the project would bring to their communities. Effective communication was established in which both the Spanish and Kariña languages were spoken as needed.

183. At the 13 December 2016 meeting, members of the participating Indigenous communities gave their positive opinion on the project. Although it was not explicit in the meeting minutes, they gave their consent for project implementation. This was confirmed in interviews with community members where it was reported that, at all times, the Indigenous communities were consulted about activities to be carried out and that they expressed their needs, which were addressed. An interviewee noted: "Everything was done with consent. Meetings were held on several occasions in each community."

184. Areas for improvement in the FPIC process are the lack of greater formality, dialogue and documentation in the consultation processes. Although consultations were carried out, there was no written evidence of the consent obtained from the affected communities or a description of the best form of communication and protocols to communicate with the community representatives or the committee of elders. This should have been in the written document that describes the FPIC process with the communities. In addition, there was no description of the following: how to ensure that the captains communicate the agreements to all community members, including youth, women, the elderly or disabled people; how to carry out decision-making processes during project implementation; the agreed mechanism for feedback from communities; the reporting of complaints and how to address them; the development of a plan to verify compliance with the agreed upon actions; and the terms for withdrawing consent.

Figure 9. Kariña Indigenous men who participated in nursery plant production

185. There was a lack of a more in-depth characterization of the Indigenous communities, as indicated in the design and implementation section. This would have identified the differences that exist between them, mainly in relation to the communities that are on the periphery of the forest, that is, close to the city of Tumeremo. It also would have included differences that resulted in different degrees of project appropriation. The assessment also identified the lack of a more in-depth dialogue to highlight the customs of Indigenous Peoples and clearly document the important role they play in the conservation and management of the forest through their ancestral knowledge and as key actors of change for sustainable forest management. A member of one interviewed Indigenous community said: "The lives of Indigenous Peoples are based on the forest and its fauna."

186. In addition, annual workshops on the exchange of knowledge were held. These, however, were not linked to the provided technical training activities. Although the participatory monitoring booklet talks about making indigenous knowledge and practice compatible with technical-scientific knowledge, this did not occur clearly and consistently in practice. The participatory monitoring guides, through the "learning by doing" approach, did not reflect an exchange of knowledge since their content was mainly technical. In general terms, there was a lack of a specialized strategy for the exchange of knowledge designed and applied by an expert. This would have encouraged the revaluation of the cultural identity of the communities and served to highlight the importance of their traditional activities for forest conservation and use.

Finding 42. Forest use by Indigenous communities materialized through co-management from the Tukupu company, which is the first indigenous forestry company in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Indeed, this significantly empowered the Kariña Indigenous communities in obtaining additional benefits from forest use.

Finding 43. Given the recent creation of the Tukupu company, and being the country's first experience of forest co-management with Indigenous communities, several challenges were identified to ensure the sustainable use of forest resources and the transparency and accountability of this process.

187. The co-management achievements among the Indigenous communities and the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, legalized through the formation of the Tukupu EPSDC in 2019, include the materialization of land use that had been defined in the 2004 Management Plan. This also involved the empowerment of Indigenous communities on the sustainable use of forest resources in order to benefit from its generated economic resources. The company has a concession of more than 54 000 ha, as mentioned in the

co-benefits section. At the time of this evaluation, the initial development of 1 000 ha was in progress.

188. The challenges to promote co-management through the Tukupu company involve:

i. strengthening its technical capabilities to ensure the sustainable use of forest resources, as well as its organizational and administrative capabilities;

ii. establishing accountability and transparency mechanisms for the economic benefits that will be generated; and

iii. continuing the monitoring and verification by the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism to ensure sustainable use.

189. The rating for Indigenous Peoples and local communities is **Satisfactory**.

3.6.4 Environmental and social safeguards

Finding 44. Environmental and social safeguards were considered in project design and execution. The potential impacts that had been identified in the design phase were avoided or minimized. As a result, the project risk, initially classified as Category B (moderate risk), decreased to low risk.

190. The project's possible environmental and social impacts due to execution – as established in the PRODOC's environmental assessment and based on interviews, project documents and direct field observation – were avoided or minimized. In particular, no change was detected in the agricultural systems or traditional practices of the Indigenous communities of the RFI. The project adapted to these practices and even optimized and complemented them. There was no increase in the workload of the communities since the project provided training and tools that facilitated work on the farming plots and the production of cassava bread. This constituted some of the main activities of the communities. In addition, the project offered financial remuneration to community members who participated in the activities to compensate them for their time. The work to strengthen capacities was highlighted. This was a need that had been identified in the environmental assessment.

191. These observations are consistent with the annual progress reports from 2017 to 2020, in which it was reported that the environmental and social risk remained a Category B. The 2021 annual progress report indicates that the risk at the time of project submission was moderate, but that, due to the prevention and mitigation actions implemented by the project, the project was reclassified as low risk.[8]

192. The rating for environmental and social safeguards is **Highly Satisfactory**.

[8] This means that the project had no or minimal potential negative environmental or social impacts.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The project's objective and results maintain national and local relevance due to their contribution to the economic forestry engine, which considers the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable forest use and the participation of Indigenous Peoples. It also remains relevant to the GEF and FAO strategies.

Conclusion 2. The project achieved its main global environmental and development objectives. Most of the expected global environmental benefits were obtained. Progress towards achieving most of its expected impacts were also made.

Conclusion 3. The project made significant progress in promoting forest co-management between the government and Indigenous communities through the creation of the first indigenous forestry company, the Tukupu EPSDC. This was a co-benefit. The proposal of a presidential decree to implement forest co-management at the national level was another co-benefit. This scaled up the approach.

Conclusion 4. Overall, project management was efficient. Some delays led to a project extension. Adaptive measures reduced, as much as possible, the effect of significant challenges faced during execution. The direct execution modality, which involved the participation of government agencies through letters of agreement, was adequate and helped to strengthen their capacities. However, in some cases, this meant a challenge to ensure the technical quality of the outputs generated.

Conclusion 5. The institutional and implementation arrangements were mostly effective. There were, however, limitations in promoting more active participation among technical staff from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism during the development phase and field activities. This could have improved technical capabilities.

Conclusion 6. Several factors, such as high institutional appropriation, make the sustainability of project achievements moderately likely. There are risks like inexperience from the Tukupu EPSDC in fulfilling its responsibilities. There are, however, risks that require mitigation: dependence on external economic resources; and non-approval of the technical standard and the policy on co-management. Environmental sustainability depends on the strengthening and continuity of good practices for the conservation of biodiversity, restoration monitoring and the sustainable use of forests through the Tukupu EPSDC.

Conclusion 7. The project had satisfactory financial management. Co-financing played an important role. New alliances were also generated. These contributed to achieving results and obtaining additional co-financing.

Conclusion 8. The project had a practical and sufficient M&E plan. It was almost fully implemented. Although there were no reports on monitoring tools during the mid-term evaluation, four were presented for the terminal evaluation. Only the report on the climate change tool is still pending. Monitoring the project was complex, as was the systematization of information on some outputs and outcomes. This made it difficult to assess its compliance.

Conclusion 9. The project had a significant contribution to the generation and systematization of knowledge on forests of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This is found in the SINIIF and the FAO publications system. However, the usability of the SINIIF can still be improved.

Conclusion 10. The project reduced gender gaps by empowering Kariña women. This was done through the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC and new, participatory spaces for women. However, the generated effects were neither monitored nor systematized.

Conclusion 11. The FPIC process was used in the project areas of Indigenous communities. Some elements, however, could have been better. Further, the project design and execution considered environmental and social safeguards and promoted the protection of human rights.

4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO. The SINIIF is an important basis for decision-making on forestry matters. Moreover, the forestry sector is key for the national economy and the conservation of biodiversity. It is also important in the fight against climate change and new FAO initiatives where the SINIIF will be used (GCP/VEN/020/GFF and GCP/VEN/023P/GFF). Continue strengthening the system through:

i. the generation of a more user-friendly interface that contains the description and content of each module, as well as the quality assurance of its content and the elimination of grammatical errors; and

ii. the completion of the National Forest Inventory and its incorporation into the SINIIF so that it can be used to make inferences with a statistical basis and to prepare reports linked to compliance with the nationally determined contributions for climate change mitigation and compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve this, the establishment of a National Forest Monitoring System is required.

Recommendation 2. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and the Tukupu EPSDC. The responsibilities acquired by the Tukupu company, through co-management with the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and ENFORESTAL on the use of forest areas in the RFI, require the strengthening of its capabilities to continue leading the implementation of sustainable forest management practices on the reserve. This is to ensure that the expected economic and social benefits are obtained. The following is recommended:

i. Design and implement a plan to strengthen the company's technical, administrative and organizational capabilities. This includes the exchange of experiences with other socially owned companies and support from a specialist on social organizations and the communal economic system. The plan should also include strengthening the gender approach.

ii. Ensure ongoing support for the company through collaboration with the Ministry of People's Power of Communities and Social Movements, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

iii. Continue with the process to elect, as soon as possible, company representatives in charge of operations. The legislation indicates that popular elections must be organized every two years.

iv. Include, as part of the company's functions, the monitoring and maintenance of the reforestation processes within the project's framework.

v. Communicate to members of the Indigenous communities about the purpose and use of the goods provided by the project to the Tukupu company (for example, motorcycles) to address any confusion.

Recommendation 3. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO. Strengthen the technical and practical capacities of officials from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism in the execution of similar projects (GCP/VEN/020/GFF, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF and the project that is in the conceptualization phase for the development of sustainable landscape management in the state of Amazonas, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela). Also strengthen work on the ground and with Indigenous communities. The following is recommended:

i. Appoint officials from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism to monitor outputs and work on the ground for each component. This will help to strengthen the ministry's presence on the ground and direct supervision of the work.

ii. Hire a local professional team that can constantly monitor and supervise field activities to ensure continuity during the work.

193. Regarding Indigenous communities, the work carried out by the project was mostly effective with some areas for improvement. This may be useful for similar future projects like the GCP/VEN/023P/GFF. Therefore, it is recommended to: i) make visible Ondigenous communities as key actors for forest conservation and sustainable use in the project design; ii) carry out a cultural, social and economic analysis (literacy level, main means of subsistence, customs, etc.) that allows the Indigenous communities to be characterized and activities to be proposed in accordance with these characteristics; iii) revalue and document their ancestral knowledge and customs (dances, ceremonies, songs, etc.) related to forest conservation and use and link these to project activities like participatory monitoring for a greater appropriation of activities; iv) strengthen the application of the FPIC during project design or execution based on the FAO guide and document the entire process; and v) involve an expert in addressing Indigenous communities during project design and execution as part of the core project team in order to support the aforementioned activities.

Recommendation 4. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO. The project addressed gender gaps. Systematize and document this contribution through the collection and robust analysis of pertinent information that goes beyond the compilation of activities. Also, generate documents and graphic material.

Recommendation 5. For FAO. When considering areas for improvement in project monitoring and adjustments made to the results framework, only a specialist should be in charge of M&E. If required, modifications to the results framework should be done using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound indicators. The vertical and horizontal logic of the framework should be reaffirmed. To this end, a logical framework expert from FAO RLC or FAO headquarters could provide assistance and, where appropriate, support could also be provided through proposed changes from the mid-term evaluation. In addition, the specialist should implement a project monitoring system that is strategic and practical. The members of the project team may provide assistance and, if required, an expert in knowledge management could ensure the necessary inputs for monitoring. Besides providing inputs for monitoring, the person in charge of knowledge management can, where appropriate, support the systematization of information generated by the project. In addition, the person in charge of M&E must generate the formats and define the methodologies for the project team to provide the inputs required for their work.

Recommendation 6. For the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. Approve the technical standard on criteria and indicators for environmental and social sustainability. Also approve the proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System, which is a national policy proposal on co-management. This is to ensure the sustainability of achievements in the implementation of sustainable forest management in the country and to maintain a favourable environment for using the capacities acquired by officials and Indigenous communities.

