

Terminal Evaluation of UNDP/GEF project: Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in the Dominican Republic
FINAL DRAFT

Evaluation conducted by Alexandra Fischer

GEFSEC Project ID: PIMS 3411

Agency's Project ID: 00047486

Evaluation time frame- September- October 2012

Date of Evaluation Report: October 19, 2012

Country: Dominican Republic

GEF Operational Program: OP15

Strategic Priority: SP-1

Executing Agency: Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water

Implementing Agency: United Nations Development Program

Acknowledgements: *The evaluation consultant would like to thank the UNDP-CO and the SLM-PMU Project Staff for the support they provided throughout the realization of this Terminal Evaluation, as well as the many stakeholders who provided feedback on the project results and implementation.*

Table of Contents

- 1 List of Tables iii
- 2 Executive Summary i
- 3 Acronyms and Abbreviations ix
- 4 Introduction 1
 - 4.1 Purpose of the Evaluation 1
 - 4.2 Scope and Methodology of the Evaluation 1
 - 4.3 Structure of the Evaluation 2
- 5 Project Description and Development Context 3
 - 5.1 Project Start, Duration and Resources Committed 3
 - 5.2 Problems that the Project Sought to Address 3
 - 5.3 Immediate and Development Objectives of the Project 4
 - 5.4 Main Stakeholders 5
 - 5.5 Baseline Indicators Established and Expected Results 7
- 6 Findings 7
 - 6.1 Project Design/ Formulation 7
 - 6.2 Project Implementation 10
 - 6.3 Project Results 21
- 7 Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons Learned 37
 - 7.1 Conclusions 37
 - 7.2 Recommended Actions to Follow Up on Project’s Benefits and Proposals for Future Directions 38
 - 7.3 Best Practices 40
 - 7.4 Recommendations Based on Lessons Learned 41

Note that all Annexes are contained in a separate Microsoft Word file.

1 List of Tables

Table 1: Ratings for the Terminal Evaluation of the SLM Project	viii
Table 2: Main Stakeholders	5
Table 3: Summary of Co-financing	16
Table 4: Summary of Expenditures by Year and Outcome	17
Table 5: Level of Achievement of Project Objective and Outcomes based on Project Indicators	25

2 Executive Summary

Project Title:	Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in the Dominican Republic			
GEF Project ID:	3411		<i>At endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>At completion (Million US \$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	00047486	GEF financing:	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000
Country:	Dominican Republic	IA/EA own:		
Region:	LAC	Government:	371,750	172,593
Focal Area:	Land degradation	Other:	460,700	412,765
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	SP-1	Total co-financing:	\$ 832,450	585,358
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Vice Ministry of Soils and Water	Total Project Cost:	1,332,450	1,082,358
Other Partners Involved:		ProDoc Signature (date project began)		1st June 2008, re- signed on March 20 2009 (to correct error)
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: Dec. 2010 (ProDoc), amended to October 2011 due to late start of project	Actual: July 31, 2012

- **Brief Description of Project**

This project forms part of a global portfolio project to support LDC-SIDS countries in strengthening their capacity to address land degradation and desertification. The Dominican Republic has high levels of land degradation due primarily to the conversion of forested land to other productive land uses not geared to the bio-physical characteristics of the land and to the application of inappropriate production practices that lead to further degradation. The project design identified a number of barriers at the policy, institutional and individual levels that are preventing an adequate response to the root causes of this degradation. This project was therefore developed with the specific objective of developing “an improved system, institutional and individual capacity to coordinate, implement, sustain and evaluate sustainable land management options to reverse desertification and land degradation processes in the Dominican Republic”. This was to be achieved through the following four outcomes:

- 1) *SLM mainstreamed into national development policies, programs and plans;*
- 2) *System, individual and institutional-level capacities to implement SLM and the NAP developed;*
- 3) *Resources to support SLM are generated through integrated resources and investment planning;*
- 4) *Effective project management through learning, evaluation, and adaptive management.*

The main project stakeholders include the Vice Ministry of Soils and Water of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry of the Environment) as the Executing Agency of the project; the Interinstitutional Technical Group (GTI), the coordinating body established to oversee implementation of the National Action Program to implement the UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification); the Ministry of Agriculture; NGOs; and municipalities, among others.

The Terminal Evaluation took place from September- October 2012 and followed the UNDP/GEF guidelines and Terms of Reference provided. The methodology included an in-depth review of project documentation, interviews with a total of 32 key stakeholders, an initial presentation of findings on-site, follow-up phone interviews, correspondence and review of documentation, detailed analysis of the findings, and preparation of the draft and final reports.

- **Main evaluation findings**

- Project design/ formulation**

In general the project is considered to have been well designed with the identification of an appropriate project goal, objective, outcomes, indicators, baselines and targets. In hindsight, interviewees commented that a few of the targets established might have been somewhat overambitious. The Project Document (ProDoc) outlined most of the main assumptions and risks that could have been expected to influence project outcomes, but did not include any assumptions for Outcome 4 (project M&E and management), such as continued political support for the project. Lessons from other relevant projects were adequately taken into consideration in the project design and linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector are detailed in the proposal. Furthermore, the project design includes various elements to facilitate replication of project results. The management arrangements established for the project are considered appropriate, including the choice of EA and IA and the composition and functioning of the proposed steering committee. The planned stakeholder participation as highlighted in the stakeholder involvement plan was highly inclusive of all relevant stakeholders.

- Project implementation**

- UNDP and Executing Agency (EA) Execution**

According to interviewees, UNDP provided regular technical and administrative support to the project. This included facilitating various meetings to attempt to address the institutional and political bottlenecks experienced by the project at the outset and changing the financial execution of the project part way through the project to direct payments rather than cash advances. UNDP also provided training on procurement policies, though this aspect could have been further strengthened to ensure that all parties were clear on the procedures and to avoid associated delays. UNDP invested significant time to ensure completion of project deliverables, including by publishing public tenders, carrying out joint evaluations of consultants' proposals with government, issuing contracts and carrying out regular monitoring. To complement the quarterly meetings of all international cooperation projects organized by the Environment and Renewable Energy Unit of the UNDP Country Office, formal project-specific meetings between the UNDP and the EA were recommended.

EA execution was hampered during the first two years of project implementation by administrative constraints and changes in institutional authorities, whose priorities were different, leading to very low rates of delivery. The change in financial execution modality to direct payments and replacement of the first project coordinator with the Director of the GTI led to much improved EA execution with a strong focus on results. Narrative reporting and risk management were considered effective. Procurement functions were also generally performed adequately,

though interviewees commented that some of the TORs could have been more detailed. A high level of support was provided by the Project Management Unit (PMU) to accompany the consultancies and provide the required assistance.

Monitoring and Evaluation Design and Implementation

The ProDoc contained a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation plan, which outlined all the main necessary M&E activities and the associated roles, responsibilities and methodology, and allocated an appropriate budget for these components. Narrative reports, including quarterly progress reports and PIRs, were prepared in a timely manner and with the required level of detail. The logframe served as a useful management tool to guide the PMU's activities, however, more effort should have been invested to ensure that all baseline and end-of-project data was collected and quantified as per the logframe to facilitate the accurate measurement of project impact. Monitoring could have also been strengthened with a more active role of the project steering committee in guiding project deliverables. The final amount spent on M&E was USD 39,566.

Project Finance

The project had a delivery rate of 96% by the time of this terminal evaluation. While there were some differences between planned and actual expenditures, particularly for Outcomes 1 and 4, these were not substantial. The financial audit carried out for the project in 2010 did not reveal any significant problems in terms of financial management. In terms of co-financing, the project secured a total of USD 585,358 by project end, which included significant leveraged cash resources. This final co-financing amount is somewhat lower than the original amount committed in the ProDoc because earlier project delays led to the loss of some co-financing sources and because some of the in-kind co-financing provided by non-state actors was not quantified by the PMU. The co-financing was considered to have contributed substantially to the achievement of the project's objectives through support for the development of specific project outputs and for the strengthening of national and local capacity. The project was relatively cost-effective, having completed most of the planned activities while staying within the project budget and developing some additional products that had not been envisioned in the ProDoc. Project management and operational resources were not used optimally during the first two years of the project when few results were achieved; however, the government later provided co-financing for the new project coordinator who was designated in 2011.

Adaptive management

While the project's long-term goal, objective and four outcomes did not change during project implementation, some modifications were made to the modality of financial execution and to project staffing, changes which were considered by interviewees to have been necessary to deal with a changing external environment and critical to the achievement of the project's objectives. It could be argued that these measures should have been taken even sooner. Some changes were also made to planned activities; examples include the commissioning of a study on micro-financing; the development of a National Strategy on the Sustainable Management of Soils; and the decision to allocate additional resources to collect baseline information on land degradation when appropriate consultants could not be found to develop a long-term proposal for monitoring land degradation.

Partnership arrangements

A number of different mechanisms were employed to interact with key stakeholders for the purposes of project monitoring, capacity building and the consultation of project products. The project played an important role in strengthening inter-institutional platforms for discussing SLM and identifying solutions through its support of the GTI as well as of the Forum for the Sustainable Management of Soils. In the absence of a formal steering committee, the GTI took on some of the associated functions. A number of useful synergies were created to increase project impact, such as with the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education. Interviewees commented that without the earlier project delays and later intense pressure to achieve deliverables, the project could have been promoted to a greater extent with other stakeholders.

Results and Sustainability

The project was largely successful at achieving its objective of strengthened system, individual and institutional capacities to promote sustainable land management. The project had a significant impact on increasing individual capacities through various training activities that were undertaken and through the production of educational material. Institutionally, the Unit to Combat Desertification was strengthened and now has increased capacity, staffing, funding and equipment to carry out its role. The GTI, as the inter-institutional coordinating body to ensure implementation of the National Action Program, also received support from the project, as did the Forum on the Sustainable Management of Soils, a multi-stakeholder body established for soil-related discussions and identification of policy and program ideas. More work is still required to consolidate the reporting and communication systems between municipalities, the Ministry of Environment and other institutions on SLM-related issues. Also, while important baseline data was gathered, a system for the long-term monitoring of LD remains to be established.

Progress was made in mainstreaming the issue of SLM, particularly as a result of awareness raising activities that were undertaken and the development of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils, which underscores the linkages between SLM and issues like food security and poverty. The government's new National Development Strategy includes the promotion of the sustainable management of natural resources in degraded areas as one of its areas of action though this was not considered a direct result of the project. Unfortunately, the NAP was not formally approved during the period of project implementation, though actions to implement are ongoing. In terms of the issue of resource mobilization, an Integrated Financing Strategy as well as a study on micro-financing sources for SLM were developed, which led to a greater understanding of existing investments in SLM, the funding gap to implement the National Action Program and how this gap could be reduced. Efforts to secure additional funding to reduce this gap are needed to build on the commitments of government and NGOs.

The sustainability of project results is perceived to be high and there were no significant financial, socio-political, institutional, governance or environmental risks identified. In fact, political commitments to act on the issue have been made, increased resources have been allocated by government in support of the Unit to Combat Desertification (though these are still limited), a supportive policy framework exists and the technical know-how to work on the issue was strengthened through this project. While it is too early to measure project impact in terms of ecological indicators or reduction of ecological stress, the evaluator is of the opinion that the project will have a positive impact on the land management practices in the country, particularly as a result of the capacity that was built, the strengthened coordination platforms and the development of the National Strategy on the Sustainable Management of Soils.

Recommended Actions to Follow up on the Project's Benefits

All interviewees stressed the importance of continuing to build capacity on the topic of SLM among agricultural extensionists, technicians, educators and decision-makers. This could involve, for example, implementing further diploma courses and short-term training sessions, establishment of demonstration farms, exchanges among experts, promotion of the Environment Education Plan for the Arid Zones and events for decision-makers. In addition, the products developed by the project, such as the National Strategy on the Sustainable Management of Soils and the study on micro-financing sources for SLM, need to be fully socialized to increase support for their implementation. Further mainstreaming of the topic of SLM in the development agenda and greater visibility on the links between SLM and livelihoods are also recommended. To measure land degradation trends over time and the impact of different initiatives to arrest degradation, the baseline data systematized by the project should be entered into a database and a long-term monitoring system established with the support of key institutions.

Best Practices employed by the project

➤ **Designation of national project coordinator with relevant experience and contacts**

The designation of a new project coordinator partway through project implementation with extensive experience, contacts and technical know-how was commended for its significant impact on the project's success.

➤ **Strengthening of inter-institutional platforms and strategic alliances, including with civil society**

The project played an important role in strengthening a number of different inter-institutional platforms, including the GTI, the Permanent Forum for the Sustainable Management of Soils and local working groups ('comisiones de trabajo'), thus increasing stakeholder engagement on the issue of SLM.

➤ **Close communication between UNDP and PMU**

Regular interaction between the UNDP and the PMU, in particular during the last two years of project execution, as well as technical and administrative support from UNDP served to facilitate project execution.

➤ **Regular exchange of information and lessons learned among UNDP projects**

The quarterly meetings organized by the Environment and Renewable Energy Unit of the UNDP CO provided an effective space for the exchange of lessons learned and sharing of experiences among different UNDP projects in execution.

➤ **Location of PMU within UNCCD Focal Point**

The physical location of the PMU within the UNCCD focal point enhanced synergies among the different initiatives being carried out by the Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water and increased government ownership of the project.

➤ **Intra-institutional strengthening within the Ministry of Environment**

Interviewees commented that the project contributed to intra-institutional strengthening within the Ministry of the Environment, including between the national and local levels.

Recommendations based on Lessons Learned

Project design

➤ **Ensure that all indicators and targets in the logical framework are realistic and feasible**

The project design included a few indicators that were considered by interviewees to have been overly ambitious in the context of the resources available, project time frame, existing capacity and reach of the project. This is not advisable as it places undue pressures on the Project Management Unit.