5. Lessons learned

5.1 Indigenous Peoples

Lesson a1. The participation of representatives from Indigenous communities on the project steering committee is a good practice. This facilitates their participation in strategic decision-making related to the project. This lesson learned may be useful for the GCP/VEN/023P/GFF project (GEF Identification Number: 10971).

5.2 Design

Lesson b1. The inclusion of calculations to estimate avoided emissions and carbon sequestration as an appendix in the PRODOC is a good practice. This is because it ensured methodological consistency in the calculation of the same estimates upon completion of project execution. This facilitated the comparability of results.

Lesson b2. On the effectiveness of the direct implementation modality for institutional strengthening, the capabilities of government entities need to be assessed during the design phase. Refresher courses can also be offered or the support of an external expert can provide advice at certain moments of execution. In fact, project activities were implemented by government entities through letters of agreement and challenges were faced in terms of their different capacity levels. This lesson may be useful for all of the GEF-funded projects, for example, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF and GCP/VEN/020/GFF with GEF ID: 10678.

5.3 Project management

194. These lessons learned can also be useful for all of the GEF-funded projects, for example, GCP/VEN/023P/GFF and GCP/VEN/020/GFF.

Lesson c1. When beginning the implementation of a project of this type, degraded area restoration must begin as soon as possible to have sufficient time for monitoring and generating more advanced results by project closure.

Lesson c2. The participation of government research bodies and university researchers facilitated the achievement of technical outputs. Also, the development of new alliances with international organizations contributed to the fulfilment of the project's achievements. However, to confirm the effectiveness of work with government partners and international organizations, it is necessary to report the incorporation of all new co-financing partners into the project and calculate the additional co-financing received.

Lesson c3. The use of co-financing to avoid interruptions in ongoing project activities, due to delays in disbursements generated by changes in the country's exchange rate, is a good practice.

Lesson c4. To provide better leadership, organization, monitoring and documentation for the implementation of a project's gender approach, it is necessary to have a gender plan that is based on a robust analysis of the topic.

Lesson c5. It is important that the mid-term evaluation proposes explicit adjustments, if necessary, to the results framework. This maintains its horizontal and vertical logic so that they can be analysed and approved by the project steering committee, the LTO and the GEF Liaison Officer. These changes should be minimal and not affect the objective or scope of the project, nor the

global goals approved by the GEF. If substantial changes are required, then they will require approval from the GEF before being formalized.

Lesson c6. Although the project's General Strategy on Synergy and Transversality was an effective adaptive measure, care must be taken to ensure that the systematization of information clearly differentiates which achievements are attributable to each specific outcome or output. This avoids linking an achievement to several outputs or outcomes as this made the assessment of compliance with some achievements in this evaluation more complex.

5.4 Outputs generated

Lesson d1. The application of the proposed environmental and social sustainability criteria and indicators is a good practice for the project. This is because environmental and social safeguards were in place, human rights were protected, and work was carried out with the active and informed participation of Indigenous communities.

Lesson d2. The participatory monitoring mechanism that was designed and implemented (Output 1.1.6) was based on a robust conceptual base with lessons learned, such as ensuring a rigorous technical review of the participatory monitoring protocol (booklet) to guarantee its usefulness in other interventions. A lack of information was identified which, according to the content of the protocol, should have been included. For example, the protocol mentions that techniques were included to approach Indigenous communities, such as semi-structured walks. However, this information was not found in the protocol. There were also design errors (for example, Figure 6 of the protocol) and editorial issues. Some paragraphs were not very clear because they did not show a connection with the preceding paragraph or the one that followed it. Another lesson learned is the need to carry out an exchange of knowledge for each topic to be addressed in participatory monitoring. Although an exchange of knowledge was carried out to identify, for example, the biodiversity of the RFI and its medicinal uses, this was not carried out for all of the topics addressed in participatory monitoring, as indicated in the protocol. There was no explanation. The same protocol indicates that the exchange of knowledge would facilitate the compatibility of indigenous knowledge and technical-scientific knowledge. This would have contributed to providing greater meaning to the tasks carried out by the Indigenous communities and to generating a common purpose with the project team. A third lesson learned regarding the same output is the need to have local extension agents with experience in rural development who contribute to the compatibility of indigenous knowledge with technical knowledge and provide continuity to the monitoring actions that strengthen knowledge and its gradual assimilation by Indigenous communities, as indicated in the protocol. A final lesson learned is to develop educational material and culturally appropriate field guides on participatory monitoring topics with less technical content. This should include the knowledge and vision of Indigenous communities. In fact, this would facilitate their use and consultation by trained people from Indigenous communities. The guides developed by the project have a high level of technical content.

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Appendix 1. List of people interviewed

Surname	First name	Position	Institution	Location
Aguirre	Lorenzo Campos	The GEF Liaison Officer	FAO RLC	Chile
Ara	Edward	Former manager of Component 1	FAO consultant	N/A
Arcia	Emilio	Specialist in M&E, physical and financial monitoring and follow up and monitoring support	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Arends	Ernesto	Manager of Component 3	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Bagnarol	Giovanny	Director (SINIIF and project website)	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Barreto	Guillermo	Former Minister of People's Power for Ecosocialism, researcher	Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research	Libertador, Capital District
Barrios	Eric	Consultant/instructor	UNEG	Piar, Bolívar
Bastardo	William	Regional manager	CONARE	
Bermudez	Mary	Field technician	ENAFOR	
Betancourt	Rosa	Former communications and dissemination specialist, editing and documentation specialist and graphic designer	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Blanco	Pilar Alexander	Fauna specialist, author of a study on fauna and proposals for its sustainable use in the RFI; updating the lists of species and their conservation status	Consultant, FAO Venezuela	Piar, Bolívar
Bonte	Alexis	Budget manager, representative	FAO Venezuela	Chacao, Miranda
Briceño	Delia	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Cabello	Yveth	Manager of Component 2	FAO Venezuela	Caroní, Bolívar
Cáceres	Alicia	Specialist in arbuscular mycorrhizae and soil microorganisms	Central University of Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Campos	Ramón	Waraira Repano National Park coordinator	INPARQUES	Visit to Waraira Repano National Park
Cegarra	Jesús	Technical project coordinator	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Corrales	Wylmar	General Directorate of Forest Heritage (trained person)	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Dávila	Miriam	SINIIF development team, Component 1	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Desa	Angel	Director, Department of Sociology	Carabobo University	Libertador, Capital District
de Severo Ríos	Hija	Community member	La Esperanza	RFI
Díaz	Marcelis	Community member	Botanamo	RFI

Appendix 1. List of people interviewed

Surname	First name	Position	Institution	Location
Diaz	Marlene	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Díaz	Miguelina	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Echenique	Zoraima	National director of the project and general director of forestry heritage	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Fernández	Daiseli	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Fernández	Yureima	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Ferrer	Fidel	President	IFLA	
Figuera	Enrique	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
García	Rosita Briceño	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Girardi	Jesús Castro	Operations and administration	FAO Venezuela	Chacao, Miranda
Giron	Isabel	Community member	Pozo Oscuro	RFI
Giron	Karina	Community member	Pozo Oscuro	RFI
González	Iliana	Administrator	Tukupu EPSDC	Tumeremo, Bolívar
González	María Eugenia	Former communications and dissemination specialist, editing and documentation specialist and graphic designer	FAO Venezuela	
Guevara	Alexis	Director of indigenous affairs	Bolivarian Mayor's Office, Sifontes municipality	Sifontes, Bolívar
Gutierrez	Josbel	Researchers	UNEG	
Herrera	Danmar	Director of forestry research	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	
Herrera	Rafael	General manager	CONARE	
Isidro	Magaly	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Jarschel	Barbara	Leading technical consultant	FAO RLC	Chile
Lara	Liliam	Former manager, Component 4	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Lehema	Jennifer	Consultant (trained person)	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Lorca	Josué	Minister	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Lugo	Jonathan	Plant production director	CONARE	
Maneiro	Alica	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Maneiro	Ana William	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Maneiro	Chiliana	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Maneiro	Inés	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Maneiro	Maribin	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Medina	Paul	Community member	Matupo I	RFI

Surname	First name	Position	Institution	Location
Méndez	Jesús	President	FUNDAMBIENTE	Libertador, Capital District
Méndez	Yésika	Administrative assistant	FAO Venezuela	Chacao, Miranda
Mireles	Mauricio	Expert on indigenous issues	FAO RLC	Chile
Morales	Manuel	Information technology (trained person)	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Nait	Danelis	Community member	La Iguana	RFI
Oviedo	Manuel Claros	Programme assistant representative	FAO Venezuela	Chacao, Miranda
Pacheco	Carlos	Specialist in sustainable forest management and determination of emissions, reserves and carbon capture	University of the Andes Venezuela	RFI
Padrón	Fanny	Specialist in M&E, physical and financial monitoring and M&E support		
Peña	Elenio	General Directorate of Forest Heritage (trained person)	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Penso	Rosmary	SINIIF development team, Component 1	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Pérez	Alejando	Development Financing and Partnerships Officer	United Nations System Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Libertador, Capital District
Piera	Carlos Velazquez	Captain	Matupo I	RFI
Piguera	Abraham	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Piguera	Alicia	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Piguera	Diyaira	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Piguera	Pedro Antonio	Captain	Botanamo	RFI
Piñango	Julio	Responsible for monitoring letters of agreement	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Poyo	José	Director, Indigenous Centre	Bolivarian University of Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Prisco	Elizabeth	Information technology (trained person)	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Ramírez	Omar	SINIIF development team, Component 1		Libertador, Capital District
Ríos	Severo	Community member and former community captain	La Esperanza	RFI
Ríos	Yasmira	Vice President	Tukupu EPSDC	RFI
Rivas	Cecilia	Captain of captains of the Kariña community and President of the Tukupu EPSDC	Tukupu EPSDC	RFI
Rivas	Edgardo	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Rodríguez	Héctor	General manager	ENFORESTAL nursery	Piar, Bolívar
Rodríguez	Ysabel	Relationship with communities	Tukupu EPSDC	RFI

Appendix 1. List of people interviewed

Surname	First name	Position	Institution	Location
Rojas	Gerardo	Specialist for the systematization of experiences in community forest management and coordinator of the Project Identification Form on sustainable landscape management	FAO Venezuela	Libertador, Capital District
Rondón	Gerardo	Supervisor, participatory forest monitoring, operational forest plan, forest co-management	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Rosales	Denny	SINIIF development team, Component 1	Consultants	Libertador, Capital District
Salazar	Luisa	Community member	Botanamo	RFI
Serrano	Julio	Specialist in forestry use with reduced impact	University of the Andes Venezuela	RFI
Serrano	Miguel	The GEF operational technical focal point and Director General of integration and international affairs	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	Libertador, Capital District
Suárez	Nairobys	Staff member	International Organization for Migration	Caroní, Bolívar
Terán	Ysa	Executive	INPARQUES	Sucre, Miranda
Urbina	Víctor	Administrative Assistant, representative	FAO Venezuela	Chacao, Miranda
Van Lierop	Pieter	LTO	FAO RLC	Chile
Vásquez	Willmer	President	Misión Árbol	
Vegas	Arnoldo	Director	Misión Árbol	
Villasmil	Nolan	Sustainable development officer	British Embassy, Caracas	Chacao, Miranda
William	Ana Celia	Community member	Matupo I	RFI
Yánez	María	Indigenous representative	National Assembly	Piar, Bolívar

Appendix 2. The GEF evaluation criteria rating table

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Sustainable forest management, co-management and biodiversity conservation are the main strategies to combat climate change, stop the loss of biodiversity and reverse soil degradation at the local, regional and global levels.
A1.1. Alignment with the GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The project aligned with four of the GEF focal areas on biodiversity, land degradation, climate change and sustainable forest management/REDD+, and with an FAO strategic priority in terms of its support for the country's forestry policy.
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	Despite the significant political and economic changes that the country faces, the strategic relevance of the project was maintained at the local and national levels. Also, the project contributed to meeting the basic needs of the majority of the beneficiaries linked to their means of subsistence. Adapting to climate change, conserving biodiversity and reversing soil degradation remain global priorities that were addressed by international treaties.
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	S	The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, in collaboration with FAO, is implementing the Integrated Management of Multiple-use Landscapes with High Conservation Value for the Sustainable Development of the Venezuelan Andean Region (GCP/VEN/020/GFF) project. This will promote the continuity of various achievements of the GCP/VEN/011/GFF project.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	S	The project generated strategic results: the development of the SINIIF; solid methodological bases and capacities for sustainable forest management; and the restoration of degraded land. In addition, it generated co-benefits such as the creation of the Tukupu EPSDC and a proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System.
B1.1. Delivery of project outputs	S	Most of the key expected outcomes of the project were achieved. There were difficulties in assessing compliance with one of the goals of Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 due to design problems in the results framework.
B1.2. Progress towards outcomes and project objectives	S	The project achieved its overall environmental and development objectives and most of its key project outcomes.
- Outcome 1.1	MS	The project improved functional capabilities for national forestry M&E, enabling M&E on

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		4 613 431 ha of ecosystems. The SINIIF is functioning, but not as fully as anticipated in the PRODOC. There are proposals to continue its strengthening and expansion.
- Outcome 1.2	S	The knowledge and assessment of biodiversity associated with forests and critical carbon areas were improved. This was included in the update of the POMF of Unit V of the RFI.
- Outcome 2.1	HS	As a result of the project, 16 320 ha were under forest management and harvesting plans. The goal in terms of the number of people trained was almost met and there is evidence of the development of capacities related to sustainable forest management of some actors. This, however, cannot be generalized for all participants in the training activities. In addition, relevant co-benefits were generated such as the creation of the first indigenous forestry company in the country and the proposal of the Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System.
- Outcome 2.2	MS	The goal of avoided indirect emissions was significantly exceeded, but the goal of avoided direct emissions was only partially achieved. One goal of this outcome could not be evaluated due to a design issue.
- Outcome 2.3	S	The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, as holder and executing partner of the project, created a platform for interinstitutional dialogue and coordination called the Forestry Cabinet. Nine out of ten interinstitutional agreements were generated that strengthen it.
- Outcome 3.1	MS	The goal in terms of number of people trained was almost met. In the interviews and field visits, it was noted that individual capacities were developed. However, there was not enough evidence to generalize that all of the trained people developed capacities.
- Outcome 3.2	S	The project reported a sequestration of 571 903.40 tCO_2eq on 1 559 ha following restorations through reforestation, analogue forestry, agroforestry and passive restoration.
- Overall rating of progress towards meeting objectives and outcomes	S	The project met its global environmental and development objectives, generating most of the expected global environmental benefits.
B1.3. Likelihood of impact	S	According to the project's theory of change (TOC), the progress made by the project is on track to generate the expected impacts.
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency	S	Management during project execution was mostly efficient. This involved the implementation of adaptive measures that reduced, as much as possible, the impact of important challenges faced by the project, such as COVID-19 and the frequent turnover of high-

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		ranking officials. In fact, this led to an 18-month project extension. The direct execution modality, with the participation of government agencies through letters of agreement, strengthened institutional capacities. Regardless, there were challenges. The organizational structure was adequate, but there could be more active participation from the technical areas of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and local personnel in the intervention area.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT RESULTS		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	Moderate institutional, environmental, financial and sociopolitical risks were identified. These will need to be addressed to achieve the expected impacts of the project.
D1.1. Financial risks	ML	The Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and its related entities still depend on external resources to ensure the continuity of the project's achievements. However, the Tukupu company could finance its needs through its economic benefits from timber sales.
D1.2. Sociopolitical risks	ML	There were frequent institutional changes due to the complex context of economic and sociopolitical instability. Regardless, the forestry issue has remained a priority.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	The level of appropriation of achievements at the institutional level is high. There are projects underway or in the process of formulation that will provide continuity to some of the project outputs and outcomes.
D1.4. Environmental risks	ML	The Tukupu EPSDC is expected to lead the implementation of good sustainable forest management practices acquired during project execution. This includes environmental studies, but there is uncertainty regarding whether the capabilities acquired will be sufficient to ensure the fulfilment of these responsibilities.
D2. Catalysis and replication	ML	The Integrated Management of Multiple-use Landscapes with High Conservation Value for the Sustainable Development of the Venezuelan Andean Region GCP/VEN/020/GFF project and the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Caroní River Basin GCP/VEN/023P/GFF project (in development), and the Management of Sustainable Landscapes for the Conservation of the Forest Biome and Maintenance of Ecosystem Services in the State of Amazonas, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (in the project identification form stage) will replicate some of the good practices generated by the project. This includes the multipurpose forest. In addition, the proposed Presidential Decree for the Creation of the National Forest Co-management System, once

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		approved, is expected to boost the expansion of forest co-management in the country.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness	MS	The project design addressed key problems facing the country, and the vertical logic of its structure has allowed for the fulfilment of its environmental and development objectives. The main areas for improvement involve the need for greater visibility of indigenous communities and their role in the conservation and sustainable use of forests in the PRODOC, and design problems and adjustments to the results framework.
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	The project was adequately conceptualized, effectively supervised and generated spaces for strategic decision-making.
E2.1. Quality of project implementation by FAO (Budget Holder, LTO, Project Task Force, etc.)	S	FAO's role as implementing agency was adequate with the effective incorporation of the vision and priorities of the Venezuelan government in the conceptualization of the project. This involved relevant and effective technical support but with few field visits due, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic.
E2.2. Project oversight (project steering committee, project working group, etc.)	S	The project steering committee met periodically and fulfilled its oversight and strategic decision-making functions.
E3. Quality of project execution For decentralized projects: PMU/Budget Holder For Operational Partners Implementation Modality projects: executing agency	S	The PMU and FAO Representation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela performed adequately in the operation of the project and the management and administration of its resources, as well as in the implementation of adaptive measures to face challenge. Areas for improvement include reducing limitations for the identification and M&E of some new risks.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	S	The effectiveness of budget planning was mainly affected by the turnover of public officials and COVID-19. Committed co-financing was exceeded (107 percent) and played an important role in mitigating the effects of late disbursements.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	HS	The project was successful in the involvement of government partners and counterparts, which resulted in greater collaboration and an increase in the project portfolio of FAO Venezuela with the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. It also generated new partnerships. The involvement of indigenous communities was inconsistent due to cultural differences.
E6. Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products	S	The project facilitated the generation and systematization of knowledge with the creation of a forestry information system and various publications on the FAO platform. Communications was not very effective during

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		the first half of the project but improved in the second half using various means such as a local radio programme.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	MS	The implementation of the M&E plan was almost completed in its entirety. Areas for improvement were identified in the lack of reporting of monitoring tools during the mid-term evaluation and the complex monitoring that was carried out during the project.
E7.1. M&E design	S	The M&E plan was practical and sufficient to meet the GEF requirements for project monitoring.
E7.2. M&E implementation plan (including financial and human resources)	MS	The monitoring plan was almost completely implemented in its entirety. The reporting of monitoring tools during the mid-term evaluation are among the areas for improvement. However, these were presented during the terminal evaluation with only the climate change tool still pending. The project monitoring system was complex, as was the systematization of information on some outputs and outcomes, which made it difficult to assess compliance. The resources were sufficient to allow for the hiring of several support staff.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	S	The impact of these factors was reduced and the effects were mitigated, which allowed for the achievement of most of the expected project results.
F. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S	The inclusion of the gender approach was considered during project design and execution. This contributed to closing some gender gaps, but the project did not provide follow up or systematize these advances and did not develop a gender plan.
F2. Human rights issues	S	The project promoted human rights, such as the right to food. It did not generate any type of discrimination against women, youth or the elderly.
F3. Indigenous Peoples	S	The project implemented an FPIC process, which facilitated interaction with indigenous communities and respect for their customs, rules and self-governance structure. It was possible to establish the Tukupu EPSDC, which is managed by representatives from the indigenous communities. This will generate benefits for the local communities. The lack of an analysis that would have allowed for a better characterization of these communities and their visibility as key actors in forest conservation was noted. Further, there was a lack of support from an expert in indigenous communities to more robustly promote the revaluation of their customs and traditions linked to the

The GEF criteria/subcriteria	Rating	Summary comments
		conservation and use of the forest, and strengthen the application of the FPIC.
F4. Environmental and social safeguards	HS	The project's risk level was classified as Category B, meaning that the project could have adverse yet not significant environmental or social impacts that could be prevented or mitigated. However, due to the mitigation measures implemented by the project, the risk decreased to low. This means that the project had no or minimal potential negative environmental or social impacts.
Overall project rating	HS	**Working with indigenous communities is complicated. Although the project did not have an expert to provide support to this area, it achieved important, unexpected results like the creation of the first indigenous forestry company. This led to forestry activities in one of the project areas and will be key in providing sustainability to the good practices on sustainable forest management and the forest restoration carried out in the RFI. Social benefits will also be generated for indigenous communities. In addition, the project generated a broad methodological framework and information to strengthen knowledge related to the forests in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and improve their M&E.**

Appendix 3. The GEF evaluation criteria rating scheme

PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

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

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

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

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

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

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

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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

i. design

ii. implementation

SUSTAINABILITY

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

Rating	***Description***
Likely (L)	*There is little or no risk to sustainability.*
Moderately Likely (ML)	*There are moderate risks to sustainability.*
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	*There are significant risks to sustainability.*
Unlikely (U)	*There are severe risks to sustainability.*
Unable to Assess (UA)	*Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.*

Appendix 4. The GEF co-financing table

Co-financing sources	Name of co-financer	Type of co-financing	Amount confirmed upon approval by the Executive Director (USD)	Actual amount materialized as of 30 June 2022 (USD)	Actual amount materialized as of 31 December 2022 (confirmed by the Evaluation Team) (USD)	Total expected disbursement at project closure (USD)
The GEF	FAO	In-kind	230 000.00	230 000.00	256 435.16	256 435.16
National government	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	In-kind	3 000 000.00	2 623 348.26	2 969 999.08	3 267 321.00
National government	ENAFOR	In-kind	10 000 000.00	8 363 959.98	10 257 283.03	12 725 620.00
National government	CONARE	In-kind	8 000 000.00	7 265 690.96	8 395 355.32	9 526 733.12
National government	Misión Árbol	In-kind	3 000 000.00	2 612 985.97	3 003 002.32	3 387 615.26
National government	IFLA	In-kind	1 500 000.00	1 374 815.04	1 500 000	2 325 336.00
National government	FUNDAMBIENTE	In-kind	N/A	N/A	4 330	ND
National government	Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities	In-kind	N/A	N/A	1 096 218.72	ND
International cooperations	British Embassy	Cash	N/A	N/A	60 000.00	N/A
		TOTAL	25 730 000.00	22 470 800.21	27 542 623.63	31 489 060.54

Source: FAO Venezuela project team. Data as of 31 December 2022.