➤ **Include sufficient funds in the project budget for regional workshops**

It is important not to underestimate the funding required for regional workshops when developing project budgets to ensure that providers who meet the procurement guidelines can be utilized and that activities across the country can be carried out.

➤ **Ensure that project budget includes funds for widespread advertisement of consultancies, including through major national newspapers.**

To complement the use of electronic networks to disseminate consultancies, project budgets should include funds for advertising consultancies in major national newspapers.

➤ **Minimize the time period between project design and implementation**

While changes in personnel and levels of political support for a project can occur even in the short-term, minimizing the period of time between project design and implementation can reduce this likelihood.

➤ **Consider the inclusion of direct work with communities to increase support and uptake of SLM**

It may be useful to include some local pilot projects/ concrete demonstrations at the field-level within the project design to increase community-level support and to promote replication of SLM actions.

Project Implementation

➤ **Socialize the project at the outset with all relevant stakeholders**

While the project did carry out an inception workshop, which enabled many key stakeholders to participate, interviewees indicated that a wider cross-section of stakeholders could have been involved in the socialization process. This is particularly important to maximize ownership when a new government administration comes into power.

➤ **Carefully assess and identify the most appropriate modality for financial execution at project onset and put in place the necessary safeguards**

Institutional limitations within the public sector to execute this type of project undermined the timely channelling of resources for this project. As such, appropriate measures need to be taken to address this; for example, in the case of this project, the decision was made to switch from the modality of advance payments to direct payments.

➤ **Share information on UNDP requirements and procedures for public tenders in a timely manner with the EA to minimize delays**

Project experience has shown that it is critical for UNDP to provide regular training on its procurement policies and for a close relationship to be maintained between the EA and the UNDP Service Centre to avoid possible delays associated with the identification of consultants who do not meet eligibility requirements.

➤ **Advertise consultancies for enough time to attract as many qualified candidates as possible**

Strong time pressures during the latter half of project implementation meant that the tender period for consultancies was sometimes shorter than desired. Given the limited human resources in many LDC/SIDS countries in specialized fields such as SLM, ample time should be provided for qualified candidates to apply.

➤ **Disseminate public tenders widely using all available means, including the national press**

In order to reach a larger number of qualified individuals, electronic dissemination should be supplemented with the advertisement of consultancies in the most widely read national newspapers.

➤ **Specify eligibility requirements in Terms of Reference of consultancies clearly**

Related to the previous recommendation, TORs need to be explicit in terms of eligibility requirements to prevent ineligible consultants or groups from applying and to minimize procurement delays.

➤ **Develop Terms of Reference for consultancies with sufficient detail and a clear indication of the expected scope of the work**

In this project, qualified applicants who were not clear on the expected scope of the consultancy sometimes developed bids that surpassed the project budget, which put them out of the running for the desired work. Such situations can be minimized by including as much detail as possible in the ToRs.

➤ **Ensure that the duration of consultancies is sufficiently long to enable the necessary data collection**

Some of the consultants involved indicated that they would have appreciated more time to collect data in the field and from local stakeholders and to validate the project products. This is critical to maximize the level of ownership over the final products.

➤ **Promote widespread consultation on documents of national importance with all relevant institutions in order to maximize ownership and support of project products**

Time constraints during project implementation limited the number of local workshops and the amount of consultation that could be carried out in the development of some of the products. Efforts to secure the participation and input of key stakeholders are critical to maximize buy-in for the final products.

➤ **Socialize project and its outputs widely to maximize ownership and uptake**

Following on the previous recommendation, once products are finalized they need to be socialized with relevant stakeholders to maximize uptake. It is important to strive to complete the project deliverables with sufficient time remaining in the project in order to enable this to happen. Efforts to promote the project as much as possible with all key stakeholders should also be carried out. Owing to time constraints, there was insufficient promotion of the project with some key stakeholders, such as the Dominican Federation of Municipalities and the Directorate of Environmental Information.

➤ **Promote the participation of high-level officials to achieve project objectives**

Progress can be slow when individuals without decision-making power are involved in project processes. For this reason, it is recommended that projects work to establish relationships with, and promote the involvement of, decision-makers in order to achieve project objectives, for example those related to revising the policy framework and to achieving inter-institutional coordination.

➤ **Ensure project steering committee maintains focus on monitoring project results**

The existing GTI, which was comprised of key stakeholders, took on some of the responsibilities of a project steering committee. However, more detailed follow-up and input into project deliverables would have been beneficial as not all members were fully cognizant of the committee's role in monitoring achievement of project results and in guiding project implementation.

➤ **Adopt a flexible approach to project implementation to deal with administrative bottlenecks**

In dealing with administrative bottlenecks, implementing and executing agencies should identify and implement flexible and creative approaches as soon as possible to avoid major delays. As an example, the project could have established arrangements with other projects and institutions to enable actions to be carried out in suburban areas.

Table 1: Ratings of Project Performance

Criteria:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation	Rating	2. IA& EA Execution	rating
M&E design at project start-up	S	Implementing Agency Execution	S
M&E plan implementation	MS	Executing Agency Execution	MS
Overall quality of M&E	MS	Overall quality of project implementation/ execution	MS
3. Outcomes	Rating	4. Sustainability	rating
Relevance	R	Financial resources:	ML
Effectiveness	MS	Socio-political:	L
Efficiency	MS	Institutional framework and governance:	L
Overall quality of project outcomes	MS	Environmental:	L
		Overall likelihood of sustainability:	L

3 Acronyms and Abbreviations

AOP	Annual Operational Plan
CEDAF	Centro para el Desarrollo Agropecuario y Forestal
CO	Country Office
CONIAF	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias y Forestales
COP	Conference of the Parties
EA	Executing Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
GTI	Grupo de Trabajo Interinstitucional (Interinstitutional Working Group)
IA	Implementing Agency
IDIAF	Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Agropecuarias y Forestales
IFS	Integrated Financing Strategy
INDRHI	Instituto Nacional de Recursos Hidráulicos
LDC/SIDS	Least Developed Countries/ Small Island Developing States
Logframe	Logical Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSP	Medium-Sized Project
NAP	National Action Program (PAN - Programa de Acción Nacional)
NIM	National Execution Modality
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ONAMET	Oficina Nacional de Meteorología (National Meteorological Office)
PC	Project Coordinator
PD	Project Director
PEG	Project Executing Group
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
ProDoc	Project Document
RTA	Regional Technical Adviser
SD	Sustainable Development
SEMARN	Secretaría Estado de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources)- Note that with new Constitution, the name of this entity was changed to Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources)
SGP	Small Grants Program
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SLM	Sustainable Land Management

TE	Terminal Evaluation
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

4 Introduction

4.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

1. The Terminal Evaluation (TE) is a requirement of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was initiated by the UNDP Dominican Republic Country Office. It was conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures for such evaluations established by UNDP and GEF.
2. The overall objective of the TE is to analyze the implementation of the project and review the achievements made by the project to deliver the specified objective and outcomes. It establishes the relevance, performance and success of the project, including the sustainability of results. The evaluation also brings together and analyzes best practices, specific lessons and recommendations pertaining to the strategies employed and implementation arrangements, which may be of relevance to other projects in the country and elsewhere in the world.
3. The TE provides a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of a completed project by assessing its project design, process of implementation and results vis-à-vis the project objective and outcomes. TEs have three complementary purposes:
 - To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishments;
 - To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design and implementation of future UNDP-GEF activities;
 - To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues.

4.2 Scope and Methodology of the Evaluation

4. This evaluation will analyze the following five main criteria:
 - **Relevance.** The extent to which the activities are suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, taking into consideration changes over time.
 - **Effectiveness.** The extent to which the results have been achieved or how likely they are to be achieved.
 - **Efficiency.** The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy.
 - **Results.** The positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to, and effects produced by, a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and longer term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects, and other local effects. The focus of TEs is at the level of outcomes.
 - **Sustainability.** The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.
5. The evaluation will provide general information about its methodology; outline the project description and development context; analyze the project design; assess project implementation (including the M&E system);

assess the level of achievement of project results and; comment on the sustainability of project outcomes. As specified in the TORs, certain elements will be rated using a scale from Highly Unsatisfactory to Highly Satisfactory. Conclusions, best practices and lessons learned will be highlighted at the end of the report.

6. The methodology for this Terminal Evaluation included the following components:

Evaluation Preparation:

- The consultant carried out an extensive review of documentation, including the Project Document (ProDoc) and all other relevant information. The list of documents studied is provided in Annex 5;
- The overall development situation of the country (based on the UNDP Common Country Assessment and other available reports) was reviewed.
- An Inception Report was prepared with the mission programme, including the evaluation methodology to be followed.

Evaluation Mission:

- Debriefing session was held with UNDP/Dominican Republic, the Project Manager and Project Technical/ Administrative Assistant.
- Interviews (individual interviews and group interviews) were carried out with a total of 32 individuals involved in different capacities in the project (see Annex 4).
- Additional material received during the mission was reviewed with a focused attention to project outcomes and outputs.
- The initial findings were presented by the consultant to the UNDP Environmental Programme Official, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist, M&E Associate and UNDP Resident Representative. As the National Project Coordinator was not available to attend the presentation, the PowerPoint slides were shared with him and a follow-up telephone conversation was carried out.

Report preparation:

- This involved a detailed analysis of data, follow-up phone calls/ interviews and e-mails to address information gaps, and consolidation of the information. Additional material was received and reviewed. The draft report was prepared in accordance with guidelines and Terms of Reference for this Terminal Evaluation (see Annex 1). Upon receipt of reviewer comments, a final evaluation report will be prepared.

4.3 Structure of the Evaluation

7. The structure of this evaluation follows the Terms of Reference provided by UNDP Dominican Republic and approved by the UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit (see Annex 1). UNDP Guidelines for Evaluators as well as GEF evaluation policies were followed as well as the specific expectations of the Implementing Agency (IA) and Executing Agency (EA).

5 Project Description and Development Context

5.1 Project Start, Duration and Resources Committed

8. The ProDoc was originally signed on June 1, 2008. Due to the inclusion of incorrect information on the total GEF grant on the signature page of the original ProDoc (which indicated a total of \$ 487,500 and did not include the funds that had been provided for the PDF-A), the ProDoc had to be re-signed on March 20, 2009.
9. In November 2008, the first disbursement was made and the first project coordinator hired. This project coordinator was replaced in March 2011 by the Director of the Unit to Combat Desertification/ Director of the Interinstitutional Working Group (GTI).
10. The project was envisioned as a three year project with a planned closing date of December 2010. Due to initial delays in the project, the closing date was extended on several occasions. The final operational closure was set for July 31, 2012 and the financial closure date is December 30, 2012.
11. The total GEF granted amount committed was USD 500,000 and USD 832,450 was promised as co-financing in the ProDoc.

5.2 Problems that the Project Sought to Address

12. The sustainability of agricultural production and rural livelihoods as well as the integrity of ecosystems in Dominican Republic are seriously affected by land degradation. The draft National Action Program (NAP) summarizes the principal land degradation problems as: (1) Decline in the productive capacity of soils; (2) decline in water resources; (3) and degradation of forest resources. These problems can be attributed principally to two processes or threats: (i) the conversion of forested land and shade coffee to other productive land uses not geared to the bio-physical characteristics of the land; and (ii) the application of inappropriate production practices that lead to further degradation.
13. The national response to the root causes of land degradation has been inadequate due to the presence of several persistent barriers at the policy, institutional, and individual levels. These are described as follows: a) insufficient, incompatible, and inadequately developed and applied policies; b) institutional capacity barriers; c) individual capacity barriers; and economic and financial barriers.
14. Without a GEF project, the barriers that impede a systematic and harmonized approach to land degradation problems will remain. The *status quo* will continue in the form of isolated efforts and individual projects without the benefit of strengthened individual, institutional and system capacities and coordination among multi-stakeholder groups, without a quantitative basis for long-term planning, monitoring and evaluation of the nation's efforts to control land degradation and desertification, without the establishment of a financial regime to support SLM and with insufficient mainstreaming of the topic of SLM to influence the decision making domain. More details are provided in the ProDoc.

5.3 Immediate and Development Objectives of the Project

15. The long-term goal of the MSP is to ensure ecosystem health, stability, integrity, functions, and the continuity of ecosystem services that support global benefits and sustainable livelihoods in the Dominican Republic.
16. The project objective is an improved system, institutional, and individual capacity to coordinate, implement, sustain, and evaluate Sustainable Land Management options to reverse desertification and land degradation processes in the Dominican Republic. These objectives will be achieved through the following four outcomes:

Outcome 1: SLM mainstreamed into national development policies, programs, and plans

Outcome 2: System, individual, and institutional-level capacities to implement SLM and the NAP developed.

Outcome 3: Resources to support SLM are generated through integrated resource and investment planning.

Outcome 4: Effective project management through learning, evaluation, and adaptive management.

5.4 Main Stakeholders

Table 2: Main Stakeholders

Category/ Unit	Function	Represented by	Involvement
SEMARN/SSA (Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources/ Sub-Secretary of Soils and Water- later changed to Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water	Executing agency and UNCCD focal point.	Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water	Manages project and communication system for upstream and downstream communication between NGOs, Municipalities, GOs, and the convention, which will be improved through the communication system. All project implementation duties will be executed through the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources/ Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water.
GTI	Mainstreaming and coordination between 40 representatives from public and private entities.	Executive Director	Beneficiary of institutional strengthening activities outlined in outcome 2 and main actor in supporting sector agreements for mainstreaming in outcome 1.
Other agencies of Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Vice-Ministry of Forest Resources, Environmental Management, and Direction management of aggregates, and National Hydraulic Resources Institute.	Under-secretaries and Directors	Development of action plans to achieve NAP objectives.
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources/Planning	Planning, monitoring and evaluation for all government environmental affairs	Director General for Planning	Involvement in the establishment and approval of LD indicators and in the monitoring and evaluation of the GEF MSP.
Ministry of Agriculture	All agricultural policy in the nation, production, and extension services	Minister and Vice-ministry of Planning, Production, and Extension.	Benefit through awareness materials that may be distributed through the National extension service, Major stakeholder in sustainable financing, and link to producers in agriculture and livestock management. Major role in developing action plans to achieve NAP objectives and in sustainable financing.