Appendix 5. Results matrix

Component 1. National Integrated Forest Information System

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Outcome 1.1. Improvement of national forest M&E capacity, within the framework of the National Forest Inventory	Biodiversity Indicator-2. Indicator 2.1: direct and indirect coverage; Sustainable forest management/REDD+ Indicator 2.1: improved capacities to reduce emissions and increase carbon reserves	Within the framework of the national forest inventory, 1 748 temporary plots (0.5 ha) for measurement at the national level have been defined at the design level, with progress on the ground on 8 percent of plots. In the RFI, forest mass, biodiversity indices, lists of species and carbon in aerial biomass were estimated for a sub-block of 10 000 ha.	4 465 909 ha of forest ecosystems monitored and evaluated through protocols that facilitate the collection and analysis of high-quality data, including the generation of thematic biodiversity maps, the evaluation of GHG flows and stocks, the identification of critical carbon areas and the development of national monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification standards.	The goal was surpassed. 3 821 900 ha of the RFI, 577 222 ha of xerophytic lands and 214 309 ha of mangroves (for a total of 4 613 431 ha) were monitored and evaluated as products of the component through the implementation of the protocols and methodologies developed. Thematic biodiversity maps were generated and estimates of carbon reserves in the different deposits and carbon dioxide emissions and absorptions were made. Also, critical carbon areas were identified and national monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification standards were developed.	• Document, Pacheco, C. 2022 "Resultado 1.1. Monitoreo y evaluación de los ecosistemas forestales de la RFI, Tierras Xerofíticas y Manglares" [Outcome 1.1: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Forest Ecosystems of the RFI, Xerophytic Lands and Mangroves]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Protocols generated as part of Outputs 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.6 • Direct observation in the field and interviews	103%
Output 1.1.1. Information system that integrates data on carbon reserves and flows, biodiversity, physical-natural-sociocultural and	Percentage implementation of the SINIIF	There are several information systems that are not integrated: National Forest Statistical Information System; National Forest Inventory Information	The SINIIF is functioning at 100 percent of its capacity and providing updated and high-quality information on forests, highlighting carbon reserves and flows, biodiversity, natural	The goal has been partially met. The project designed and developed the SINIIF, which has functional and thematic modules, to provide information on forest, tree, species, thematic maps and social,	• Direct navigation in the SINIIF and demonstration by the project team	75%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
economic environment, and state and characterization of forest ecosystems that provides high-quality information for decision-making		System; System of Electronic Guidelines for Forest Assets; Geographic Information System/Current General Directorate of Forest Heritage; Venezuelan Information System on Biological Diversity.	physical, sociocultural and economic environment, and state and trends of forest ecosystems.	cultural, ethnic and economic aspects. The SINIIF is functioning, but not as fully as anticipated in the PRODOC, and is in the adjustment and data loading stage to be hosted on the servers of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. According to the PRODOC, the SINIIF should be uploaded and functioning at a central level in the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and managed by its officials to extract relevant information and support decision-making.		
Output 1.1.2. Development of protocols for updating and processing geospatial information for sustainable forest management (planning, monitoring, control and research) and for multitemporal analysis of forest coverage at the national level	Number of protocols designed	a) There is no protocol as such. Applicable decisions are made for each project according to objectives and goals and with advice from the Geographic Institute of Venezuela, universities and international organizations.	A protocol for updating and processing geospatial information for sustainable forest management (planning, monitoring, control and research). A protocol for multitemporal analysis of forest cover at the national level.	The goal has been met, as the project developed two protocols: the Protocol for Updating and Monitoring National Forest Cover using Remote Sensors, which focuses on updating and monitoring national forest cover through multitemporal analysis. With this protocol, the deforestation processes will be determined. Additionally, the project generated the Protocol for Monitoring National Forest Degradation	• Document, "Propuesta de protocolo para la actualización y el monitoreo de la cobertura forestal nacional mediante sensores remotos" [Protocol Proposal for Updating and Monitoring National Forest Cover Using Remote Sensors]. FAO. 2021 • Document, "Propuesta de	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
		b) Methodology used in the 2000–2010 deforestation map of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (Pacheco, Aguado and Mollicone, 2014)		using Remote Sensors, which focuses on determining forest degradation processes, as a result of selective forest harvesting and forest fires.	protocolo para el monitoreo de la degradación forestal nacional mediante sensores remotos" [Proposal for a Protocol for Monitoring National Forest Degradation Using Remote Sensors]. FAO. 2022 • Interviews	
Output 1.1.3. Protocol for gathering sociocultural economic information on communities and Indigenous Peoples associated with or dependent on forests	Protocol design percentage	This information is not collected within the framework of the National Forest Inventory, nor other forestry or botanical surveys.	A protocol for gathering sociocultural/economic information on communities and Indigenous Peoples associated with or dependent on forests 100 percent designed.	The goal was met. The project carried out a first version in 2017 and later, in 2022, adjustments were made. The protocol is robust and has a notable methodological foundation, highlighting a framework for the planning and application of the protocol, the characterization of Indigenous communities, the geolocation of family units and farming plots and information gathering instruments.	• Document, Dávila, M., Fernández, L., Calderón, A. and Ara, E. 2017. "Protocolos de Apoyo al SINIIF. Aspectos Socioculturales, Étnicos y Económicos" [The SINIIF Support Protocols: Sociocultural, Ethnic and Economic Aspects]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and IFLA. Mérida • Document, Dávila, M., Fernández, L. and Ara, E. 2022. "Protocolo para el Levantamiento de Información	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					Espacial Socio Ambiental con Enfoque de Género para la Caracterización de las Comunidades y Pueblos Indígenas Asociados o Dependiente de los Bosques" [Protocol for the Survey of Socioenvironmental Spatial Information with a Gender Approach for the Characterization of Communities and Indigenous Peoples Associated or Dependent on Forests]. Mérida • Interviews	

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Output 1.1.4. Study of GHG flows and stocks for three types of forest, identification of critical carbon areas and established national measuring, reporting and verification standards for GHG reduction benefits from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+)	Study carried out	There is no national plan for forest carbon estimates, but specific studies have been carried out in different types of forests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Under the RAINFOR protocol, 12 permanent plots and personnel training have been established in Imataca and other forests in the state of Amazonas.	A study of GHG flows and stocks in three forest types, the identification of critical carbon areas and established national monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification standards for GHG reduction benefits from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+).	The goal was met. The estimation of GHG flows and reserves (specifically carbon dioxide) was carried out for nine types of forest, considering ten types of land use classes and forest degradation as a result of selective forest use. The critical carbon areas were determined spatially, by crossing the 2000 and 2020 maps, in which deforested areas were considered critical carbon areas. The monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification standards were established based on the results and products generated during project implementation. In addition, the "Methodological Guide for Carbon Estimation in the RFI" was designed.	• Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Producto 1.1.4: Estudio de flujos y reservas de GEI en tres tipos de bosque, identificación de áreas críticas de carbono y estándares de monitoreo, medición, reporte y verificación nacionales establecidos para los beneficios de reducción de GEI de la deforestación y degradación forestal (REDD+)" [Output 1.1.4: Study of GHG Flows and Reserves in Three Types of Forest, Identification of Critical Carbon Areas and National Monitoring, Measurement, Reporting and Verification Standards Established for the GHG Reduction Benefits of the Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)]. Ministry of	100% with coverage in nine forest types instead of three types

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document. "Estudio. Reservorio de carbono. Emisiones de la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Study on Carbon Reserves and Emissions in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Estándares medición, notificaión y verificación nacionales establecidos para los beneficios de reducción de GEI de la deforestación y degradación forestal (REDD+)" [National Measuring, Reporting, and Verification Standards Established for the GHG Reduction Benefits of Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, Pacheco, C. "Guía	

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					Metodológica para la Estimación de Carbono en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Methodological Guide for Carbon Estimation in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Direct observation in the field and interviews	
Output 1.1.5. Thematic maps of biodiversity that include information on the distribution of flora species, their abundance, frequency, dominance and phytogeographic relationships	Number of thematic maps generated	There are protocols for the presentation of cartographic products at the level of the Geographic Institute of Venezuela, and experiences in maps and vegetation atlases for the cadastre. Various biodiversity indices have been included in former vegetation	Seventy-five thematic maps of biodiversity (at a scale of 1:250 000) covering the national territory that include information on the distribution of flora species, their abundance, frequency, dominance and phytogeographic relationships.	The goal was surpassed as 76 thematic maps were developed with their respective descriptive reports, covering 916 455 km^2 of the national territory. This included the 23 states plus the Capital District, the federal dependencies and the coastal provinces, where a total of 451 studies were analysed, including 317 969	• Document, 2021. "Protocolo. Directrices para el análisis espacial y la representación cartográfica de la distribución de especies de flora y la diversidad florística para la República Bolivariana de Venezuela" [Guidelines for the	101%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
		information management systems at the level of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (current Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism).		records, 17 501 species, 2 891 genera and 374 families. In addition, a database of flora species was developed for the 64 ecoregions of the country and a protocol with methodological guidelines.	Spatial Analysis and Cartographic Representation of the Distribution of Flora Species and Floristic Diversity for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism. Caracas • A total of 76 maps at a scale of 1:250 000 • A total of 76 descriptions of the maps • Flora species database • Interviews	
Output 1.1.6. Participatory mechanism for monitoring forest coverage and status and GHG flows in deforested and degraded forests	Percentage of participatory monitoring mechanism designed and implemented	There are experiences within the framework of Misión Árbol for the collection of seeds, phenological data, production and the planting of trees. There is no experience of dasometric measurements, carbon measurements or other monitoring of forest variables by communities. Operational plan for 6 489 ha, environmental impact	A participatory forest monitoring mechanism fully designed and implemented in an area of 3 000 ha with: a) protocols for the organization and the participation of communities/Indigenous Peoples; b) protocols on training techniques and strategies; and c) manuals and support material for the training process.	The goal was met as the Protocol for Participatory Forest Monitoring was developed, including methodological guidelines on the approach, organization and sensitization of the Indigenous community to promote their participation. Also, the protocol on training techniques and strategies was developed to promote a gradual educational process under the approach of learning by doing. Also, 15 field	• Document, Cegarra, J., Rojas, G. and Betancourt, R. E. 2022. "Monitoreo participativo del bosque. Experiencia en la reserva forestal Imataca" [Participatory Forest Monitoring: Experience in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism • Document, Rodríguez, K.d.V.P., Perdomo, D.A.S., Serrano, J., and Cordero, J.M.P. 2020.	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
		study and forest management programmes.		teaching guides for the programmed courses were prepared. In the implementation of the protocol, 41 training events were carried out and community leaders applied the measurement techniques in 105 monitoring plots (temporary and permanent) that cover an area of 44.93 ha each which, according to the optimal sampling intensity, would represent a total 4 493 ha.	"Protocolo de técnicas y estrategias de capacitación para el monitoreo participativo de bosques" [Protocol of Training Techniques and Strategies for Participatory Forest Monitoring]. FAO and Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism • Teaching guides • Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 • Document, 2022. "Análisis espacial y descriptivo de las parcelas establecidas en el área de influencia del proyecto, para la validación e implementación del mecanismo de monitoreo participativo de bosques" [Spatial and Descriptive Analysis of the Plots Established in the Project's Area of Influence for the Validation and Implementation of the	

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					Participatory Forest Monitoring Mechanism]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Direct observation of some plots in the field and interviews	
	Percentage of participation of women		At least 30 percent participation of women	The goal was exceeded since the participation of women was 38 percent.	• Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 • Interviews	127%
Outcome 1.2. Improved state of knowledge and valuation of biodiversity associated with forests and critical carbon areas as a strategy to be integrated into improved forest management at the level of management units through the development and inclusion of forest biodiversity conservation measures applied in forest management plans	Number of hectares (area) under sustainable forest management plans Biodiversity Indicator-2. Indicator 2.1: direct and indirect coverage; Sustainable forest management/REDD+ Indicator 1.2: good management practices applied in existing forests; and Land Degradation Indicator 1.5.2: protected habitat	The POMFs are prepared and implemented without considering the ecological characteristics of the forests. The RFI Unit V has a POMF prepared in 2004 that does not incorporate aspects related to global environmental benefits.	The POMF of Unit V of the RFI integrates data and information on coverage, changes in the use of forest types, deforestation, degraded areas, carbon reserves and forest biodiversity conservation measures and community participation in management decision-making.	This result does not include specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound indicators as it presents four indicators with only one goal, which generates confusion about which indicator the goal corresponds to. Further, there is a lack of horizontal logic since the indicators have hectares as the unit of measurement and the goal refers to a document (the POMF). The goal also lacks specificity since, according to the explanations provided by the project team, it was supposed to focus on updating the document, which is not specified in the results framework. These	• Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Resultado 1.2. Plan de Ordenación y Manejo de la Unidad N-5, Reserva Forestal Imataca, estado Bolívar" [Outcome 1.2. Planning and Management Plan for Unit V, RFI, Bolívar State]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Interviews and direct observation	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				areas for improvement caused this result to be confused with Outcome 2.1, which presents similar indicators. However, once the Evaluation Team received the corresponding clarifications from the project team, and in an effort by the Evaluation Team to demonstrate the work carried out, the updating of the POMF is considered an achievement – including data and information on forest cover, changes in land use, degraded areas, carbon reserves and capture, conservation measures for biodiversity and forest ecosystems, forest potential, values of ecosystem products and services, community participation in decision-making, and guidelines for forest operation plans.		
Output 1.2.1. Lists of forest species (endemic, threatened, exotic) and critical carbon areas	Species conservation protocol designed	There is taxonomic information on species at the level of forest inventories and botanical and fauna surveys, and analysis of endangered and threatened species,	A species risk assessment protocol (e.g. International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species list [IUCN Red List Index] and the Convention on	The goal was met as the project developed the species risk assessment protocol for the methodological process to be used for the evaluation of the risk status of the species	• Document, Catalán, A., Arteaga, A., Blanco, C. 2018. "Protocolos de apoyo al SINIIF. Evaluación del Estado de Riesgo de las Especies. Propuesta metodológica según	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
		but there is no cross-referencing of information or it is at a very general level. There are forest cover maps and plots of mining concessions, but there is no updated quantification of affected areas or estimation of losses of carbon, biodiversity, etc. due to deforestation and degradation.	International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES]).	in relation to their possible extinction.	el protocolo UICN adaptado y modificado" [Protocols to Support the SINIIF Assessment of the Risk Status of the Species Methodological Proposal According to the Adapted and Modified IUCN Protocol]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Interviews	
	Percentage of the conservation status attribute developed in the SINIIF species module		100 percent conservation status attribute developed in the species module to incorporate information into the SINIIF.	The goal was met as the general conceptualization of the species module was carried out, including the taxa and its attributes. The database of the fauna species module was also designed, including conservation status. The Flora Species module was incorporated into the SINIIF.	• Document, Cernuda, E. A. 2020. "Conceptualización General del Sistema Módulo: Especies. Biodiversidad: Taxa y sus Atributos" [General Conceptualization of the Module System: Species; Biodiversity: Taxa and its Attributes]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, Blanco, P. A. 2021. "Diseño de la Base de Datos del Módulo de Especies	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					de Fauna para Integrar al SINIIF" [Design of the Fauna Species Module Database to Integrate into the SINIIF]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Informe. Producto 1.2.1: Listados de especies forestales, de fauna y flora (endemismo, amenazadas, exóticas) de la RFI asociada a áreas críticas de carbono de la unidad V" [Report: Output 1.2.1. Lists of Forest, Fauna and Flora Species (Endemism, Threatened, Exotic) of the RFI Associated with Critical Carbon Areas of Unit V]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Interviews	
	List of forest species, flora and fauna with their updated conservation status		An updated list of forest species, flora and fauna and their conservation status.	The goal was met since the RFI's list of flora species was updated, in line with the 2003 edition of the *Libro*	• Document, "Informe: Listados de especies de flora presentes en la Reserva Forestal	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				Rojo [Red Book], as well as that of vertebrate species in accordance with the 2015 edition of the *Libro Rojo* [Red Book]. Also included is the list of fish and flora registered or with distribution in xerophytic lands, mangroves and the RFI.	Imataca" [Report: Lists of Species of Flora Present in the RFI] • Document, "Informe: Listado de especies de vertebrados presentes en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Report: List of Vertebrate Species Present in the RFI] • Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Listados de especies de flora presentes en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Lists of Species of Flora Present in the RFI"]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, Blanco, P. 2022. "Listado de especies de vertebrados presentes en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [List of Vertebrate Species Present in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • List of fish species recorded or distributed in the	

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					xerophytic lands, mangroves and RFI • Interviews	
Output 1.2.2. Guidelines for the study and definition of zoning of management units according to the state and conservation needs of biodiversity and forest ecosystems using the information generated by the SINIIF	Guidelines designed	There are territorial planning experiences, governance plans in national parks and other ABRAE, zoning with different criteria and objectives in ABRAE and other non-protected areas, and management plans for basins close to the RFI, as is the case of the Caroní basin.	A document with guidelines for the study and definition of zoning of management units based on the state and conservation needs of biodiversity and forest ecosystems using the information generated by the SINIIF.	The goal was met, since the project prepared a document with the guidelines for the study and definition of zoning of management units of the Unit V of the RFI according to the state and conservation needs of biodiversity and the forest ecosystem, using the information generated by the SINIIF.	• Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Producto 1.2.2: Directrices para el estudio y definición de zonificación de unidades de manejo acorde al estado y necesidades de conservación de la biodiversidad y ecosistemas forestales utilizando la información generada por el SINIIF" [Output 1.2.2: Guidelines for the Study and Definition of the Zoning of Management Units According to the State and Conservation Needs of Biodiversity and Forest Ecosystems Using the Information generated by the SINIIF]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO	100%
Output 1.2.3. Database of goods and products of	Percentage of design and implementation of database of goods	There exists: i) scattered information on the use	A database of goods and products of biodiversity and forest ecosystems,	The goal was met. The database was designed and uploaded to the SINIIF. It can	• Document, "Estudio del potencial etnobotánico de la	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
biodiversity and forest ecosystems (including forest reserves), plus timber and non-timber products and their multiple uses by local communities	and products of biodiversity and forest ecosystems	of species and ethnobotany; ii) forest classification systems as a generator of products and services; and iii) the economic valuation techniques of forest or ecosystem services, etc. However, there is no: i) consensus classification of products, goods and services; or ii) a systematized database of these aspects.	including timber and non-timber products and their multiple uses by local communities, fully designed and implemented.	currently be consulted in the test version of the system. The database was prepared based on the study of the ethnobotanical potential of the RFI and three studies prepared for Outputs 3.2.2 and 3.2.4, which contain lists of timber and non-timber products and their use by Indigenous communities. This highlights their uses: medicinal; food; construction; household goods; fuel; crafts; toxins; ornamentals; and dyes.	Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Study of the Ethnobotanical Potential of the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF, available online in the SINIIF trial version	

Component 2. Strengthening of capacities and innovative instruments for sustainable forest management

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Outcome 2.1. Community actors, national government and local governments involved in sustainable forest management through new participatory management tools, covering at least 167 320 ha of forests in Management Unit V of the RFI	1) Sustainable forest management/REDD+: area (number of hectares) under application of good management practices and sustainable forest co-management in RFI forests (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	ENFORESTAL developed forest operations plans for the use of the Santa María I (2013–2014) and Santa María II (2014–2015) Units for a total of 6 486.61 ha, in which good forest management practices are applied. However, aspects related to forest co-management have not been addressed.	1) 167 320 ha in Unit V of the RFI under sustainable forest management/co-management plans	The indicator for this outcome is similar to one of the indicators in Outcome 1.2, which caused confusion in the evaluation. However, after the clarifications provided by the project team, the fulfilment of this goal is considered complete, having an area of 167 320 ha covered by the POMF and two operational plans for forestry use in the RFI.	• Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Resultado 1.2. Plan de Ordenación y Manejo de la Unidad N-5, Reserva Forestal Imataca, estado Bolívar" [Outcome 1.2: Ordination and Management Plan of Unit V, RFI, Bolivar State]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, 2021. "Plan forestal operativo. Unidad de producción de comanejo Tukupu EPSDC, Unidad de Aprovechamiento N° 1, Sección 1-a. Tukupu" [Forest Operations Plan: The Tukupu EPSDC Honey Production Unit No. 1, Section 1-a. Tukupu] • Document, 2022. "Plan Forestal Operativo. Unidad de producción de Comanejo Tukupu II. Unidad de Producción UPI-A. Tukupu" [Forest Operations Plan: Co-management Tukupu II Production Unit UPI-A. Tukupu]	100%
	2) Sustainable forest management/REDD+ 2.1: improved	The General Directorate of Forests (current	2) Five institutions, 10 Indigenous communities and at	Given the complexity of determining the fulfilment of the goal, since it has several	• Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022	50%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
	capacities to reduce emissions and increase carbon stocks. Number of institutions, Indigenous communities and people with strengthened technical capacities for the implementation of sustainable forest co-management and other participatory forest governance tools (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	General Directorate of Forest Heritage) and ENFORESTAL have professional and technical personnel trained in various topics related to the forestry sector (25 and 15 people, respectively). There is no information on other institutions related to the forestry sector. Indigenous communities do not have sufficient technical capacities in forest management. Sustainable forest co-management has not been addressed either at the institutional or community level.	least 500 people, representatives of institutions and communities (at least 40 percent women) with developed and strengthened capacities for forest management and co-management of the RFI (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force).	subgoals, it was determined that the goal has two main parameters: one management goal that refers to the number of institutions or people trained; and another strategic goal, which includes capacity building and development. To estimate the first parameter, the training monitoring matrix was consulted, provided by the project, which contains the systematization of all the workshops held by the project. According to the matrix, 167 workshops are recognized for Outcome 2.1. However, only eight workshops were exclusive for that outcome (ID: 0018, 0026, 0029, 0032, 0036, 0037, 0038 and 0129), and the other workshops are shared or linked to other results of the component and Components 1 and 2. Due to the inability to determine what percentage of the workshops contribute exclusively to Outcome 2.1, only the eight aforementioned workshops were counted, given that it was the only way to make an objective measurement of compliance with the goal. Workshop 141 was not counted either since it	• Database accessed 4 February 2023 • Interviews	