NGOs	Social action and increases in local financing for LD initiatives.	NGO representative to the GTI and through the RIOD network (International Network to Combat Desertification and Drought).	Participate in sector agreements to support the NAP and to harmonize objectives. Will benefit from the availability of materials made available through the awareness building campaign, which will improve their own awareness building campaigns. Beneficiaries and supporters of sustainable financing activities.
Municipalities	Local Government and public works	Federation of Dominican Municipalities (FEDOMU), individual municipalities and city councils (ayuntamientos)	Beneficiaries of awareness campaigns, direct participation in communication of investments to respond to the effects of land degradation. Participate in the communications system and flow of information to the conventions through SEMARN/SSA
National Meteorological Office	All weather forecasting and monitoring of drought and desertification. Participating in south-south cooperation activities to improve drought monitoring	Director of ONAMET	Increase in technical capacity as part of LD monitoring system.
Gabinete Social	Promote multi-sector sustainable development within the context of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan	Office of the Vice-president.	Information exchanges on land degradation role in sustainable development.
Congressional Environment Committee	Congressional advisory panel for all environmental legislation.	Committee Chairman	Improved connection of the congress with the implementation of the UNCCD, national reporting, and mainstreaming of SLM. Large role in spearheading national financing for NAP implementation.
Office of the Chancellor	Represents the nation in all treaties and foreign affairs	Environmental ambassador	Improved information flows and management to the office of the chancellor for reporting on progress in the responses of the nation in terms of SLM, and reduction of drought and desertification.

5.5 Baseline Indicators Established and Expected Results

17. The Logical Framework presented in Annex 6 identifies the Project Objective and four Project Outcomes, as well as associated indicators, baselines, targets, sources of verification, risks and assumptions.

6 Findings

6.1 Project Design/ Formulation

- **Analysis of LFA (Project logic /strategy; Indicators)**

18. The Project Goal, Objective and Outcomes are considered appropriate and clear. While they are consistent with the global SLM capacity building portfolio project, the scope and specific activities were considered by interviewees to have been appropriately adapted to the national context. Furthermore, the indicators, baselines and targets are logical and consistent with the corresponding project outcomes. Based on the evaluator's analysis of the logical framework, the outcomes established are generally considered to be "SMART", that is, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. With a few exceptions that will be highlighted in the next section, interviewees indicated that the project components were feasible to achieve within the project's time frame and corresponded to nationally identified priorities.

19. In hindsight, some of the targets identified in the ProDoc were rather ambitious. For example, under Outcome 2, the target for the first indicator was that 80% of municipalities would be reporting to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources/Vice-Ministry of Soils and Waters on land degradation issues, actions and investments. However, interviewees commented that the achievement of this target would have presupposed a certain level of capacity within municipalities on the issue of SLM. Since this was still incipient during the project's implementation period, the project focused on municipal capacity building and as a result municipalities were not yet in a position of reporting on SLM actions and investments by project end. It should also be noted that achievement of this target was undermined by the early project delays and by the changing political context in which the project operated in the first years.

20. Another expected project result which was deemed ambitious by some interviewees was the incorporation of the issue of SLM into national policies, as it was felt that the topic of SLM was not yet sufficiently high on the political agenda and the project would have had difficulty interacting at this level. It might have been more appropriate for the project design to have aimed at mainstreaming the topic of SLM within the agenda of institutions most directly related to the topic, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (henceforth referred to as Ministry of Environment). However, this focus on mainstreaming within national policies was part of the global portfolio project design.

21. The target for Outcome 3 was to obtain "initial funding commitments from all sources for 50% of the value of the financing gap as outlined in the financing plan for the period 2010-2015". Given the relatively short time period of the project, this commitment of 50% of the funds required to implement the NAP could also be considered a very ambitious target to have included in the project design.

- **Assumptions and Risks**

22. In general, the Project Document outlines the main assumptions and risks that could be expected to potentially influence project outcomes, including factors such as possible changes in motivation with new political administrations, the willingness of institutions to share information and the impact of staff turn-over rates. These assumptions are considered logical and robust. However, one of the assumptions included in the Project Document was not fully external to the project and as such should not have been listed as project assumptions, namely the assumption at the objective level that “government and key stakeholders are increasingly aware of the impacts of land degradation on national development objectives and provide enhanced support for SLM options”. This was in fact one of the project’s intended goals.
23. It should also be noted that at the level of Outcome 4, the Project Document did not include any assumptions or risks that may have been relevant, such as, for example continued political support for sharing of lessons learned and project promotion and staff turn-over rates. Nor was the risk of administrative bottlenecks or political issues that affected effective project management/ fund disbursement identified at the project design stage. However, interviewees commented that it would have been difficult to foresee the political difficulties that later emerged and to identify mitigation measures at that stage.

- **Lessons from Other Relevant Projects (e.g., same focal area) Incorporated into Project Design**

24. The overall project design structure was developed at a global level as part of a multi-country initiative. The evaluator cannot comment on the extent to which lessons learned from other projects implemented elsewhere influenced the design of the portfolio project. However at the national level, interviewees indicated that the project was adapted to local realities and took into account previously implemented projects relating to watershed management and SLM since the 1980s. In the context of the global design focused on capacity building, it was decided that the project would emphasize actions to consolidate the GTI at the national level.

- **Planned Stakeholder Participation**

25. The planned stakeholder participation, as articulated in the Project Document, is considered highly inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, including national and local government institutions; national and local level NGOs; the private sector; and multi-lateral cooperation agencies. The ProDoc provides sufficient detail on the nature of the planned involvement of these stakeholders, such as through the Inter-Institutional Working Group (GTI) and a project steering committee.
26. Some interviewees commented that it would have been useful to include pilot projects in the project design which would have enabled direct participation in SLM practices by local stakeholders, while other interviewees felt that this was outside of the scope of the project.
27. Key stakeholders were consulted during the design of the project, including through a national consultation with extensive stakeholder participation and two presentations that were made to the GTI. The period of project design coincided with the final consultations of the NAP process, which involved many of the same actors, resulting in significant cross-fertilization between the project and the NAP.

- **Replication Approach**

28. While the ProDoc does not (and is not expected to) include a specific section detailing the proposed replication approach, there are various elements included in the project design to facilitate replication.
29. The project outcomes include the strengthening of an enabling policy environment through the approval of the NAP; the strengthening of the GTI, which would then be able to act as a steering committee for all land

degradation related activities and projects country-wide and promote further actions to implement the NAP; the identification of resource mobilization and investment opportunities to ensure that the resources for replication are available to both the public and private sectors alike; and the widespread dissemination of lessons learned, which would presumably increase the likelihood of replication. The replication approach is therefore considered adequate for promoting the increased adoption of SLM in the country.

- **UNDP Comparative Advantage**

30. The UNDP had a strong comparative advantage as Implementing Agency (IA) for this project. UNDP's physical office in the country facilitated regular interaction with the Executing Agency, support and technical back-stopping, particularly in the second half of the project when there were significant time pressures to produce the project's key deliverables.
31. Over the years, the UNDP has established a large network of contacts and relationships with key stakeholders involved in this project, including the Ministry of Environment and others. The Environment Unit of UNDP is equipped with the technical capacity for monitoring projects in the land degradation focal area, with a Program Official with a Master's in biodiversity and a M&E specialist with a Master's in environmental engineering, among other staff members. In addition, UNDP provided support for the development of the first national communications on land degradation, has been a member of the GTI since the late 1990s and has channeled funds to implement the UNCCD.
32. It should be noted that when the project was designed, UNDP was already acting as IA for another land degradation project, entitled "Demonstrating Sustainable Land Management in the Upper Sabana Yegua Watershed System" (2005-2012), and was therefore able to ensure inter-project learning and exchange of experiences. While the SLM project was under execution, UNDP also took on the role of IA for a third land degradation project, entitled, "Reducing Conflicting Water Uses in the Artibonito River Basin through Development and Adoption of a Multi-Focal Strategic Action Programme" (2011-2015) (a binational project). As such, there were three ongoing GEF funded SLM projects being executed in parallel with UNDP as IA. The UNDP organizes quarterly meetings among all international cooperation projects with which it is involved to provide a formal space for exchange of lessons learned.

- **Linkages between Project and Other Interventions Within the Sector**

33. The Project Document includes a detailed list of other interventions within the sector, including various GEF initiatives such as the "Demonstrating Sustainable Land Management in the Upper Sabana Yegua Watershed System" project; the GEF Small Grants Program, which has funded many projects related to SLM; the regional "Integrated Watershed and Coastal Areas Management project" (IWCAM); the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA); and the "UNDP/GEF Enabling Activities for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs): National Implementation Plan (NIP)". The ProDoc indicated that linkages among these projects would be achieved through a number of relevant means, including the quarterly UNDP meetings of all international cooperation projects, updates on the UNDP CO website, and through the GTI, which has representation on the steering committee of all the related projects.

- **Management Arrangements**

34. The management arrangements established for this project and described in the Project Document are considered adequate. As previously mentioned, the selected Implementing Agency for this project was the UNDP Dominican Republic Country Office, which was considered the most appropriate IA for a project of this nature. The chosen Executing Agency (EA) was the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources, Soils and Water Under-Secretariat (now called Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water), which houses the UNCCD focal point and as such is the appropriate entity to

take on this role. Interviewees commented that the capacity of the EA to implement the project was adequately considered and was strong when the project was designed with an adequate level of human resources in place to support its implementation.

35. The ProDoc provides a detailed description of the Project Steering Committee to be established, its proposed composition and duties in terms of the review and approval of project annual operational plans, budgets and reports and ensuring that project activities are in line with the ProDoc and with national policy frameworks. The ProDoc also adequately summarizes the role of the Project Management Unit (PMU) to execute project management activities and carry out administrative, technical and financial reporting duties, and summarizes the specific responsibilities of the National Project Coordinator. The Project Document also outlines a stakeholder involvement plan to facilitate project execution.
36. The ProDoc did not mention the designation of a Project Director within government to be responsible for ongoing supervision of the project and ensuring adherence to existing policies and contractual obligations with the UNDP. While this information was omitted in the ProDoc, the project did indeed have a Project Director, who was the Deputy Minister of Soils and Waters.

6.2 Project Implementation

- **UNDP and Executing Agency Execution, Coordination, and Operational Issues**

UNDP Execution (*Satisfactory*)

37. The Implementing Agency Execution of this project is rated as *Satisfactory*. Based on the results of the interviews, UNDP provided regular technical and administrative support to the project. UNDP arranged multiple meetings with stakeholders when the project was experiencing significant delays in an attempt to kick-start project executions and address the administrative and political bottlenecks the project was facing. Finally and after substantial discussions, the parties agreed to make a formal amendment to the ProDoc in order for UNDP to begin making direct payments rather than cash advances to government as of March 2010.
38. UNDP also provided support to the PMU on UNDP procurement policies and procedures, including formal training for the first project coordinator and sharing of information with the second coordinator. Even greater and timely information sharing on these procedures would have been beneficial. At times, delays were experienced when the PMU identified consultants to carry out assignments who were later found out to be ineligible according to UNDP procurement policies.
39. Significant time was invested by UNDP in the project in order to ensure completion of deliverables, including by publishing public tenders, carrying out joint evaluations of proposals with government, issuing the contracts, and undertaking regular monitoring. The UNDP Environment and Renewable Energy Unit also took the initiative of facilitating quarterly meetings among all international cooperation projects to promote exchange of information and lessons learned, which proved to be a very useful practice. It was suggested that in addition to these quarterly meetings, formal individual meetings with the project to provide follow-up would have also been useful.

EA Execution (*Moderately Satisfactory*):

40. The effectiveness of EA execution changed significantly over time. For the first two years of project execution, serious weaknesses were evident in terms of carrying out project activities and executing the budget, with very low delivery rates (for example, these were as low as 4% in some quarters with only 12% of the budget having been executed after approximately 1.5 years of the project). In fact some unspent advances had to be returned to the project account in 2009 and 2010. Some of the issues were outside the scope of the PMU to address as they related to bureaucratic procurement procedures within the EA, and administrative and political constraints. Changes at the higher political level, which coincided with the beginning of the project, affected the level of high-level commitment to the project's objectives and implementation methodology, which made it difficult to hire consultants and use the existing mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination, such as the GTI. This situation put the project at a near standstill without the ability to issue payments. Eventually, this also influenced the departure of the first project coordinator.
41. The change in financial executing modality to UNDP direct payments and the assignment of a new National Project Coordinator in March 2011 led to a much improved EA execution, with a strong focus on results and significantly increased rates of project execution. By project end, the delivery rate was approximately 96%. Narrative reporting was felt to have been well carried out, with timely and sufficiently detailed reports provided. Risk management was carried out regularly through the inclusion of updated risk tables in the progress reports, which also identified mitigation measures. The EA performed procurement functions effectively and in coordination with UNDP, including the development of Terms of Reference, the selection of consultants and follow-up on their work. Greater familiarity with and training on UNDP procurement procedures would have reduced a few of the delays experienced. The Terms of Reference developed for the consultancies were generally considered clear, though in some cases, interviewees indicated that greater detail might have been useful to specify the scope of the work required. In addition, interviewees commented that some of the consultancies, particularly those carried out in the last stage of project implementation, should have been longer to permit more time for information gathering and consultations, particularly at the local level.
42. All consultants interviewed concurred that there was a high level of support from the Project Coordinator and the Administrative/Technical Assistant to accompany the consultancies and that the support was provided on a regular and timely basis. The PMU supported the consultants' information needs, facilitated contacts with relevant institutions, reviewed products carefully and provided appropriate technical feedback and guidance to strengthen the final products. In addition, the Ministry of Environment itself provided support to consultancies in the form of information and logistics.
43. The rating of *Moderately Satisfactory* is therefore based on an assessment balancing the earlier execution problems with the later strong delivery.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation: Design (*Satisfactory*)**

44. The Monitoring and Evaluation design at project entry is rated as *Satisfactory*. The logical framework was well-designed, and for the most part contained appropriate indicators, baseline values and targets, though some of the targets were considered ambitious (please section 5.1 -Project Design/Formulation, Analysis of LFA for further details). The assumptions/risks analysis for the project was appropriate, with a few areas that could have been strengthened as highlighted in the section on Project Design, such as the inclusion of assumptions for Outcome 4.
45. The Project Document included a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, which outlined the main M&E activities, including an inception workshop, preparation of an inception report, preparation of annual Project Implementation reviews, annual Tripartite reviews and reports, Mid-Term and Terminal External

Evaluations, yearly financial audits, preparation of terminal report, two surveys and the gathering of lessons learned. In addition, there was a clear articulation of the roles, responsibilities and methodology for M&E in the Project Document and an adequate budget of USD 58,000 set aside for Monitoring and Evaluation.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation (*Moderately Satisfactory*)**

46. Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation is rated as *Moderately Satisfactory*. An inception workshop was carried out in December of 2008 to coincide with a GTI meeting to inform stakeholders about the project's main objectives and an inception report was prepared. During the initial period of project execution, quarterly progress reports were developed in a timely manner and the logframe was used as a guide for the PMU but despite this use of monitoring tools, political and administrative bottlenecks translated into significant delays and very few results.
47. With the change in financial execution modality and later change in project coordinator, delivery increased significantly and monitoring was carried out adequately. The logframe served as a useful management tool to guide the PMU's activities and was regularly consulted to ensure achievement of expected results. However, increased attention to establishing baselines and carrying out follow-up surveys as per the logframe would have enabled a more accurate assessment of project impact. For example, at the project objective level, for the indicator related to the change in status of compulsory indicators in the M&E toolkit for the LDC/SIDS portfolio project, the logframe stipulated that the baseline and targets would be established for each category in the M&E toolkit at project inception, but this was not done. In terms of the indicator related to increase in awareness on LD under Outcome 1, while the baseline was calculated, a follow-up survey was not carried out at project end to enable measurement of the degree of achievement of the target. For Outcome 3, the percentage of the funding gap for which funding commitments had been obtained by project end was not quantified.
48. Narrative reporting was deemed effective and quarterly progress reports were submitted on a timely basis and with the expected level of detail. Annual PIRs were also prepared on a timely basis, and these were discussed formally and informally by the PMU and the UNDP to permit adaptive measures to be carried out in response to the findings (see section on Adaptive Management for more details). The final PIR and the Terminal Evaluation compiled lessons learned from the project.
49. Financial reports were not required to be submitted by the project team after 2010 when the UNDP began to make direct payments rather than advances to government. A financial audit was carried for the 2010 calendar year and did not reveal any significant concerns with regard to the financial management of the project.
50. No formal tripartite reviews were carried out during the course of project implementation, however, the GEF operational focal point attended many of the quarterly meetings of UNDP international cooperation projects (which of course also included UNDP and the PMU). The participation of the operational focal point proved to be very useful, particularly in terms of obtaining the support of the government to sign an amendment to the ProDoc to enable UNDP to implement direct payments. Meetings were also held with the project coordinator/Director of the GTI and the representative of the Ministry during crucial bottlenecks in project implementation to move things forward.

51. Given the time pressures under which the PMU was operating once the new national Project Coordinator was in place and the fact that it is not mandatory, the decision was made not to carry out a Mid-Term Evaluation and to prioritize the delivery of the main project components by the globally established deadline of June 2012. As such, it is not possible to comment on the consistency of the MTE ratings with the PIR self-evaluation reports. The ratings provided in this TE are generally consistent with the PIR 2012 ratings as can be seen in the following table:

Ratings in 2012 PIR:

	<i>Rating of Project Progress</i>
National Project Manager	Satisfactory
UNDP Country Office	Moderately Satisfactory
UNDP Regional Technical Adviser	Moderately Satisfactory

TE Ratings:

Overall quality of Monitoring and Evaluation	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall quality of project Implementation/ Execution	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall quality of project outcomes	Moderately Satisfactory

52. The final amount spent on M & E was USD 39,566.20. Funds were spent primarily on the financial audit, the Terminal Evaluation and the two surveys carried out. Other activities such as the inception workshop, the preparation of PIRs, gathering of lessons learned and preparation of the terminal report did not incur any additional costs.

53. The rating for M&E implementation is *Moderately Satisfactory*. While both the EA and IA monitored the level of achievement of project results throughout, additional project monitoring activities would have been useful as previously highlighted (for example in terms of establishing the relevant project baselines and carrying out required follow-up surveys), and as envisioned in the ProDoc. Furthermore, the project steering committee could have played a more active role in monitoring project deliverables. While the GTI took on some of the functions of a project steering committee, it had many other issues on which to follow up and based on interviews did not provide as much guidance and monitoring as might otherwise have been possible.

- **Project Finance**

54. The project's financial planning was appropriate, and the Project Document included a detailed budget and description of co-financing commitments in the amount of USD 826,450. The ProDoc committed to regular financial reporting and yearly financial audits.

55. By project end, the total co-financing obtained was USD 585,358. Earlier project delays contributed in part to the fact that not all committed co-financing was secured. Moreover, some of the in-kind co-financing provided by non-state sources was not quantified by the PMU and is therefore not included in the final co-financing figures. However, it should be noted that besides the co-financing secured from the original ProDoc

commitments, substantial additional cash funding was leveraged after signature of the ProDoc for a total of USD 255,101.

56. The co-financing for the project contributed substantially to the achievement of the project's objectives by strengthening capacity at the national and local levels and supporting the development of specific project outputs. For example, FAO and GM provided USD 35,000 each for the development of the Integrated Financing Strategy. USAID contributed USD 24,182 in cash in order to enable replication of the Sustainable Land Management diploma course, initially funded by GEF, and since then, additional funds have been committed from the Ministry of the Environment to carry out a third diploma course. To complement the course funded by GEF, CONIAF, a decentralized government institution that promotes capacity building in agriculture and forestry, provided an additional USD 32,000 for four more one-week courses to train extensionists. Further funding from GM was obtained later to align the financial strategy with the NAP and the 10-year UNCCD strategy and to strengthen South-South cooperation. GTZ provided an additional 72,000 above and beyond the original commitment of USD 150,000 for a total of USD 222,000 to strengthen the GTI, carry out studies at the watershed level, implement small agroforestry projects in the Artibonito watershed, implement training courses and provide equipment for the Unit to Combat Desertification, among other activities.
57. The in-kind co-financing amounts provided for the use of equipment and vehicles and the staff time of those who participated in the GTI meetings, as well as the salary of the project coordinator designated in 2011. Unfortunately, some of the additional contributions from the organizations that comprise the GTI (such as CEDAF, Consorcio Ambiental Dominicano and Sur Futuro) in the form of use of equipment, vehicles, meeting facilities, and staff time to review documents and guide activities were not quantified so the amount presented is lower than the actual amount provided.
58. As can be seen in Table 4, there were some differences between planned and actual expenditures per Outcome but these were not significant. Spending on Outcome 1 was somewhat less than planned, owing in part to the fact that the activities related to NAP approval could not be undertaken, specifically a high-level meeting to mainstream SLM and some planned regional meetings were not carried out. Spending on Outcome 4 (M&E and project management) was slightly more than planned as a result of the fact that the project was extended, which led to higher operational costs, in particular salary costs. There were some unrealized losses in 2009 and 2010 totaling \$1372 from currency conversion losses when unspent monies were returned from the government to the UNDP.
59. A financial audit was conducted for the period between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2010 (as per requirements each project must carry out at least one financial audit- additional audits were not required as the annual spending amount did not reach the threshold requiring audits). The audit found that the Combined Delivery Reports adequately represented the expenses for the period indicated, and that the status of goods and equipment and petty cash were adequately represented. No major issues related to the system of internal control were flagged. The only minor issue that was raised related to the miscategorization of some goods and equipment leading to a slight discrepancy between the CDR (Combined Delivery Report) and the acquisitions account for goods and equipment.
60. The project was considered to be relatively cost-effective as most planned activities were completed and expected outcomes achieved without surpassing the original budget. Furthermore, some additional products were developed that had not been envisioned in the ProDoc such as the National Strategy on the Sustainable Management of Soils. The level of cost effectiveness would have been even greater had the project not had to deal with such significant delays during its first two years of operation, which were associated with continued expenditures on project management with few results. However, it should be noted that even though the project required several extensions and was not completed on schedule, co-financing from government was

obtained to cover the additional salary costs of the national project coordinator who was designated in 2011. Overall, adherence to incremental cost criteria was observed and substantial co-financing was secured.

Table 3: Summary of Co-Financing

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP own financing (mill. US\$)			Government (mill. US\$)			Other sources (mill. US\$)			Total (mill. US\$)		
	Amount as in ProDoc	Amount committed after project approval	Actual monies spent	Amount as in ProDoc	Amount committed after project approval	Actual monies spent	Amount as in ProDoc	Amount committed after project approval	Actual monies spent	Amount as in ProDoc	Amount committed after project approval	Actual monies spent
Grants				40,000 (SEMAR N-SWS/FO GAP)	30,478	70,478	FAO: 50,000 GTZ-CCD 150,000	GTZ: 72,000 GM: 35,000 GM: 65,000 USAID: 24,182 CONIAF: 28,441	FAO: 35,000 GTZ: 222,000- GM: 35,000 GM: 65,000 USAID: 24,182 CONIAF: 28,441	240,000	255,101	480,101
Credit												
Equity												
In-kind support				331,750		102,115	GTI (NGO): 254,700		GTI (NGO): 3,142	586,450		105,257
Non-grant instruments												
Other types												
Total										826,450	255,101	585,358

Table 4: Summary of Project Expenditures by Year and Outcome

Output	Annual					Total Budget
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
Outcome 1:						
SLM mainstreamed into national development policies, programs and plans						
Total Project Budget as in PRODOC	98,500	22,500	8000		0	129,000
Disbursed	5737.37	184.28	3134.49	45,107.63	58,817.83	112,981.6
Delivery Rate						88%
Outcome 2:						
System, individual and institutional-level capacities to implement SLM and the NAP developed						
Total Project Budget as in PRODOC	101,000	66,500	19,375		0	186,875
Disbursed		2136.45	16,615.50	21,766.97	140,881.26	181,400.18
Delivery Rate	0%					97%
Outcome 3:						
Resources to support SLM are generated through integrated resource and investment planning						
Total Project Budget as in PRODOC	725	35,500	27,000		0	63,225
Disbursed		27.05	5.92	36,975.16	24,060.40	61,068.53
Delivery Rate	0%					97%
Outcome 4 **and project management cost:						
Effective project management through learning, evaluation and adaptive management						
Total Project Budget as in PRODOC		24,300	34,800	49,300	0	108,400
Disbursed		33,576.04	35,651.33	25,532.75	18,094.51	112,854.63
Delivery Rate	0%					104%
Unrealized losses		887.05	484.63			1371.68
Grand Total						
Total Project Budget as in PRODOC						487,500
Total Disbursed	5737.37	36,810.87	55,891.87	129,382.51	241,854	469,676.62

Total Delivery Rate								96%
---------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-----

- **Adaptive Management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)**

61. The project's long-term goal, objective and four outcomes did not change during project implementation. However, some modifications were made to planned activities and the modality of financial execution of the project was adjusted. Interviewees considered that these changes were necessary to deal with a changing external environment and were critical to the achievement of the project's objectives.
62. The following section will highlight some of the key examples of adaptive management carried out by the PMU and by the UNDP. As mentioned previously, and owing to the significant delays experienced during the first two years of project implementation when the UNDP was providing cash advances to the EA, the financial execution modality was modified. In order to expedite budgetary execution, the mutual decision was made between the EA and the IA to switch to direct payments issued by UNDP. As this was considered a substantive change, an amendment to the Project Document was prepared. The new administrative modality was felt to have functioned effectively and was critical to project success.
63. A second example of adaptive management was the decision to replace the original project coordinator who had been hired externally with the existing Director of the GTI. By virtue of the new Project Coordinator's position as Director of the Unit to Combat Desertification and Director of the GTI, he had an extensive array of contacts and established relationships in the field as well as the technical know-how to ensure achievement of deliverables. GEF funds were used to hire an Administrative/ Technical Assistant to support the Project Coordinator, who also had other demands on his time. Both the change in coordinator and in financial execution modality were very effective at addressing the administrative and political bottlenecks that plagued the project for its two years, but it could be argued that these adaptive management measures should have been taken sooner.
64. There were also some changes made to planned activities during project implementation. For Outcome 1, the project coordinator identified the need for an additional project output that had not been envisioned in the original project design and which would facilitate the mainstreaming of SLM, namely, the development of a National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils. For Outcome 3, although a consultancy was carried out to develop an Integrated Financing Strategy, there was insufficient stakeholder buy-in of the final product, which was considered by some to be quite ambitious and difficult to implement in its entirety. While this Strategy may still be submitted for possible approval, the PMU decided to develop an additional product that had not originally been conceived in the project design, which was a micro-financing study to analyze the role of micro-credit in supporting SLM practices among producers and how this role could be strengthened.
65. A final example of adaptive management was the decision not to carry out the activity related to developing a long-term proposal for monitoring of land degradation, due to difficulties identifying suitable consultants. Instead, efforts were focused on strengthening the consultancy to gather baseline land degradation data, some of which had never before been collected, to set the basis for long-term monitoring.