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				corresponds to a work meeting rather than training. In these eight workshops, the participation of 11 institutions was reported, which exceeded the goal, but representatives from only six Indigenous communities participated (a total of 180 participants). The participation of women was exceeded. Regarding the second parameter, the project did not measure capacity development. As a result of the evaluation, it can be mentioned that some people perceive that their capabilities have been developed. However, given the limited number of responses received, these results cannot be generalized to all of those who received training, so it cannot be claimed that all of them strengthened their capabilities, which is why the fulfilment of this goal was only partial.		
Output 2.1.1. Technical-legal strengthening programme for human resources implemented to promote and sustain	Design of the training programme	The General Directorate of Forests (current General Directorate of Forest Heritage) and ENFORESTAL have professional	Design of a training programme	The goal was met, since the project designed the programme for technical/legal strengthening of human resources for sustainable forest management under an ecosocial approach.	Document, Bracamonte, L., Peña, K. and Contreras, W. "Producto 2.1.1. Programa de Fortalecimiento Técnico - Legal de los recursos humanos en el Manejo Forestal Sustentable (MFS)" [Output 2.1.1: Technical-Legal Strengthening Programme	100%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
innovations in sustainable forest management using information generated by the SINIIF		and technical officials trained in various topics related to the forestry sector (25 and 15 people, respectively).			for Human Resources in Sustainable Forest Management]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Water and FAO	
	Number of training workshops		Twenty training workshops held	Although the project reported 30 workshops associated with this output, only eight are exclusively for this output. Therefore, the fulfilment of this goal is partial.	Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 Interviews	40%
	Number of people trained		A total of 100 people trained	The goal was exceeded, where 180 people participated.	Database accessed 4 February 2023 Interviews	180%
	Percentage of participation of women		Participation of women in the programme of at least 40 percent	The goal was exceeded since the participation of women was 43.3 percent.	Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 Interviews	108%
Output 2.1.2. Forest operations plans based on information generated by the SINIIF for forest planning and management with a livelihood focus developed with local governments and community organizations	Number of forest operations plans designed and implemented	ENFORESTAL developed operational plans for the use of the Santa María I (2013–2014) and Santa María II Units (2014–2015, currently being executed). The plans do not include a livelihood focus.	Two forest operations plans designed and implemented	The goal was partially met, since two co-management forest operation plans were designed with the Tukupu EPSDC. The first is in the implementation phase, covering an area of 1 000 ha, located in Unit C-3 of the RFI, and the second plan, which awaits the completion of the first to be implemented, will be executed on 47 916 ha located in Units N-5 and C-2 of the RFI. It should be noted that these plans include activities with a livelihoods focus, such as: implementation of	• Document, 2021. "Plan forestal operativo. Unidad de producción de comanejo Tukupu EPSDC, Unidad de Aprovechamiento N° 1, Sección 1-a. Tukupu" [Forest Operations Plan: The Tukupu EPSDC Honey Production Unit, Exploitation Unit No. 1, Section 1-a. Tukupu] • Document, 2022. "Plan Forestal Operativo. Unidad de producción de Comanejo Tukupu II. Unidad de Producción UPI-A. Tukupu" [Forest Operations Plan: Co-management of the Tukupu II	75%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				agroforestry systems; use and marketing of non-timber forest products; establishment of community and family nurseries; support in the transfer of agricultural products; and attention to health, education and food services.	Production Unit. Production Unit UPI-A. Tukupu] • Resolution document No. 189 to allocate 6 487.12 ha to the Tukupu EPSDC for forest use • Strategic partnership agreement between Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, ENAFOR and Tukupu for the use of 47 916 ha • Direct observation	
Output 2.1.3. Pilot scheme for forestry co-management with communities or other types of social organizations	Percentage of the pilot scheme for forest co-management designed and implemented	There is currently no co-management scheme. The legal basis is contained in the Law on the Transfer of Powers, which allows for the transfer of powers to communities or social organizations.	Pilot scheme for forest co-management designed and fully implemented.	The goal was met since the project designed the pilot scheme for forest co-management with the Kariña Indigenous communities, so that they could participate in management units in the RFI. The implementation of the framework was developed in several phases: promotion and consultation with the Indigenous community; formation of the Tukupu EPSDC on behalf of the Indigenous community; request for the unit to be co-managed; approval and signing of the agreement; preparation of the forest operations plan; and execution of the plan.	• Document, Rojas, G., Ferrer, F., Fernandez, L., Gonzalez, I., Deza, A., Avila, H. and Cabello, I. "Comanejo Forestal. Un Esquema Piloto en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Forest Co-management: A Pilot Scheme in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Interviews and direct observation • Strategic partnership agreements between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Tukupu, signed on 29 October 2021 and 5 August 2022	100%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Outcome 2.2. Development and initial implementation of a national programme for the application of environmental and social sustainability standards for the production of timber and non-timber forest products	1) Demonstration area (number of hectares) of Unit V of the RFI under application of the pilot scheme of national standards of environmental and social sustainability in balance with the provision of forest goods and services (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	There are no national standards for the production of timber and non-timber forest products in natural/native forests. The Forest Law contains provisions for the development of sustainability standards for certification by the competent body (Article 112), which have not been developed. There are forest management instruments: the Management Plan and Forest Operations Plan. However, there are no participatory forest monitoring mechanisms.	1) A demonstration area within Unit V, covering 15 000 ha, managed under environmental and social sustainability standards for the production of timber and non-timber forest products, and applying participatory monitoring mechanisms (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force).	This outcome has a design problem since the description of the outcome is not consistent with the indicator and the proposed goal. Further, in the interviews it was explained that this demonstration area corresponds to the area in which participatory forest monitoring was applied, which the project counts in both Outputs 1.1.6 and 2.2.2. In this case, the achievement of Output 2.2.2 cannot be assessed because that achievement was already counted in Output 1.1.6, and as reported by the project team, Output 2.2.2 is also part of this Outcome 2.2.		Compliance cannot be assessed for the reasons explained in the progress column
	2) Sustainable forest management/REDD+: direct and indirect	A loss of 147 320 tCO_2eq per year is	2.a) Direct emissions avoided: 1 136 759.35 tCO_2eq	2.a) The goal was partially met since of the 25 000 ha, 1 668 ha were used with direct	• Document, Pacheco, C. 2022. "Estimación del indicador emisiones y secuestro de	Goal 2a: 9% Goal 2b: 187%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
	emissions avoided. Climate change mitigation indicator-5: land use, land use change and forestry (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	estimated due to the use of conventional forestry techniques.	for the five years of the project on 25 000 ha (227 351.87 tCO_2eq for 5 000 ha per year). 2.b) Indirect avoided emissions: 18 188 149.06 tCO2eq for the five years of the project (3 637 629.92 tCO_2eq per year on 80 000 ha) (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force).	avoided emissions of 100 776.06 tCO_2eq. 2.b) For this goal, the indirect emissions avoided are added due to the fact that the total area of 25 000 ha was not used and the conservation area of the reserve remained intact. That is, since 23 332 ha were not used and remained intact, 5 294 929.15 tCO_2eq were indirectly avoided, plus 28 760 011.56 tCO_2eq, which correspond to the indirect emissions avoided by the conservation of 126 500 ha of the RFI for a total of 34 054 940.6 tCO_2eq of avoided indirect emissions.	carbono del proyecto" [Estimate of the Project's Carbon Emissions and Sequestration Indicator]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Direct observation • Interviews	
Output 2.2.1. Criteria and indicators for the environmental and social sustainability of sustainable forest management defined and based on information generated by the SINIIF	Technical standard designed	Criteria for indicators have not been developed, but there is a Forest Law, management plans and operational plans.	A technical standard with criteria and indicators for the environmental and social sustainability of sustainable forest management, based on information generated by the SINIIF and applying a multicriteria analysis, including indicators of: a) REDD+ and monitoring, measurement, reporting and	The goal was met, since the project designed the technical standard on criteria and indicators of socioenvironmental sustainability for sustainable forest management in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The technical standard is made up of five criteria, 20 subcriteria, 45 strategies, 37 substrategies and 560 associated indicators. This includes: a) carbon indicators using the 2019 Refinement of the 2006	Document, "Propuesta. Diseño de norma técnica sobre criterios e indicadores para la sustentabilidad socioambiental para el manejo forestal sustentable en Venezuela" [Proposal: Design of a Technical Standard on Criteria and Indicators for Socioenvironmental Sustainability for Sustainable Forest Management in Venezuela]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF Interviews	100%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
			verification standards (based on Output 1.1.4); b) conservation of biodiversity and forest ecosystems under pressure; and c) conservation of forest cover in areas sensitive to land degradation processes.	Intergovermental Panel on Climate Change Methodological Guidelines; b) indicators of conservation and maintenance of biodiversity in forest ecosystems; and c) indicators based on the inventory of the coverage and trend of the forest area. The technical standard is in the Legal Consultancy of the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism for review and subsequent approval.		
Output 2.2.2. Participatory monitoring mechanism for forests managed under environmental and social safeguards for multiple use in balance with the provision of goods and services of forest ecosystems	Percentage of design and implementation of the participatory forest monitoring mechanism	There is no monitoring for the sustainability of native forest management.	A participatory monitoring mechanism for forests managed under environmental and social safeguards for multiple use designed and fully implemented on 15 000 ha.	There is a design problem since the indicator and goal of this output is similar to the indicator and goal of Output 1.1.6. Given this similarity, the project developed documents that allow compliance with both outputs. However, the achievements can only be attributed to a single output, which means that the same achievement cannot be doubly counted and attributed to two outputs. It is understood that this situation was generated by a design problem of the results framework.		Compliance cannot be assessed due to a design problem

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
	Percentage of participation of women		At least 20 percent participation of women	The goal was exceeded since the participation of women in the training activities reached 35 percent.	Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022	175%
Outcome 2.3. Interinstitutional dialogue on sustainable forest management strengthened	Number of actors (national and local government institutions, Indigenous communities, community-based organizations, companies, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], etc.) with strengthened capacities and participating in a platform for intersectoral dialogue and coordination for forest governance in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	There are numerous actors in the forestry sector without a defined plan to strengthen technical capacities. The country has a legal basis (Decree No. 2083 of 2 November 2002) that regulates institutional coordination, but there are no formal coordination mechanisms in the forestry sector.	At least 15 actors with strengthened technical capacities that actively participate in an intersectoral dialogue and coordination platform for forest governance (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force).	In 2022, the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism created the Forestry Cabinet in which the following related entities participate: CONARE; ENFORESTAL; FUNDAMBIENTE; INPARQUES; Institute for the Control and Conservation of the Lake Maracaibo Basin; and IFLA, in addition to the regional directorates related to the area. Representatives from the academic and private sectors also participate as non-permanent members. Therefore, the cabinet is made up of more than 15 actors, and the representatives of ENFORESTAL, CONARE, FUNDAMBIENTE, INPARQUES, IFLA and the General Directorate of Forest Heritage that were interviewed indicated that their technical capacities were strengthened as a result of the project. Therefore, the goal was partially met.	Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 Minutes of the project steering committee Interviews	40%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Output 2.3.1. Human resources training programme and dialogues for the exchange of local knowledge related to the use of information generated by the SINIIF for better forest planning and management, and sustainable forest management practices designed and implemented	Number of people from the community trained	ENFORESTAL provides training to community members.	At least 100 people from the community trained	The project reported 79 workshops associated with this output. However, only two workshops (ID: 0040 and 0121) are exclusive for this output, which together resulted in the training of 36 people.	Database accessed 4 February 2023 Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 Interviews	36%
			Participation of women at least 30 percent	The participation of women was 50 percent.	Database accessed 4 February 2023 Training monitoring matrix as of 31 December 2022 Interviews	167%
Output 2.3.2. Interinstitutional agreements for the interinstitutional coordination of the governance of forest management in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the adaptation of the SINIIF	Percentage of participation of women	There is currently no coordination and consultation mechanism.	Ten interinstitutional coordination and consultation agreements or agreements for the governance of forest management and the adaptation of the SINIIF.	The goal was partially met. Nine interinstitutional agreements were signed that strengthened interinstitutional coordination for forest management, which are detailed here: 1) agreement between ENFORESTAL and UNEG to carry out internships and field practices at the RFI; 2) cooperation agreement between IFLA and ENFORESTAL for the exchange of information, documentation, research,	• Document, "Convenio Marco de Cooperación Interinstitucional National Forestry Company, Stock Corporation y la Universidad Nacional Experimental de Guayana" [ENFORESTAL Interinstitutional Cooperation Framework Agreement and the National Experimental University of Guayana] • Document, "Convenio de Cooperación Interinstitucional entre la National Forestry Company, Stock Corporation y El	90%

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				training and technical assistance for sustainable forest management and strengthening of the National Network of Forest Seed Producers; 3) strategic alliance between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, ENFORESTAL and the Tukupu EPSDC for the management, conservation and use of 6 487.12 ha; 4) strategic alliance between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, ENFORESTAL and the Tukupu EPSDC for the management, conservation and use of 47 916 ha of the Tukupu II Production Unit; 5) agreement between ENFORESTAL and the mayor's office of Piar municipality of Bolívar state, with the aim of strengthening relations in terms of participatory governance and training in forest management techniques; 6) agreement to form the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers (Output 3.1.3); 7) ENFORESTAL and the Instituto de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo Forestal	Instituto de Investigación Para el Desarrollo Forestal y Convenio entre ENAFOR e IFLA" [Interinstitutional Cooperation Agreement between ENFORESTAL and the Research Institute for Forestry Development and Agreement between ENFORESTAL and IFLA] • Strategic alliance documents between the Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, ENFORESTAL and the Tukupu EPSDC, signed on 29 October 2021 and 5 August 2022 • Framework Cooperation Agreement between ENFORESTAL and the mayor's office of Piar Municipality, Bolívar state • Agreement with the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers • Interinstitutional Framework Agreement between the Tukupu company and the National Experimental University of Guayana/UNEG • Contribution arrangements format for projects financed on bilateral bases, signed in January 2022	

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				(INDEFOR) Interinstitutional Cooperation Agreement; 8) UNEG-TUKUPU Agreement, in order to establish cooperation links in terms of services and technical assistance, training, technological transfer, in order to strengthen forestry and social management, as well as information, based on scientific and technological development and research; and 9) British Embassy/FAO collaboration agreement, aimed at strengthening the sustainable forest management capabilities of the indigenous forestry company Tukupu.	• Interviews	

Component 3. Restoration, conservation and sustainable forest and land management in areas affected by degradation processes