- **Feedback from M&E Activities Used for Adaptive Management**

66. According to interviewees, the PMU's regular monitoring activities (including monitoring of consultancies, preparation of PIRs and quarterly progress reports, etc.) informed management decisions. Regular monitoring of budgetary execution by the UNDP also played a significant role in the decision to change the existing financial execution modality. The PIRs were discussed annually through formal meetings as well as through informal communication and facilitated decision-making and adaptive management to ensure completion of project's objectives. The meetings of the GTI (which took on some of the functions of a project steering committee) included revision of project annual workplans and discussions on project activities and therefore

also supported adaptive management. However, given that the meetings entailed discussion on many other issues aside from the project, the level of project-related feedback was less than might have been received if a steering committee had been set up specifically for the project.

- **Partnership Arrangements (with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region)**

67. The project employed a number of different mechanisms to interact with key stakeholders for the purposes of project monitoring, capacity building and the consultation of products being developed through consultancies.
68. The multi-stakeholder GTI committee was utilized as the Project Board based on the fact that it was comprised of approximately 20 key stakeholders involved in the field of SLM, including government institutions, civil society and private sector organizations and the bodies responsible for the coordination of the UNCCD. Furthermore, it was an already existing functioning platform for coordination. In part this decision to piggy back off the GTI may also have been due to weak political support for the establishment of a steering committee during the first years of project implementation. The GTI, which met at least three times per year, reviewed and approved annual workplans and provided input on the main project activities/developments. There were differences of opinion among interviewees as to whether the use of the GTI as a steering committee was the best way to proceed. Some interviewees within the project IA and EA considered it a strategic move that worked well. Others felt that a smaller steering committee with sufficient time available to dedicate exclusively to reviewing this project's progress would have been able to provide more detailed follow-up and input and would have felt more ownership over the project. It should be noted that some interviewees who were members of the GTI were not actually aware of its role as steering committee for this project, though they did know that that annual operational plans for the project were approved by the GTI and that project activities were discussed through this forum.
69. The project played an important role in strengthening inter-institutional platforms for discussing SLM and advancing solutions, thus facilitating information exchange among stakeholders on this issue. The project provided support for the strengthening of the GTI through the publication of materials, capacity building and support for meetings outside of the capital. In addition, the project provided funding to support the Permanent Forum for the Sustainable Management of Soils, a broad-based multi-stakeholder committee created in 2010 to serve as a platform to discuss soil-related issues and provide policy and program recommendations to take to decision makers.
70. A number of different synergies were created with other institutions as a result of this project, which will be highlighted next:
 - Coordination between the Project Coordinator and the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) Director led to the identification of local participants for the training courses, support for the facilitation of these courses, as well as the development of new project ideas, for example in soil conservation. Ultimately, the relationship established between the project and the SGP also impacted the decision to allocate approximately one third of the country's STARR resources for UNCCD to the SGP for the GEF 5 allocation period (2010-2014).
 - Establishment of steering committee composed of the Unit to Combat Desertification of the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and CEDAF to promote incorporation of SLM practices, such as agroforestry, in existing programs across the country.
 - Agreement between the Unit to Combat Desertification and the Ministry of Education to develop an Environmental Education Plan for arid zones and to ensure its dissemination and usage.

71. Furthermore, the project shared information with other ongoing UNDP projects through the UNDP quarterly meetings of international cooperation projects, with positive impacts. For example, these meetings led to the dissemination of a methodology to measure a land degradation indicator that was developed through the project, which has subsequently been adopted by another UNDP/GEF project in execution in Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the Artibonito river basin.
72. The significant project delays during the first two years followed by intense time pressures to produce deliverables meant that the project was not promoted as much as it could have been with other departments within the Ministry of Environment (such as the Directorate of Environmental Information and the Direction of Planning) or with some other institutions. As a result, some of these other actors were not as involved in the development and usage of project outputs.

6.3 Project Results

- **Overall results (attainment of objectives) (*Moderately Satisfactory*)**

73. The overall rating for attainment of the project objective and outcomes is *Moderately Satisfactory*. The objective established for this project was an “an improved system, institutional, and individual capacity to coordinate, implement, sustain, and evaluate Sustainable Land Management in response to land degradation problems in the Dominican Republic.” The project had a significant impact on strengthening individual capacity through various training activities that were undertaken and will continue building on this through planned additional training and education activities and through the dissemination and use of training and educational materials produced through the project (e.g., the Environmental Education Plan in Arid Zones). Institutionally, the Unit to Combat Desertification was strengthened and now has increased capacity, staffing and funding to carry out its responsibilities. The GTI, as the coordinating body to ensure implementation of the PAN that brings together key players involved in the UNCCD, was also strengthened through the project, thus allowing for increased inter-institutional coordination and system-wide capacity to address the problem of land degradation. Without the significant project delays during the first few years of the project, the project could have had an even greater impact, particularly in terms of securing additional financing commitments to address land degradation, and institutionalizing the project’s key deliverables, such as the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils.
74. More details on the level of achievement of each of the four Outcomes are provided in the next section on Effectiveness and in Table 5, which assesses the degree to which the main targets included in the logframe were achieved.

Effectiveness (*Moderately Satisfactory*)

Outcome 1: SLM mainstreamed into national development policies, programs, and plans

75. The level of achievement of this Outcome is rated as *Moderately Satisfactory*. Activities were undertaken to measure the baseline level of awareness among inhabitants of the desertification regions on LD and to increase awareness of SLM, through the production and dissemination of material (such as a documentary) and through workshops. Interviewees felt that the project succeeded in raising the profile of the issue of SLM on the national agenda, though additional promotion continues to be needed to further facilitate mainstreaming, including with policy and decision makers. While this was not included in the original ProDoc, the PMU decided to develop a National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils as a tool to facilitate mainstreaming of SLM in the country. This was the first such policy to be developed to identify

specific strategies and actions to address soil degradation and thus represents an important policy achievement. The strategy addresses the linkages between sustainable management of soils, poverty and food security.

76. The position paper that had been envisioned as a tool to facilitate the integration of the topic of SLM into the country's long-term National Development Strategy was not produced in time to coincide with the national development planning process. The Unit to Combat Desertification still plans to make use of this position paper to promote mainstreaming of the SLM topic in the future. Though interviewees indicated that this was not a direct result of the project, the issue of SLM was nevertheless highlighted in the National Development Strategy which was approved by law. One of the specific objectives (#3.5.3) detailed in the law that establishes the strategy is: "to increase the productivity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability of the agricultural chains, in order to contribute to food security, take advantage of the export potential and generate employment and income for the rural population". Under this specific objective, one of the action items is to "promote and strengthen practices of sustainable management of natural resources, on degraded lands and those in the process of desertification, through training and extension programs that permit adaptation to climate change, respect biodiversity and comply with criteria to manage risks" (3.5.3.3).
77. The country's National Action Program was not approved by resolution as had been hoped due to the need to realign it with the UNCCD strategic 10-year plan (2008-2018). This realignment process could not be carried out as planned in 2010 because the required co-financing did not come through (the process is now underway in 2012). In addition, higher-level support from decision makers to approve the NAP by resolution was lacking. Despite its lack of formal approval, the NAP was validated by the members of the GTI. It continues to be implemented with a number of institutional members of the GTI allocating resources to carry out actions consistent with the NAP. The Unit to Combat Desertification still plans to push for the NAP to be adopted through a resolution of the Vice Ministry of Soils and Water.

Outcome 2: System, individual, and institutional-level capacities to implement SLM and the NAP developed.

78. The rating for achievement of this Outcome is Moderately Satisfactory. The project had a significant impact on strengthening individual and institutional capacities to implement the NAP and promote SLM practices. A substantial number of extensionists and technicians from key institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture, INDRHI and ONAMET (National Meteorological Organization) received technical and practical training on desertification, SLM and climate change adaptation. A total of 22 participants completed a diploma course and 92 people participated in a shorter training courses in the four prioritized regions. The trainings were well received, according to all the participants interviewed by the evaluator. The only two constructive criticisms provided were that the one-week courses were too short for the large amount of material covered and that there could have been a greater emphasis on watershed management. Interviewees indicated that they have been able to apply the information learned from the capacity building in their regular work as technicians and extensions and through publications such as the bulletins produced by ONAMET that are disseminated to the agricultural sector. The project also funded the development of an Environmental Education Plan for arid zones aimed at teachers, technicians, students, and communities, which is currently being validated ahead of its dissemination. Material and equipment to support the plan were also provided by the project. In addition, the project funded a technical assistant to support the implementation of the NAP for a period of 18 months.
79. The project strengthened the inter-institutional working group (GTI) through the development of organizational tools such as statutes, production of promotional material on the group, capacity building and support for the holding of a GTI meeting outside of the capital city. Within the Ministry of Environment, the Unit to Combat Desertification was strengthened as a result of this project through capacity building and improved equipment. Project funds were also used to support the Permanent Forum for the Sustainable Management of Soils. The project funded the development of the Forum's regulations, a general brochure and a web page, as well as a well-attended conference of the Forum.

80. Best practices in combating land degradation were compiled through an extensive consultancy that reviewed 22 projects across the country and that was the first of its kind in the country. The findings of this research now need to be disseminated to strengthen capacities in SML and promote replication.
81. The project fell somewhat short in achieving some of the other expected outputs associated with this outcome, particularly in terms of the establishment of a tool to facilitate NGOs and municipalities in reporting LD problems, actions and investments. In this respect, the project decided to focus its efforts on municipal capacity building, which was felt to be a necessary first step before increased reporting could be expected.
82. In addition, the project did not succeed in designing a national monitoring system for land degradation, drought and desertification nor in putting in place a functioning land-use data base and information system. This consultancy was advertised three times through public tender but no appropriate consultants were identified to carry out the work. In terms of the land use database, there were also problems in integrating existing information systems. Increased funds were therefore allocated to strengthening the consultancy to assess the current state of land degradation through the systematization and gathering of baseline data. The importance of this work should not be underestimated. Approximately 25 maps summarizing key information such as salinity and soil loss for each of the four arid regions were produced, as well as a report that specifies the methodologies used in data gathering. It was considered the first time such a comprehensive data gathering study on land degradation was undertaken in the country and as such represents a significant project achievement. Furthermore, the maps and data are considered an important input for the development of policy and programs and for the preparation of national reports to the UNCCD. In addition to the work carried out to gather biophysical data, another consultancy was undertaken to investigate the level of pressure on the country's natural resources, which included an analysis of socio-economic issues.

Outcome 3: Resources to support SLM are generated through integrated resource and investment planning.

83. The project took advantage of co-financing from the Global Mechanism and from FAO to develop an Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS), whose purpose is to create an enabling environment for mobilizing internal, external and innovative resources to provide an investment framework for SLM. This Strategy was developed in lieu of the Resource Mobilization Plan and investment plan that had been identified in the ProDoc. The IFS was developed in April 2011 and included an analysis of the existing investments to implement the NAP, barriers to the increased mobilization of funds and the existing funding gap (i.e., the resources needed to implement the NAP in the four priority regions). Strategic recommendations were developed for different sectors in order to address this funding gap. A separate study was also undertaken to analyze the existing investments by NGOs and their capacity to finance actions, though it was found that there was some reluctance among NGOs to disclose this financial information.
84. The process of developing the IFS involved introductory workshops to familiarize key stakeholders with the concept of IFS and with the purpose of the strategy. A total of 26 institutions participated in these workshops. In addition, further workshops were held to gather information and socialize the product, to which the main stakeholders were also invited to solicit their input. A committee was established to provide follow-up during the process of development of the IFS, with the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture being most involved and significant support received from the GTI. However, time pressures and lack of consistent participation by some key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Economic and Finance led to the development of a product for which there was insufficient ownership and one that was felt to be too ambitious to achieve despite containing many strong elements. Furthermore, there were insufficient resources for some of the workshops and to align the strategy with the 10-year UNCCD strategic plan and with PAN. Nevertheless, interviewees indicated that the IFS will be presented to the new administration that came into power in August 2012 for the 2013-2014 budgetary period for possible revision and approval.

85. The PMU decided to commission an additional study to identify existing sources of micro-financing for local inhabitants and to provide recommendations to strengthen the availability of micro-credit to support SLM actions. This was considered a strategic study to undertake as the institutional base for micro-financing is strong and people with few resources are well aware of the organizations involved. This research needs to be further built on and disseminated in order to have an impact on the micro-credit financing system.
86. By project end, government and private sources committed funds to implementing actions in support of the NAP. For example, the Ministry of Environment has included a budget line to implement the NAP and to combat desertification of 3.5 million pesos per year (approximately USD 89,000). Interviewees indicated that this represents an increase in support that can be attributed at least in part to the impact of the project. The resources now allow for an operational budget to be available to the Unit to Combat Desertification within the Vice Ministry of Soils and Water. The Ministry of Environment also continues to implement a project to fight desertification in the border region for a value of USD 43,000. The number of personnel within the Unit to Combat Desertification increased from two at project outset to seven by project closure. As noted elsewhere in this report, the target of securing commitments to reduce the funding gap to implement the NAP by 50% might have been overambitious and it does not appear that this occurred during the lifetime of the project though the project did not quantify the extent to which the project contributed to reducing this gap.

Outcome 4: Effective project management through learning, evaluation and adaptive management.

87. The rating for this Outcome 4 is Moderately Satisfactory. As detailed in the section on EA and IA Execution, there were significant delays in project execution during the first two years of the project and though monitoring was being carried out, results were not achieved. In the latter period of project execution, the project is perceived to have been effectively managed with a strong focus on achieving project results. Throughout the project, adaptive management was employed to deal with the variety of different problems that emerged (see section on Adaptive Management). Lessons learned were shared through GTI meetings, meetings with UNDP and various narrative reports.

Relevance (*Satisfactory*)

88. The project was considered highly relevant by the stakeholders interviewed, particularly given the high levels of land degradation in the Dominican Republic and the limited awareness and capacity on this issue in the country. As highlighted in greater detail in the section on country ownership, the project was consistent with existing government policies and commitments as well as with the GEF land degradation strategy. For the most part, the main project deliverables were well received, such as the training activities and the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils. One exception to this could be considered the Integrated Financing Strategy, which was not fully supported by all the relevant institutions.

Efficiency (*Moderately Satisfactory*)

89. The rating for efficiency, that is, the extent to which the results were achieved with the least costly resources possible, is Moderately Satisfactory. For the first two years of the project, minimal progress was achieved due to administrative and political issues, with the result being that a substantial proportion of the funds allocated for project management were spent with the main deliverables still outstanding. However, the decision was made to replace the original coordinator with the existing Director of the Unit to Combat Desertification/ Director of the GTI, which allowed for cost savings as this position was funded by government. GEF funds were used to pay for a technical/administrative support position. By project end, most of the expected project objectives were achieved, with a few exceptions such as the development of a proposal for the long-term monitoring of LD indicators. A few additional products were developed that had not been envisioned in the

original project design. The delivery rate was 96%, with substantial co-financing obtained for the project. On balance, the project can be said to have relatively cost-effective, particularly in the second half of execution when the main project deliverables were produced without surpassing the original budget.

Table 5: Level of Achievement of Project Objective and Outcomes based on Project Indicators

Goal: <i>To ensure ecosystem health, stability, integrity, functions and the continuity of ecosystem services that support global benefits and sustainable livelihoods in the Dominican Republic</i>						
	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	2012 end of project status	TE Comments	Rating
	Objective of the project: an improved system, institutional, and individual capacity to coordinate, implement, sustain, and evaluate Sustainable Land Management in response to land degradation problems in the Dominican Republic.	To be measured at inception	Demonstrated increase of at least one level for all toolkit areas and criteria. Target for each category to be assessed with UNDP country office at inception following the baseline calculation.	According to the final PIR, at least 74% of the indicators presented a positive change. In addition, it was estimated that there was a 1-5% increase in SLM cover over the time period of the project though it is difficult to determine how much of this to attribute to the project versus other actions carried out concurrently.	The baseline and targets were not determined at project outset as should have been the case. Instead, estimates were made comparing the end-of-project situation to 2008 data.	MS
	Outcome 1: SLM mainstreamed into national development policies, programs, and plans.	Low level of awareness. Level (category) to be documented during the inception	High level of awareness (>80%) of respondees to Awareness Survey by GO and NGO partners and 50% of general public demonstrate	Level of awareness among key stakeholders was increased. The National Development Strategy, which was approved by law in January of 2012, makes reference to the promotion of sustainable management of natural	Interviewees considered that the level of awareness of land degradation and its impacts had increased with the project, particularly as a result of the capacity building workshops and consultations carried out. While a baseline study was	S

	economy and on poverty reduction.	phase of the project through a baseline Awareness Survey.	awareness by the end of the project.	resources in degraded lands.	undertaken to measure attitudes and level of awareness of SLM issues, time constraints near project closure were cited as the reason why a follow-up survey was not carried out. According to interviews, the Vice Ministry of Soils and Water is interested in carrying out this survey post project.	
	Number of institutions with investment plans to execute actions in support of land degradation objectives oriented to NAP.	0 Institutions	___ Institutions: Ministry of Environment and Vice-Ministries of Forestry, Soils and Water, SEA INDRHI Public Works NGOs (collective). Municipalities (collective).	The estimated total number of institutions with financing allocated for LD activities that are consistent with the NAP is six (6).	The Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water of the Ministry of Environment has increased its budget for the implementation of the UNCCD and the National Action Program. CEDAF, a leading NGO involved in the promotion of SLM continues to allocate resources to capacity building to reduce land degradation. For other institutions, while there may not be specific budget lines/ investment plans to implement LD actions, funds are incorporated in programs and projects (e.g., for CONIAF, IDIAF, INDRHI, and the Dirección General de Desarrollo Fronterizo)	S
	Congressional approval of the NAP	Unapproved NAP document soon to be approved by Presidential	Approval as either a congressional resolution or as a law.	The NAP was not submitted to Congress as it still needs to be realigned with the 10-year UNCCD strategy. There was also difficulty obtaining support	Co-financing to carry out the task of realigning the NAP to the 10-year strategy did not materialize as had been expected during project	MS

		decree.		from higher level authorities to approve the NAP via a congressional resolution.	implementation (funds have now been secured for 2012 to proceed with this task). Despite the fact that the NAP has not been yet been formally approved, the GTI validated the NAP and budgetary allocations by relevant institutions to implement the NAP have been made.	
<u>Outcome 2:</u> System, Institution and Individual-level capacities to implement SLM and the NAP developed.	The number of municipalities reporting land degradation issues, actions, and investments from the municipal levels to SEMARN/SWS	0 Municipalities reporting	50% of Municipalities by the end of 2009 and 80% by the end of 2010.	The PMU reported that approximately 50% of the country's 155 municipalities are applying the new Municipal Law, which requires the implementation of soil conservation practices at the municipal level and the creation of Environmental Management Units.	The municipalities required capacity building efforts to be undertaken to raise their awareness of SLM issues before being in a position to report on land degradation issues, actions and investments. Furthermore, the lack of organizational structure and financial resources within municipalities and poor information quality were reported as undermining the ability to establish an effective communication system to report on progress toward NAP objectives. Awareness raising workshops on environmental education in arid zones were carried out with four municipalities with a total of 93 technical staff using co-financing. Please note that some interviewees felt that the originally established target was overly ambitious given the low level of capacity of municipality in this thematic area.	MU

	The GTI effectively executes bi-annual workplans for NAP implementation	0 workplans with 0 level of execution.	1 workplan approved by members every 2 years and executed to 80% of programmed activities within 3 months of established targets.	Bi-annual operational plans linked to SLM for the institutions comprising the GTI were developed and approved by the institutions during the period of project implementation.	There was no formal review of the percentage of execution of each institution's workplan carried out by the GTI and these were not formally submitted to the GTI. Nevertheless, members updated each other on relevant programmed activities at regular GTI meetings.	MS
	The number of Secretariats that receive timely reports from SEMARN for inclusion in PRSP, PND, and MDGs	0 Ministries receive information.	5 actors receive information systematized for national reporting within 6 weeks of reporting due dates: 1. Social Cabinet, 2. Secretariat of Hacienda 3. Secretariat of Economic development 4. Chancellery 5. Congressional environment committee.	During the time period of project implementation, the country developed a long-term National Development Strategy.	The process of development of the National Development Strategy involved an information exchange among key institutions, however, the Vice Ministry of Soils and Water did not submit a position paper on SLM in time to influence the content of the Strategy. The final product made reference to SLM though the project was not directly responsible for this result. More effort is still required to establish a system whereby the Ministry of Environment submit reports to stakeholders to influence key national documents related to development issues.	MS
	Proposal to measure baseline and future monitoring of national	0 proposals developed and ratified by 0 institutions.	At least 90 percent of institutions named in the technical proposal for LD monitoring ratify the proposal.	Relevant indicators to measure LD were identified through the GTI (ensuring consistency with the indicators approved at the ninth COP). Baseline information was systematized	Digital maps were produced for each of the biophysical indicators (such as probability of saline soils, erosion, and soil type) and a second study was undertaken to analyze various	MS

	indicators for land degradation, drought, and desertification is ratified by all institutions with named responsibilities.			and additional data collected to establish a solid baseline of both biophysical and socioeconomic indicators. A proposal for future monitoring of indicators was not developed due to difficulties identifying appropriate consultants to carry out this task (three public tender processes were undertaken but were unsuccessful).	socio-economic indicators. The process of collecting the baseline information led to increased capacity and understanding of what data exist, the data gaps and the institutional responsibilities with regard to monitoring various indicators, thus laying the foundation for a long-term monitoring system to be established. According to interviews, there is commitment from the Vice-Ministry of Soils and Waters to secure the funds to continue to carry out monitoring and the issue continues to be discussed through the GTI.	
<u>Outcome 3:</u> Resource mobilization to support Sustainable Land Management.	The amount of funding commitments received from government and from private sources in support of actions detailed in the Medium-term financing plan (in \$ U.S.).	The financing gap outlined in the mid-term financing plan	Initial funding commitments from all sources for 50% of the value of the financing gap as outlined in the financing plan for the period 2010-2015	An Integrated Financing Strategy was developed through co-financing from the Global Mechanism and FAO. This included the identification of existing investments in SLM and the funding gaps to implement the NAP in the four prioritized regions. In addition, project funds were used to carry out a study on sources of micro-financing for SLM and how to promote increased financing for this purpose.	The Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water has an increased budget for implementing the National Action Program and several other institutions have also committed and are spending resources in support of SLM. However, a study was not undertaken to quantify to what extent the funding gap is being addressed through such investments. The process of developing the strategy involved various workshops with stakeholders. However, several interviewees commented that some key players such as the Ministry of	MS

					<p>Economy and Finance did not participate sufficiently. The final product was considered overly ambitious and difficult to implement and had not yet been formally presented to the relevant institutions or approved. With the recent change in political administration, the Ministry of Environment plans to submit the Strategy for the 2013-2014 period, and it is not year clear what level of uptake it will receive.</p> <p>The micro-financing study carried out by the project still requires promotion with relevant stakeholders to maximize its impact.</p>	
<p><u>Outcome 4:</u> Effective project management through learning, evaluation, and adaptive management.</p>	<p>Lessons learned from project widely disseminated</p>	<p>0 evaluations to determine change in management systems</p>	<p>A monitoring and evaluation system that promotes effective adaptive management of the project and for identification of lessons learned that can be widely accepted.</p>	<p>Project experiences and lessons learned were shared regularly through the GTI. In addition, UNDP's quarterly meetings of all international cooperation projects permitted inter-project learning and sharing of experiences.</p>	<p>The GTI brought together the main players in the field of SLM and was considered an effective platform for the sharing of lessons learned, as were the quarterly UNDP project meetings. The final PIR and this TE also document lessons learned. Adaptive management was employed on a number of occasions throughout the project.</p>	<p>S</p>
	<p>Establishment & operation of Project Implementation</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Unit is operational within 1 month of Project start-up.</p>	<p>A Project Management Unit that included a National Project Coordinator and technical and administrative support staff</p>	<p>The initially established PMU experienced significant delays in being able to deliver expected project outputs.</p>	<p>MS</p>

	Unit			was established within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water.	However, with the new National Project Coordinator and technical/administrative assistant put in place partway through implementation, the PMU functioned effectively to achieve the project's main goals.	
--	------	--	--	--	--	--

- **Country Ownership**

90. While the level of country ownership and support for the project varied during project design and implementation, the project had a significant level of country ownership by operational closure.
91. The project was designed with the active participation of relevant government and non-government institutions and was consistent with government commitments under UNCCD, including with the NAP. Support for the project and its objectives was high at this point and interviewees indicated that there was significant capacity within entities such as the GTI to facilitate achievement of the project's objectives.
92. During the first few years of execution, with a new administration and personnel changes, there was decreased support from the higher political echelons, which contributed to some of the administrative bottlenecks experienced. There were also differences of opinion as to how the project should best be implemented, for example, with regard to the use of consultants versus in-house expertise, and the role of civil society.
93. However, the latter period of the project enjoyed a renewed level of support, which helped facilitate a greater speed of project execution. Stakeholders had the opportunity of participating in a number of ways, including through the multi-stakeholder GTI, the Forum on the Sustainable Management of Soils and through various workshops.
94. The policy framework for the promotion of SLM was strengthened during the time period of project implementation. Though this occurred independently of the project, the government developed a long-term vision for the country's development, entitled National Development Strategy, which made reference to the need to promote the sustainable management of natural resources on degraded lands and those in the process of desertification. Furthermore, a National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils was produced with project funding. This was the first of its kind in the country and was consistent with the strategic objectives of the National Development Strategy. It should also be noted that the manifesto of the new administration that came into power in August 2012 makes reference to the National Plan for the Management of Soils, which presumably would be based on the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils (or perhaps means to refer to one and the same thing).
95. By project end, the government had committed more resources to the Unit to Combat Desertification as well as greater staffing. This increased financial commitment would suggest that the project contributed to higher levels of awareness as to the importance of acting on this issue and increased country ownership.

- **Mainstreaming**

96. This section will assess the extent to which the project mainstreamed UNDP priorities such as livelihoods, gender, and disaster management. The project's focus was on integrating the issue of SLM into policies and programs, building capacity and identifying resources to support SLM implementation, but did not incorporate direct work with communities. As such, it is difficult to define direct or immediate project effects on local populations and livelihoods. However, the project created synergies with the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program, which led to new project ideas related to promoting SLM and improving livelihoods. Furthermore, the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils highlights the linkages between SLM and poverty (with poverty being both one of the causes and consequences of SLM) and with food security. It is believed that local populations

would benefit from the increased adoption of more sustainable and diversified land management practices if the strategy is successfully implemented. In addition, the implementation of the recommendations included in the study on micro-financing for SLM could lead to increased funding for the implementation of SLM practices among those most in need of such credit.