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Outcome 3.1. Technical and institutional capacities for the restoration of forests and forest lands strengthened through	1) Sustainable forest management/REDD+ 1.2: good management practices applied in existing forests. Number of	The Forest Law establishes the legal basis for a strategy on the restoration and recovery of forest cover with an ecosocial focus.	1) Five national institutions, 10 Indigenous communities of the RIF and at least 200 people (at least 40 percent women)	The modification that was made to the goal of this result after the mid-term evaluation altered the horizontal logic between outcome and goal (the goal is not related to the central		50%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
sustainable forest/land management practices	institutions, Indigenous communities and people representing government institutions, NGOs, community-based organizations, Indigenous and local communities with technical capacities in sustainable forest/land management practices developed and/or strengthened (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	However, there is no sustainable forest/land management training programme. ENFORESTAL has provided training to some members of three Indigenous communities present in Unit V of the RFI.	with technical capacities in sustainable forest/land management practices developed and/or strengthened (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force).	theme of restoration), and the congruence that existed between the outcome and its associated outputs (the original result contributed to the generation of technical support instruments for use in Outcome 3.2). In addition, the goal is complex and makes it difficult to assess its fulfilment by having several subgoals. To assess the work carried out by the project on the restoration issue, for this outcome it is considered that the goal has two measurement parameters: 1) number of participants in the training programme; and 2) evidence of technical capacities developed and strengthened. Each parameter contributes 50 percent to achieving the goal. The project linked the training workshops to various outputs, but due to the inability to determine what percentage of the workshops contribute exclusively to this outcome,		

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				for the first parameter only the institutions, communities and people participating in the workshops that deal with the restoration topic, and that are exclusively for Outputs 3.1.1 and 3.1.3, are counted. In this regard, and considering the training monitoring matrix provided by the project team, five exclusive workshops were identified for Output 3.1.1 (ID: 0027, 0028, 0056, 0071 and 0039) (in total, the matrix includes 21 workshops linked to that output) and ten workshops for Output 3.1.3 (ID: 0020, 0057, 0058, 0059, 0060, 0061, 0062, 0072, 0073 and 0074) (in total 44 workshops linked to that output are identified in the project matrix). Together, this adds up to a total of 379 trained people and 30 institutions, but no Indigenous communities participated in these workshops. For the second parameter, there was evidence, through interviews and direct		

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				observation, that capacities were developed, mainly in Indigenous communities. However, this evidence is insufficient to extrapolate to all of the trained people. Due to the above, it is estimated that the goal was partially met.		
Output 3.1.1. General standards and indicators to prioritize areas for forest restoration based on information generated by the SINIIF	Standards and indicators designed	There are currently no standards.	A technical document of general standards and indicators to prioritize areas for forest restoration, based on information generated by the SINIIF, intended for technical personnel and communities.	The goal was met. The project prepared the document: Criteria and indicators for the selection of priority areas for restoration in the RFI Eight criteria and 29 indicators were selected.	Document, Zambrano, T. and Azuaje, F. 2018. "Criterios e Indicadores para la Selección de Áreas Prioritarias a Restaurar en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Criteria and Indicators for the Selection of Priority Areas for Restoration in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO	100%
Output 3.1.2. Strategy for restoration, rehabilitation and recovery of forest cover in the RFI with an ecosocial approach designed to be implemented through Output 3.2.1	Strategy designed	There is a forestry policy proposal. The Forest Law establishes the legal basis for a strategy for the restoration and recovery of forest cover with an ecosocial focus.	A strategy for restoration, rehabilitation and recovery of forest cover in the RFI with an ecosocial approach designed.	The goal was met. The project prepared a document on a strategy for the restoration and rehabilitation of Forest Cover in the RFI. In addition, it prepared the documents: Restoration Strategies with Mycorrhizas; Impacts of Gold Mining and Restoration Strategies; Proposal for Restoration through Reforestation in	Document, Cáceres, A., Malaver, N., Hernández, I., Márquez, M. and Mago, K. C. 2018. "Estrategia de Restauración y Rehabilitación de la Cobertura Forestal en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Strategy for Restoration and Rehabilitation of Forest Cover in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				the RFI; and the Technical Manual for Restoration of Tropical Humid Forests.	Document, Cáceres, A. 2021. "Estudio de micorrizas arbúsculares (MA) y microorganismos asociados a procesos de restauración de áreas boscosas degradadas en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Study of Arbuscular Mycorrhizae and Microorganisms Associated with Restoration Processes of Degraded Forest Areas in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO Document, "Impactos de la Minería Aurífera y Estrategias de Restauración" [Impacts of Gold Mining and Restoration Strategies]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Water Interviews	
Output 3.1.3. National network of forest seed suppliers established	National network of forest seed suppliers established and functioning	There is no national network. Misión Árbol collects seeds and establishes nurseries. Additionally, CONARE and environmental institutions	A national network of forestry seed suppliers established and functioning. Local component of the network operating in Unit V with the participation of 10 communities.	The goal was met. The project carried out the design of the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers, validated by the potential members, which signed an interinstitutional cooperation agreement and committed to its	• Document, "Diseño de la Red Nacional de Proveedores de Semillas Forestales" [Design of the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Water	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
		participate in seed collection sessions.		formalization and implementation. A local branch of the network was established in the RFI led by women from ten Kariña communities, who have produced 80 000 plants for the reforestation of degraded areas and the improvement of farming plots and fallow fields. With the support of the project, a National Seed Collection Day was held with the participation of Misión Árbol, CONARE and ENFORESTAL. However, during the evaluation, the network was going through a latency phase due to the socioeconomic conditions of the country.	• Document, "Componente Local de la Red Nacional de Proveedores de Semillas Forestales en las Comunidades Indígenas de la Reserva Forestal Imataca y sus alrededores" [Local Component of the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers in the Indigenous Communities of the RFI and its Surroundings]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO • Document, L.A. Valera Briceño and V.E. Garay Jerez. 2022. "Red Nacional de Proveedores de Semillas Forestales Fortalecida. Informe final" [Strengthened National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers: Final Report]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA • Interviews	
	Number of RFI communities participating in the local component of the national network		Ten communities participating in the local component of the national network of forest seed suppliers.	The communities of La Iguana, Botanamo, La Esperanza, Matupo I, Matupo II, Río Negro, Pozo Oscuro, La Fortaleza, Cafetal and Los Waikas	Document, "Componente Local de la Red Nacional de Proveedores de Semillas Forestales en las Comunidades Indígenas de la Reserva Forestal Imataca y	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
	of forest seed suppliers			participate in the local component of the national forest seed network.	sus alrededores" [Local Component of the National Network of Forest Seed Suppliers in the Indigenous Communities of the RFI and its Surroundings] Interviews	
	Number of technical documents on good community practices for seed tree planting seed management, and guidelines for seed certification designed, validated and disseminated		Two technical documents on good community practices for seed tree planting and seed management, and guidelines for seed certification designed, validated and disseminated.	The goal was surpassed. Two technical guides were prepared, one on good community practices for the selection of seed trees and the handling of forest seeds and another on guidelines for the certification of forest seeds. In addition, a technical booklet was prepared: Certification of Forest Seeds.	• Document, Valera Briceño, L.A., Garay Jerez, V.E., Bracamonte Muñoz L.T., and Dugarte Rojas, S.D. 2021. "Guía técnica de buenas prácticas comunitarias para la selección de árboles semilleros y manipulación de semillas forestales" [Technical Guide to Good Community Practices for the Selection of Seed Trees and Handling of Forest Seeds]. Caracas, FAO • Document, Valera Briceño, L.A., Garay Jerez, V.E., Bracamonte Muñoz, L.T., and Dugarte Rojas, S.D. 2021. "Guía técnica. Líneas orientadoras para la certificación de semillas forestales" [Technical Guide: Guidelines for the Certification of Forest Seeds]. Caracas, FAO.	150%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					• Document, 2022. "Cartilla técnica. Certificación de Semillas Forestales" [Technical Booklet: Certification of Forest Seeds]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and GEF. Caracas • Interviews	
Outcome 3.2. Restoration and regeneration of 1 440 ha of forest through sustainable forest/land management strategies within the framework of an ecosystem approach and prioritizing the multifunctionality of forests	1) Biodiversity-2. 3.4: management practices that integrate biodiversity	A loss of 453 135.81 tCO_2eq per year is estimated due to the use of conventional forestry techniques for harvesting a forest area of 5 000 ha per year.	Sequestration of 512 985.68 tCO_2eq in 1 440 ha • Reforestation (748 ha): 262 348.88 tCO_2eq per ha • Analogue forestry (342 ha): 122 976 tCO_2eq per ha • Agroforestry (350 ha): 127 660.08 tCO_2eq per ha	The project estimated carbon sequestration as of 30 April 2023 for each restoration strategy with the following results: • sequestration of 571 903.40 tCO_2eq in 1 559 ha (111 percent of the goal) • for the 509 ha reforested, 191 242.32 tCO_2eq will be captured (72.9 percent of the goal) • for the 446 ha with analogue forestry, 120 692.16 tCO_2eq will be captured (98.14 percent of the goal) • for the 530 ha under agroforestry, 205 443.12 tCO_2eq will be captured	Document, Arends. E. 2023. "Producto 3.2. Reporte Técnico de Resultados de las Acciones Estratégicas y Desafíos. Versión Borrador 2" [Output 3.2: Technical Report of Results of Strategic Actions and Challenges. Draft Version 2] Direct observation and interviews	111%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				(160.9 percent of the goal) • with the passive restoration strategy in 74 ha of farming plots and mining, 54 525.80 tCO_2eq were captured		
	2) Area (number of hectares) of restored and regenerated forests and forest lands (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force)	From 2000 to 2013, a forest loss of 827 ha was reported for Unit V, with an average annual deforestation rate of 0.018 percent. This was mainly due to mining and the opening of roads. The area that had been restored by ENFORESTAL until 2015 covered 20 ha of reforestation in Unit V of the RFI.	2) 1 440 ha of restored and regenerated forest and forest lands (modified after the mid-term evaluation with approval of the seventh project steering committee and the Project Task Force).	The goal was surpassed. The total area restored was 1 559 ha.	Document, "Plantaciones establecidas por la CONARE y el INPARQUES en el marco del proyecto 'Ordenación Forestal Sustentable y Conservación de Bosques en la Perspectiva Ecosocial'" [Plantations Established by CONARE and INPARQUES within the framework of the "Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective" project]. FAO and Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism Direct observation and interviews	108%
Output 3.2.1. Model for forest restoration through sustainable forest/land management field tested with the participation of local	Restored area (number of hectares)	In 1994, 8 100 ha of intensive plantations were implemented, externally and internally in the areas of permanent	Implementation of the restoration strategy designed in Output 3.1.2 on 1 440 ha (350 ha of agroforestry, 342 ha of analogue forestry	The goal was surpassed. In agreement with CONARE and INPARQUES, 389 ha of agroforestry and 374 ha of reforestation were established. In the RFI and adjacent areas, 722 ha	Document, "Plantaciones establecidas por la CONARE y el INPARQUES en el marco del proyecto 'Ordenación Forestal Sustentable y Conservación de Bosques en la Perspectiva Ecosocial'"	106%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
governments and communities		forest production, with 1 026 ha of plantations for multiple purposes (agroforestry, forests on farms, communal, state, municipal).	and 748 ha of reforestation) in a participatory manner with the local and Indigenous communities of the area.	were restored, including 141 ha under agroforestry, 135 ha under reforestation and 446 ha under analogue forestry. The total area restored was 1 485 ha. It should be noted that the implementation of the restoration strategy was carried out with the participation of local and Indigenous communities.	[Plantations Established by CONARE and INPARQUES within the Framework of the "Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective" project]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO Direct observation and interviews	
	Number of demonstration sites implemented to reduce land degradation in illegal mining sites		Four demonstration sites of sustainable land/forest management practices to reduce land degradation in illegal mining areas.	The goal was partially met. Two areas were selected, El Arenal and Puente Roto, located in Unit No. 2 of the RFI, and management practices were experimentally implemented on land affected by small-scale gold mining.	Document, "Restauración de Áreas Degradadas por Minería Artesanal en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Restoration of Areas Degraded by Artisanal Mining in the RFI] Interviews	50%
Output 3.2.2. Experiences and lessons learned in systematized marketing of timber and non-timber products	Number of systematizations of experiences and lessons learned	There are statistics on timber products published annually, but there are no experiences of systematic analysis of trends derived from this information accessible to producers and consumers.	Four systematizations of experiences and lessons learned in the marketing of timber and non-timber products.	The goal was met. The project systematized four experiences of crafts with timber and non-timber forest products: 1. experiences of crafts of timber forest products and non-timber forest products in the state of Amazona; 2. experiences of crafts of timber forest products and	Document, 2022. "Sistematizar las experiencias en producción y comercialización de productos forestales con fines artesanales en la región andina, central, oriental y sur de Venezuela" [Systematization of Experiences in the Production and Marketing of Forest Products for Artisanal	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
		Information on non-timber products was captured, but there is no experience in analysing that information and making it available to producers and consumers.		non-timber forest products in the state of Anzoátegui; 3. experiences of crafts of timber forest products and non-timber forest products in the state of Lara; and 4. experiences of crafts of timber forest products and non-timber forest products in the state of Mérida.	Purposes in the Andean, Central, Eastern and Southern Regions of Venezuela]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA Interviews and direct observation	
	Analysis of current and potential use of non-timber forest products		A document analysing the current and potential use of non-timber forest products.	The goal was met. The project carried out a study on the current and potential analysis of non-timber forest products, which constitutes a valuable contribution to the sustainable use, conservation of forest resources and the economic and social development of the peoples who inhabit the forests. This document contains 12 strategies and 70 actions for the promotion of non-timber forest products aimed at state institutions involved in the issue.	Document, "Informe final. Análisis del uso actual y potencial de los productos forestales no maderables (PFNM) nivel nacional" [Final Report: Analysis of the Current and Potential Use of Non-timber Forest Products at the National Level]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA Interviews	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Output 3.2.3. Market and value chain analysis of the main forest products in demand and that affect the forest, and recommendations for market adjustments and the design of strategies to reduce pressures on forests	Number of market and value chain analyses	The information on domestic consumption is incomplete since the forest industry activity has several establishments with moderate technology that need to be developed and modernized to make them more efficient and competitive in their production.	Three market and value chain analyses of forest products	The goal was met. The project prepared three studies on the market and value chains of forest products: 1. analysis of the value chain of timber and non-timber forest products from Unit V of the RFI, which contains aspects that characterize the value chain and its main links; 2. analysis of the situation of timber production in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and international market trends for timber and non-timber products; and 3. characterization of the forest products market in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with emphasis on timber production, where national production, geographical distribution of the processing industry and its installed capacity are analysed.	• Document, "Análisis de Línea Base de la Cadena de Valor de los Productos Forestales en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Baseline Analysis of the Value Chain of Forest Products in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Water • Document, 2022. "Aspectos económicos de los productos forestales analizados y estrategias formuladas para la sostenibilidad del comanejo forestal en la Reserva Forestal Imataca (RFI)" [Economic Aspects of the Forest Products Analysed and Strategies Formulated for the sustainability of forest Co-management in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and IFLA • Interviews • Document, "Caracterización del mercado de los productos forestales en Venezuela con énfasis en la producción de madera" [Characterization of the forest products market in	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					Venezuela with emphasis on timber production]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA. 2017	
Output 3.2.4. Community marketing plans for timber and non-timber products implemented in accordance with the principle of multiple use	Analysis of the potential of timber and non-timber forest products	There are few community experiences in the marketing of timber and non-timber products.	An analysis of the potential of timber and non-timber forest products	The goal was met, the project prepared a study on non-timber forest products used in the RFI for self-consumption or as a commercial alternative in order to identify those that represent greater potential in the economic development of the region. This analysis seeks to determine the development potential based on a model that generates greater sustainability in the circle of environmental, social and economic wealth.	Document, Guedes, F. and Piña, R. 2020. "Características, procesamiento, comercialización y cadena de valor de productos forestales, especialmente productos no maderables (PFNM) potenciales para planes comunitarios en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Characteristics, Processing, Marketing and Value Chain of Forest Products, Especially Potential Non-timber Products for Community plans in the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and ENFORESTAL Interviews	100%
	Number of community marketing plans for timber forest products and processed non-timber forest products		Four community marketing plans developed	The goal was met. The project developed four community plans for the production and marketing of timber and non-timber forest products: 1. timber and non-timber forest products with the	• Document, 2017. "Productos forestales maderables y no maderables con potencial a ser comercializados por las comunidades locales de la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Timber and	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				potential to be marketed by the local communities of the RFI; 2. business model for the socially owned Tukupu company; 3. study on the potential use of native bees in the Cafetal and Pozo Oscuro sectors of the RFI, through the establishment of three pilot meliponaries; and 4. carpentry manual for the transformation of timber from branches and trunks of trees in the RFI.	Non-timber Forest Products with the Potential to be Marketed by the Local Communities of the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA • Document, Rivas, F., Graterol, A., Peña, N., Rondón, L. M. 2022. "Modelo de negocio que debe regir para garantizar la viabilidad económica y la sostenibilidad de una organización del tipo EPSDC, caso EPSDC-Tukupu" [The Business Model that Guarantees the Economic Viability and Sustainability of an EPSDC Organization: The EPSDC-Tukupu Case]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA • Document, Guedes, F. "Manejo y aprovechamiento de la meliponicultura en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Management and Use of Meliponiculture in the RFI]. Ministry of People's	