97. Project impacts on the country's ability to cope with natural disasters cannot yet be discerned, but it is expected that the implementation of more sustainable land management practices, for example, on hillsides, would reduce the vulnerability of local populations to natural disasters.
98. The project design did not specifically tackle the issue of gender by including tailored studies or solutions for women to address their particular needs with regard to land management, and this lens was therefore not fully applied during project implementation. However, the PMU promoted the inclusion of women in the training actions carried out, including the diploma course as well as the training courses for extensionists (this was more effective for the diploma course than the training for extensionists, as most agricultural extensionists were male). One of the two members of the PMU was female, and the project also benefited from a number of female support staff members.
99. The project contributed to the UNDAF 2007-2011 Outcome: "By 2011, have in place national and local policies and capacities for the protection and sustainable management of the environment, including the management of environmental risks and response to emergencies and disasters", the expected outcome Goal 3, Energy and environment for sustainable development and service line 3.1: frameworks and strategies for sustainable development. The project played a role in the achievement of the Output, "Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources actively participating in main global and national environmental processes." The project is also consistent with the Country Program (CPD) outcome: "national capacity for environmental management strengthened and aligned with rural development strategies" and with the CPD output "national capacity strengthened from the implementation of multilateral environmental treaties, protocols and the conventions of biodiversity, climate change, land degradation and ozone". The project is thus consistent with agreed priorities in the UNDAF and the country programme action plan (CPAP), including the sustainable management of land.

Sustainability (*Likely*)

100. The overall rating for sustainability indicates that it is likely that outcomes will be sustainable at project termination and that benefits will continue to accrue. This rating is based on an analysis of four dimensions to sustainability, as outlined below.

Financial Risks (ML- Moderately likely sustainability rating)

101. The financial risks to the sustainability of project outcomes are considered relatively low. The Ministry of Environment has included a budget line to implement the National Action Program to combat desertification, although the funding being provided is limited. It also continues to implement a project to combat desertification in the border region. Furthermore, as evidence of the government's financial commitment to support SLM actions, the Unit to Combat Desertification now has seven staff members, compared to the two members in place at the project outset and benefits from greater logistical support (e.g., use of vehicles). The new administration has also committed to increasing funding allocations for work at the watershed level in highly impoverished communities.
102. In terms of the sustainability of capacity building initiatives, various organizations within the GTI, such as CONIAF and CEDAF, continue to commit financial resources to further the objectives of the project in this respect. The synergy created by the project between the Ministry of the

Environment, CEDAF and the Ministry of Education will lead to the rolling out of a strengthened environmental education plan in arid zones, which includes SLM content. The Ministry of Environment has also committed to funding the cost of a third diploma course, building on the first one funded by the project and the second funded by USAID.

103. The Integrated Financing Strategy developed as part of the project identified the existing investments in SML and the financing gap to implement PAN in four priority regions. The Strategy still needs to be socialized with the new administration and has not been approved. While various institutions have committed to including the topic of SLM in their annual workplans to set aside funding from the national budget, follow-up is required to determine to what extent this is occurring and how much of the funding gap remains. More work is also required to identify and implement appropriate financial mechanisms for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils; to ensure that sufficient financing sources are available at the local level for producers and other land users to implement SLM practices; and to set aside required funds for long-term monitoring of biophysical indicators of land degradation over time.

Socio-political Risks (L- Likely sustainability rating)

104. The socio-political risks to sustainability are perceived to be low. The current administration has indicated its commitment to furthering the SLM agenda and makes reference to a Plan for the Management of Soils in its government manifesto. The issue of increasing food security, which is intimately linked to SLM, is also an important agenda item for the government. As highlighted previously, the political will to act on this topic has been demonstrated by the increased allocation of resources to the Unit to Combat Desertification and increased funding for sustainable management of watersheds in the poorest communities.
105. Key stakeholders continue to meet regularly through the GTI to push the SLM agenda. Within the GTI, there is an active executive group comprised of the Unit to Combat Desertification, CEDAF and CONIAF, who are particularly critical to building on the project's achievements and championing the cause of combating desertification. In addition, the strengthened Forum for the Management of Soils remains active as a platform for a wide cross-section of stakeholders to engage on soil-related issues. While public awareness of the need to adopt SLM practices was increased through the project, all stakeholders interviewed indicated that further awareness raising activities are needed.
106. Without the project delays experienced during the first half of the project, there would have been more time remaining to socialize the main deliverables, which could have increased the level of socio-political support and project sustainability even further.

Institutional Framework and Governance Risks (L- Likely sustainability rating)

107. A supportive policy framework is in place to support continued actions that are consistent with the project's objectives. The Dominican Republic is implementing a National Action Program to combat desertification, which is currently being harmonized to ensure its consistency with the UNCCD 10-year strategy. Furthermore, the project led to the development of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils, through a process of consultation with national and international experts and local workshops. This Strategy still needs to be socialized and formally approved, though the current administration has signaled its intent to do so.
108. The technical know-how to promote sustainability of project outcomes resides primarily within the Unit to Combat Desertification. It should be noted that the Project Coordinator continues to head

the Unit and the GTI, thus greatly enhancing the likelihood of furtherance of project objectives, and follow-up and usage of project outputs. Beyond the Ministry of the Environment, the project also led to the strengthening of capacity among extensionists and technicians from other institutions, who benefited from the diploma and the training courses on SLM. Despite the capacity built through the project within various ministries and organizations involved in SLM, interviewees highlighted that the current state of understanding among many government workers on this topic, even among government extensionists, requires further strengthening.

Environmental risks (L- Likely sustainability rating)

109. There are no significant environmental risks to the sustainability of project outcomes, as the promotion of SLM is likely to increase ecosystem health and resilience to environmental factors. Furthermore, the project's capacity building actions specifically addressed the issue of SLM together with climate change adaptation, in recognition of the need to ensure that practices take into consideration existing and expected climate change impacts.

- **Catalytic Role**

110. The UNDP project-level evaluation guidance indicates that the catalytic role of a project can be assessed by "the extent to which the project has demonstrated: a) production of a public good; b) demonstration, c) replication, and d) scaling up." Based on this interpretation, the project can be said to have had a significant catalytic impact though further scaling-up is still desired. Firstly, the project led to the development of a variety of products of utility in combating desertification, such as promotional and training material, baseline information on land degradation as well as a key policy document in the form of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils.

111. To promote replication of SLM practices, information dissemination and training were undertaken through various means, including workshops, a diploma course, shorter courses. Based on the interviews, participants from institutions are beginning to apply what they have learned within their work. Further capacity building efforts are underway. For example, the diploma course originally funded by the project was delivered to a second group of participants through funding from USAID and the Ministry of the Environment has now committed funding to a third round of the diploma, in recognition of the strong need for capacity building in this area. Similarly, while the project funded one of the short-term courses, four others were funded by CONIAF.

112. In addition to the impact of the training, it is hoped that the implementation of National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils will lead to further replication of SLM practices. More effort is still required to socialize and operationalize such key project outputs as time constraints during the latter part of project implementation limited this work.

113. The section on partnership arrangements highlighted some of the synergies achieved by the project which are likely to catalyze further adoption of SLM practices. For example, the project contributed to the establishment of a committee between the Project Coordinator/ Director of Unit to Combat Desertification, the Ministry of Agriculture and CEDAF to develop a proposal to promote the establishment of sustainably managed plots, including agroforestry systems. The idea is to encourage national projects in execution to incorporate this program in their work.

- **Impact**

114. Given the relatively short time frame of the project and the fact that many of the key project deliverables were finalized in the last months of the project, the project did not measure changes in

ecological status or reductions in stress on ecological systems and it is unlikely that these could be discerned at this point. However, it is expected that the project will have a positive impact on the land management practices in the country, particularly as a result of the increase in capacity built through the project, the strengthened coordination platforms, the development of a National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils and the establishment of baseline information against which progress can now be measured over time. As discussed in the sustainability section, the perceived sustainability of the project outcomes is relatively high and it is unlikely that financial, socio-political, institutional/governance and environmental factors will significantly impede progress. As such, the evaluator is of the opinion that the project has put in place the necessary processes and structures to lead to positive environmental impacts.

7 Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons Learned

7.1 Conclusions

115. This project made important progress in building capacity to tackle the high levels of land degradation that plague the country. The findings of the evaluation indicate that the project's most significant achievements were: increasing the individual and institutional capacity on the topic of SLM; strengthening inter-institutional coordination platforms such as GTI and the Permanent Forum for the Sustainable Management of Soils; systematizing and gathering data such as on biophysical indicators of degradation and best practices in SLM in the country; and developing the country's first Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils. These achievements are all the more impressive given the short time period in which they were accomplished. Presumably without the earlier project delays, there would have been more time to build on these achievements by further socializing the project's main outputs and increasing the level of support for their implementation. More time might have also enabled the completion of a few of the expected outputs that could not be achieved, such as the establishment of a long-term monitoring system for land degradation.
116. In its execution, the project employed adaptive management throughout. This was necessary as a number of different institutional and political challenges were faced by the project. A change in the financial execution modality and in the project leadership proved effectiveness in breaking the stalemate in which the project found itself. The execution agency is believed to have performed its functions effectively in terms of monitoring project deliverables, procurement functions and project administration and reporting. Monitoring of project progress against the logframe to measure impact could have been strengthened with the collection of all required baseline and target data. The UNDP performed effectively as Implementing Agency, taking an active role in ensuring completion of project deliverables, providing regular technical and administrative support and facilitating the exchange of information among different UNDP/GEF projects. Although UNDP provided initial training with PMU personnel on its administrative and procurement processes, ongoing reinforcement of this information, especially its procurement policies, would have been beneficial.
117. The project is considered to have been relatively cost-effective. Although earlier delays meant that operational expenses were being incurred with little results, the project was able to make up for lost time and achieve most of the expected results without exceeding the original budget. Substantial

co-financing was secured including in the form of the salary of the coordinator who was designated to take on the management of the project in 2011.

118. The project's objectives remain highly relevant for the country given high levels of land degradation and relatively low levels of capacity and awareness on the subject. Country ownership for the project was relatively high at project closure as evidenced by the increased financial and human resource commitments of the government to the Unit to Combat Desertification. Based on an analysis of socio-political, financial, institutional and governance issues and environmental factors, the level of sustainability of project impact is believed to be high.
119. The following section will outline recommended key actions that should be undertaken to build on the project's impact in combating desertification in the country. The report closes with a summary of best practices employed by the project and a comprehensive list of recommendations related to project design and implementation based on lessons learned in this project.

7.2 Recommended Actions to Follow Up on Project's Benefits and Proposals for Future Directions

Further capacity building and education

120. All interviewees concurred on the importance of continuing to build capacity on the topic of SLM and combating desertification. This is deemed critical to ensure that the human resources are in place to carry out the NAP and to implement the National Strategy on the Sustainable Management of Soils. Awareness and capacity on this subject are still considered to be relatively low, even among agricultural extensionists, and while the project was able to train a significant number of individuals, more work remains to be done. For example, of the approximately 1000 agricultural extensionists in the country, the project was able to train about 90, indicating that more training in the different priority regions would be beneficial. As part of the training, it may be useful to facilitate exchanges with experts from other regions or countries. It would also be important to bring such training to community centres to work directly with communities/ producers and to encourage *campesino* to *campesino* outreach and dissemination. The idea of establishing more demonstrative farms was also recommended in order to tangibly demonstrate SLM techniques to producers. In addition, more content on SLM and desertification should be introduced in existing agricultural training institutes.
121. Interviewees recommended that the diploma courses and the short-term courses that were implemented through the project continue to be offered. Also, follow-up training for beneficiaries of the training programs would enable them to act as multiplication agents in the further dissemination of best land management practices to producers. Events or workshops should also be organized for decision-makers in order to continue to build the high-level support required to support SLM actions. Another idea that was presented during interviews was to develop an on-line training course on SLM. To complement the training of technicians and extensionists, a program to provide support for the recuperation of degraded soils was recommended.

122. The impact of the training and education efforts should be measured in order to determine whether they are actually influencing the content of extension efforts, awareness levels and land management practices. One of the project's targets was to increase the level of awareness of respondents of the awareness survey by over 80% and of the general public by 50%, but time constraints during the latter period of project implementation prevented the implementation of a follow-up awareness survey so this task is still outstanding.
123. In terms of education, the project produced a user-friendly Environmental Education Plan for the Arid Zones. This still needs to be rolled to serve as a guide for facilitators to educate trainers/trainers, students in the primary and secondary levels, technicians in the environmental, agricultural and social areas of public institutions and civil society, as well as inhabitants of the arid regions of the country.

Socialization of project products

124. To ensure that the products developed by the project are utilized and have the desired impact, their further socialization is critical. For example, the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils still needs to be socialized to increase support for its implementation among decision-makers. A high-level workshop is planned to revise and adopt this strategy in October 2012. Moreover, this National Strategy outlines general guidelines, but further work to develop more specific products and recommendations is still required.
125. In addition, the study that systematizes existing best practices in SLM should be widely disseminated to local-level authorities, community-based organizations and decision-makers to maximize the chances of uptake of the practices described.

Promotion of innovative financing mechanisms for SLM

126. The study on micro-financing sources for SLM would benefit from a roundtable discussion with existing and possible future sources of credit/ lending institutions and further follow-up to strengthen the micro-financing structures in place and increase the availability of micro-financing for individuals with few resources to carry out SLM. In addition, other promising innovative financial mechanisms for SLM should be further explored.

Continued cooperation with Haiti

127. For various reasons, mostly external to the project (such as the levels of instability, changes in government and the earthquake), the level of interchange of information with Haiti, which was also implementing the SLM project, was less than ideal. Given the shared problems of land degradation, particularly acute problems in the border region and severe levels of deforestation in Haiti, continued efforts to identify and implement projects and to provide training in cooperation with Haiti are needed.

Establishment and maintenance of long-term monitoring system

128. As had originally been envisioned in the project design, the baseline data on land degradation needs to be entered into a database and a long-term monitoring system established with the support of diverse institutions. This will require existing data to be systematized and institutions to commit to greater data sharing. Currently, data is disperse and not always socialized and the process of

requesting and obtaining data is overly bureaucratic and tedious according to interviewees. This will also require data to be collected for indicators that are not currently being systematically measured. Such a long-term monitoring system would enable stakeholders, including producers themselves, to have access to data on levels of land degradation and would permit measurement of the impact of actions carried out to reverse land degradation and desertification. As a next step to build on the study on the state of land degradation, the exercise of superimposing the relevant maps to produce a map of desertification risk also needs to be undertaken.

Further mainstreaming of SLM into development agenda

129. While there has been progress in incorporating the topic of SLM in development policies (for example, the recently approved National Development Strategy now mentions the topic), further mainstreaming into existing policies and into the development agenda itself is recommended. This will require greater effort to overcome the practice of institutions working in isolation and to achieve inter-institutional information exchange and coordination. In addition, increased visibility is needed on the links between SLM and livelihoods so that producers and others understand the benefits of applying sustainable practices and so that the techniques promoted respond to on-the-ground socio-economic realities.

7.3 Best Practices

130. The project employed a number of best practices which will be highlighted here.

➤ **Designation of National Project Coordinator with the relevant experience and contacts**

After the initial project delays and lack of progress in achieving expected results, the decision was made to replace the original project coordinator who had been hired externally with the Director of the GTI/ Head of the Unit to Combat Desertification. This decision was considered to have contributed to the intensification of project outputs, as the new coordinator was already fully immersed in the topic, had well-established relationships with key stakeholders involved in the field and ample experience to lead the project forward. The fact that he was already within the government system and was funded by government might also have led to a feeling of greater government ownership of the project. Besides the individual's technical background and experience in SLM, interviewees also commented on his strategic vision, which had a positive impact on project outcomes. A technical/administrative assistant was hired to support the PC and was considered to have performed this role efficiently.

➤ **Strengthening of inter-institutional platforms and strategic alliances, including with civil society**

The project took the initiative of providing substantial support to strengthen the Permanent Forum for the Sustainable Management of Soils, established in 2010 to facilitate debate and provide policy and program advice on soil-related issues. This body includes participation from civil society and other parties interested in the soil resource. In addition, the project strengthened the GTI which brings together key state and non-state actors to support implementation of the PAN. These inter-institutional platforms enabled substantial discussion of the problems related to SLM and identification of possible solutions. Local "comisiones de trabajo" (working groups), which are comprised of public institutions and civil society organizations, were also strengthened through the project by increasing their level of awareness of the issue of desertification and of existing plans, projects and programs.

➤ **Close communication between UNDP and the PMU**

As a result of the original project delays and the pressure to obtain project deliverables by the global deadline for project completion, UNDP prioritized this project in the last two years of its implementation and dedicated substantial time to providing support to expedite execution. This included taking on the financial management of the project in terms of direct payments, publishing public tenders, and participating in the review of consultants' proposals, among other tasks. This active involvement of the UNDP with the project played an important role in the delivery of the expected project products.

➤ **Regular exchange of information and lessons learned among UNDP projects**

The UNDP Dominican Republic Environment and Energy Unit organizes quarterly meetings in which all international cooperation projects being implemented or supervised by UNDP have the opportunity to share lessons learned and experiences. Project interviewees commented that this was an effective mechanism and enabled the project to benefit from the experiences of other projects addressing similar issues such as the recently completed Sabana Yegua project¹ and in turn benefit other projects itself. The cost-effective methodology developed by the project to measure certain indicators of desertification in the field was shared with the ongoing UNDP/GEF Artibonito² project and serves as a tangible example of the impact of this information exchange among projects being implemented by UNDP.

➤ **Location of the Project Management Unit within the UNCCD focal point**

The PMU was physically located within the Vice-Ministry of Soils and Water of the Ministry of Environment, the government entity charged with ensuring implementation of the NAP and established as the UNCCD Focal Point. This enhanced synergies among the different initiatives being carried out by the Vice-Ministry in the area of land degradation and enhanced project ownership.

➤ **Intra-institutional strengthening within the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources**

Finally, the project was felt to have contributed to intra-institutional strengthening within the Ministry of Environment. For example, the provincial Ministry of Environment offices were strengthened through the provision of training and the identification and formulation of SLM projects in the transboundary zone.

7.4 Recommendations Based on Lessons Learned

Project Design

➤ **Ensure that all indicators and targets in the logical framework are realistic and feasible**

The project design included a few indicators that were considered by interviewees to have been overly ambitious in the context of the resources available, project time frame, existing capacity and reach of the project. For example, the goal of incorporating the topic of SLM into national development programs and plans given the existing relatively low levels of awareness of the topic might have been too ambitious. This would have required the support and active participation of high-level officials and their willingness to work effectively across institutions in a coordinated fashion, which was difficult to achieve. The target of 80% of municipalities reporting on SLM was also felt to have been ambitious in light of the need for significant capacity building with municipalities before the implementation of actions or investments would be likely. Finally the goal of obtaining commitments to cover 50% of the value of the funding gap to implement the NAP may not have been realistic within the time frame of the project. The

¹ "Demonstrating Sustainable Land Management in the Upper Sabana Yegua Watershed System"

² "Reducing Conflicting Water Uses in the Artibonito River Basin through Development and Adoption of a Multi-Focal Strategic Action Programme."

inclusion of unrealistic indicators in the project design is not advisable as it places undue pressures on the Project Management Unit.

➤ **Include sufficient funds in the project budget for regional workshops**

The project planned for a larger number of regional workshops than were eventually carried out. Time constraints, the need to follow UNDP guidelines in terms of procurement (which prevented the provision of services by some informal providers, for example) and often slow government administrative processes contributed to this situation. As the budget for such workshops was relatively limited, the providers that met UNDP procurement guidelines were sometimes too costly. It is therefore important not to underestimate the funding required for regional workshops when developing project budgets in order to ensure a high level of participation across the country in project activities, such as in the development of nationally relevant policy documents.

➤ **Ensure that project budget includes funds for widespread advertisement of consultancies, including through major national newspapers.**

On numerous occasions, due to the limited qualified human resources in the country in the specialized topics of relevance for this project, the project had to readvertise consultancies. While the UNDP, government and GTI networks proved useful in disseminating the public tenders and identifying appropriate consultants, several interviewees also suggested that consultancies should be consistently advertised in the major national newspapers. Sufficient funding therefore needs to be included in project budgets to enable such widespread dissemination and to reduce delays in hiring consultants.

➤ **Minimize the time period between project design and implementation**

For this project, several years passed between project conception and actual implementation and in that time period, there were significant changes in personnel and in the players involved within the Ministry of Environment. When the project began to be implemented there was less government support and understanding of its objectives, which undermined progress. Such changes in personnel and levels of support can occur even in the short-term, but minimizing the period of time between project design and implementation can reduce this likelihood.

➤ **Consider the inclusion of direct work with communities to increase support and uptake of SLM**

While not all interviewees agreed on this point, several recommended that local pilot projects/ concrete field-level actions should be included within the project design to increase community-level support and awareness and to promote replication of SLM actions. Such components could be funded through co-financing and in fact other projects under this same portfolio project did just that with positive results. This would enable demonstration of SLM practices and would ensure greater participation of civil society. Others felt that the inclusion of work with communities was not necessary to the achievement of the project's objectives given its focus on more systemic level changes and the limited funds available.

Project Implementation

➤ **Socialize the project at the outset with all relevant stakeholders.**

The project carried out an inception workshop in conjunction with a GTI meeting, thus enabling many key stakeholders to participate. However, interviewees indicated that a wider cross-section of stakeholders should have been involved in the socialization process to increase understanding of, and support for, the project. Furthermore, given that project onset coincided with a new government administration, it is critical to re-socialize the project extensively in order to obtain support required for the project, and to ensure the government is fully aware of its commitments *vis-a-vis* the project and of GEF's mechanism of operation in terms of covering incremental costs.

➤ **Carefully assess and identify the most appropriate modality for financial execution at project onset and put in place the necessary safeguards**

Institutional limitations within the public sector to implement this type of project within established timelines and standards were evident and these undermined the timely channeling of resources for this project. As such, appropriate measures need to be taken to address this. Given the initial delays experienced by the project, the decision was made to make use of the UNDP's financial management system in order to expedite project execution, rather than continuing with the modality of advancing funds to the Executing Agency. This decision, together with other adaptive management measures, increased the rate of budgetary execution significantly.

➤ **Share information on UNDP requirements and procedures for public tenders in a timely manner with the EA to minimize delays**

Project experience has shown that it is critical to provide training on UNDP's procurement procedures with the EA and to reinforce this regularly. Otherwise, valuable project execution time may be lost; in the case of this project, the EA advanced significantly with the process of selection of consultants for some of the consultancies only to find out a later stage that the consultants chosen did not meet the eligibility requirements. While UNDP provided formal training near project outset to the initial project coordinator and to the project's technical administrative assistant, and shared information on this topic later on, additional training would have been useful.

➤ **Advertise consultancies for enough time to attract as many qualified candidates as possible**
Strong time pressures during the latter half of project implementation when the project had to catch up significantly in order to deliver expected products meant that the tender period for consultancies was sometimes shorter than desired. Given the limited human resources in many LDC/SIDS countries in specialized fields such as SLM, it is important to provide ample time for qualified candidates to apply.

➤ **Disseminate public tenders widely using all available means, including the national press**
As previously mentioned, the project took advantage of UNDP, government and GTI networks to disseminate public tenders to qualified consultants. Several interviewees suggested that in addition to electronic dissemination, efforts should be made to consistently advertise public tenders using the most widely read national newspapers.

➤ **Specify eligibility requirements in Terms of Reference of consultancies clearly**
On several occasions, applicants who did not meet the eligibility requirements applied for consultancies, which led to delays. For example, organizations applied for some consultancies that were only open to individual consultants or government employees applied even though this is not permitted (unless certain special conditions are met). To avoid such delays, the eligibility conditions need to be made explicit in the Terms of Reference. The project learned from this experience, and in subsequent procurement notices clearly specified the eligibility conditions.

➤ **Develop Terms of Reference for consultancies with sufficient detail and a clear indication of the expected scope of the work**

As the Terms of Reference for the consultancies did not indicate their financial value and some were not very detailed, there were cases when qualified applicants who were not clear on the expected scope of the consultancy promised more than was necessary and had a bid that surpassed the project budget, which put

It should be noted, however, that this situation was not always due to a lack of awareness of the criteria for eligibility, but in some cases was because consultants were not open in their application about the fact that they were government employees.

them out of the running for the desired work. Such situations could be minimized by including as much detail as possible in the ToRs and specifying the scope of work required.

➤ **Ensure that the duration of consultancies is sufficiently long to enable the necessary data collection**

The problem of limited time to complete all project deliverables led to a situation where a few of the consultancies were felt to have been shorter than ideal. Even though the final products were well received by the stakeholders interviewed, some of the consultants indicated that they would have appreciated more time to collect data in the field and from local stakeholders as well as to validate the project products. This is critical to maximize the level of ownership over the final products.

➤ **Promote widespread consultation on documents of national importance with all relevant institutions in order to maximize ownership and support of project products**

During the development of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils, consultants carried out various workshops with locals, which were felt to be critical in generating interest in the subject. However, some interviewees commented that it would have been beneficial to hold more workshops at the local level to obtain input into the Strategy. The IFS was also developed under time constraints and although relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance were invited to participate in the process, this did not always occur. Additional efforts to ensure participation of such key stakeholders are critical to maximize support and buy-in for the final products developed.

➤ **Socialize project and its outputs widely to maximize ownership and uptake**

Project deliverables such as the National Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Soils, the study on sources of micro-financing for SLM and the study on best practices in SLM were carried out near the end of the project with the result that a full socialization exercise could not be carried out. It is important to strive to complete the project deliverables with sufficient time remaining in the project for widespread dissemination. It is also important to promote the project as much as possible with all key stakeholders. Owing to time constraints, there was insufficient promotion of the project with some key stakeholders, such as the Dominican Federation of Municipalities and the Directorate of Environmental Information.

➤ **Promote the participation of high-level officials to facilitate to achieve project objectives**

Interviewees indicated that it is important to establish effective relationships with decision makers in order to achieve project objectives (such as in this case, the approval of the NAP). Furthermore, such individuals should be involved in processes to promote inter-institutional coordination. Project experience has shown that when individuals without the power to make decisions were assigned to represent their institutions for different processes, progress was laborious and slow.

➤ **Ensure project steering committee maintains focus on monitoring project results**

The GTI took on some of the functions of a project steering committee given that it was comprised of the key stakeholders involved in the field. However, not all GTI members were aware of its role as such. Furthermore, while the GTI did review and approve annual plans and provide input on project activities, more detailed follow-up and input into project deliverables would have been beneficial.

➤ **Adopt a flexible approach to project implementation to deal with administrative bottlenecks**

Many of the delays experienced by the project were outside of the control of the PMU and UNDP, but it is important for both the IA and the EA to strive to identify flexible and creative ways to circumvent bottlenecks and setbacks. For example, flexible approaches to address administrative issues related to identifying appropriate providers for the regional workshops could have been sought, such as the establishment of arrangements with other projects and institutions to enable actions to be carried out in suburban areas.