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
					Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Document, Owen, M. and Contreras, W. "Propuesta técnica. Aprovechamiento de maderas y fustes para carpintería en la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Technical Proposal: "Use of Wood and Shafts for Carpentry in the RFI"]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF	
	Percentage of implementation of community marketing plans for timber and non-timber forest products		Community marketing plans 100 percent implemented	The plans are being implemented with some progress, which include the following: 1. the encouragement of Indigenous communities to market their non-timber forest products, such as fruits, seeds, oils and vegetables, in the Casa Kariña market, in Tumeremo; 2. the implementation of the Tukupu EPSDC business plan, for the commercialization of timber, a product of forestry operations on the first concession called Tukupu I;	• Document, "Propuesta de proyecto. Desarrollo de Cadena de Valor de la Meliponicultura (Abejas Nativas Sin Aguijón-Meliponas) en poblaciones indígenas Kariña de la Reserva Forestal Imataca (RFI)" [Project Proposal: Value Chain Development of Meliponiculture (Native Needleless Bees-Melipons) in Kariña Indigenous Populations of the RFI] • Field observation	80%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
				3. the production of bee honey in three pilot meliponiculture farms and the approval of financing by the United Nations Development Programme to increase the value chain of meliponiculture as a non-timber forest product; and 4. training of 15 people from the Indigenous community in the carpentry trade and the construction project of an industrial carpentry shop for the production of furniture, doors, windows, bread repositories and kitchens made with timber from various forest tree species, which will be financed by the project.		
Output 3.2.5. Financing schemes for sustainable forest management, sustainable land management and support for the commercialization of non-timber forest products and implementation of the national programme of	Design of financing fund	The Environmentally Sustainable Community Programme provides incentives to promote soil and water conservation practices. Currently, there is no fund to finance sustainable forest/land management	Financing fund designed	The project designed the environmental fund with the purpose of obtaining and managing funds aimed at financially supporting projects and activities for the conservation, exploitation and sustainable use of the RFI.	Document, Rivas, F., Pérez, J.A., Bandes, T.A., Aguilar Castro, V., and Graterol, A. 2022. "Conformación de un fondo ambiental, a fin de apoyar la sustentabilidad financiera y económica del comanejo forestal en la RFI con la Empresa de Propiedad Social Tukupu (EPSD Tukupu)" [Creation of an Environmental Fund to	100%

Outcomes/outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
sustainable forest management standards established in Outcome 2.2		activities and marketing of non-timber forest products. There is no financing fund for the certification of sustainable forest management.			Support the Financial and Economic Sustainability of Forestry co-management in the RFI with the Tukupu Social Property Company (EPSD Tukupu)]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism, FAO and IFLA	
	Percentage of implementation of the financing fund		Financing fund implemented 100 percent	There is no evidence that the fund has been implemented, but other fund proposals have emerged (e.g. microfinance proposal for the Kariña communities) that are making positive progress.		0%

Component 4. Monitoring and evaluation of the project and dissemination of information

Outcomes/ outputs	Indicator	Baseline	Goal	Progress towards meeting the goal	Evidence	Level of compliance
Outcome 4.1. Project implemented through results-based management and by facilitating the application of lessons learned and good	Project implementation percentage		Project results 100 percent achieved and their sustainability demonstrated	Regarding the results of the project, it is highlighted that, out of a total of 50 goals to be met, 22 were fully met, 17 goals were exceeded, 9 were partially met and 2 goals were not assessed (one of the goals of Outcome 2.2. and that of the Output 2.2.2.). Component 1: 14 goals, 10 met 100 percent, 3 exceeded and 1 partially.	Semi-annual progress report, annual progress report Interviews and observation in the field	100%

practices in future actions				Component 2: 18 goals, 3 100 percent met, 9 surpassed, 4 partially and 2 not assessed. Component 3: 18 goals, 9 100 percent met, 5 surpassed and 4 partially met		
Output 4.1.1. Monitoring system in operation generating constant information on progress in meeting the goals of the project outcomes and outputs	Percentage of monitoring system implemented		100 percent monitoring system in operation, generating constant information on progress in meeting the goals of the project outcomes and outputs.	The project implemented a rigorous yet complex monitoring system, which required a challenging update.	Semi-annual progress report, annual progress report Interviews	100%
Output 4.1.2. Mid-term and terminal evaluation carried out, and implementation and sustainability strategies adjusted according to their recommendations	Mid-term evaluation carried out		A mid-term evaluation carried out with the project's implementation and sustainability strategies adjusted according to its recommendations.	The mid-term evaluation was carried out in May 2020. This included the analysis of the results matrix and the preparation of a proposal for adjusting the indicators, which was approved by the project steering committee. In this regard, the indicators were reorganized and converted into products that contribute to the expected result.	Evaluation report	100%
	Terminal evaluation carried out		A terminal evaluation of the project carried out, a verification of results obtained at the end of the project and sustainability strategy adjusted	The terminal evaluation is in progress.		75%

			according to its results.			
Output 4.1.3. Good practices and lessons learned from the project published	Number of newsletters prepared and published		At least eight newsletters prepared and published	The project produced eight newsletters, including three informative and five thematic newsletters.	• Informative newsletter No. 1. 2021. FAO. • Informative newsletter No. 2. 2022. FAO, Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Informative newsletter No. 3. 2023. FAO, Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Thematic newsletter No. 1. Pacheco, C. and Rivas, F. 2022. "Bosques de Venezuela y cambio climático" [Venezuelan Forests and Climate Change]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Thematic newsletter No. 2. Ascanio, A. 2022. "La comunidad Kariña y el Casabe en Venezuela" [The Kariña Community and Cassava Bread in Venezuela]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Thematic newsletter No. 3. "Imataca, territorio megadiverso de Venezuela" [Imataca, The Venezuelan Megadiverse Territory of Imataca] • Thematic newsletter No. 4. 2022. "Tukupu Primera Empresa Forestal Indígena De Venezuela" [Tukupu, the First Indigenous Forestry Company of Venezuela]. Ministry	100%

					of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF • Thematic newsletter No. 5. "SINIIF. Sistema Nacional Integrado de Información Forestal" [SINIIF: National Integrated Forest Information System]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and the GEF	
	Number of systematizations of good practices and lessons learned prepared and published		At least three documents of good practices and lessons learned prepared and published	The project developed the systematization of "Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective" (GCP/VEN/011/GFF) in Kariña Indigenous communities of the RFI, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.	Document, "Ordenación Forestal Sustentable y Conservación de Bosques en la Perspectiva Ecosocial" (GCP/VEN/011/GFF) en comunidades indígenas Kariñas que habitan la Reserva Forestal Imataca" [Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Conservation from an Ecosocial Perspective (GCP/VEN/011/GFF) in Kariña Indigenous Communities of the RFI]. Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and FAO Interviews	33%
Output 4.1.4. Website for the dissemination of information and exchange of experiences	Percentage of the webpage designed and implemented		Website designed and working 100 percent	The project designed the website https://bosquesdevenezuela.com, which is currently operating.	Website: https://bosquesdevenezuela.com/	100%

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