

## MID-TERM REVIEW

Project ID:	4847
Project Name:	Pine Islands - Forest/Mangrove Innovation and Integration (Grand Bahama, New Providence, Abaco and Andros)
Countr(ies):	Bahamas, Regional
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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## I. Overview

### A. Description

Project name

Pine Islands - Forest/Mangrove Innovation and Integration (Grand Bahama, New Providence, Abaco and Andros)

Country

Bahamas, Regional

GEF ID

4847

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

BEST Commission with Bahamas Agriculture and Industrial Corporation (BAIC), Bahamas National G.I.S. Centre (BNGIS), Bahamas National Trust (BNT), Department of Lands & Surveys (DLS), Forestry Unit, Department of Physical Planning (DPP), and Town Planning Committee (TPC).

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

Objective

Integrate Biodiversity Considerations & Ecosystem Services into Forest Management and Land Use Planning (4 Pine Islands: Grand Bahamas, New Providence, Abaco and Andros)

### B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

9/8/2015

Agency Approval

9/8/2015

Implementation Start

11/17/2015

First Disbursement

2/23/2016

Expected MTR

7/1/2021

MTR Submission

6/20/2025

Actual MTR

5/1/2021

Expected Completion

12/30/2024

## II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

### A. Main MTR Findings

The overall rating of the Pine Islands project was Moderately Satisfactory.

***Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory***

The project is highly consistent with UNEP's overall mandate and was aligned with the UN Environment Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2010-2013 and Programme of Work (PoW) relating to Ecosystems Management. The project spans two MTS periods (2014-2017 and 2018-2021) and three Biennial PoWs, currently aligning with MTS 2018-2021 under Sub-programme 3: Healthy and productive ecosystems. Furthermore, it is aligned with the strategic priorities of donors, GEF, and partners, specifically Objectives 1 and 2 of the GEF-5 Strategy for Sustainable Forestry Management (SFM/REDD+), Objectives 1 and 2 of the Biodiversity (BD) focal area strategies, and Objective 3 of the Land Degradation (LD) focal area strategy. The project's objectives are also highly consistent with national plans and priorities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable ecosystem resource management in The Bahamas, including numerous national plans and priority activities. While demonstrating Satisfactory complementarity with existing interventions, the review noted that dialogue or engagement with other recent, ongoing, or planned interventions was not explicitly mentioned, although linkages and benefits from previous interventions were adequately described.

***Effectiveness: Moderately Satisfactory***

The availability of outputs was rated Moderately Unsatisfactory, with five out of nine midterm targets (56%) being fully delivered, three partially delivered, and one undelivered. Despite implementation delays, the deliverables were of good quality, and partially delivered outputs were on track for completion. The direct outcomes deemed most crucial for attaining intermediate states (Outcomes 1.1, 2, and 3) were partially achieved. Most assumptions from project output to direct outcomes held true, with the exception of the assumption that a natural disaster would not significantly impact the project. Institutional and technical capacity building, along with local community participation, served as key drivers that aided the partial achievement of some outcomes.

The likelihood of impact was assessed as Moderately Likely. At the time of the review, none of the outcomes had been entirely achieved, though the most important outcomes for intermediate states (1.1, 2, and 3) were partially realized. While drivers supported the transition from outputs to outcomes, the drivers from intermediate states to impacts were not entirely in place. The project showed a catalytic role, particularly in Component 3, leading to the establishment of the Acklins & Crooked Island Cooperatives and the Andros Artisan Association.

***Financial Management: Satisfactory***

Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures was rated Moderately Satisfactory. The project received its first GEF contribution in 2016, but encountered delays in funding release in subsequent years due to non-compliance in financial reporting and a lack of technical resources. Releases were obtained in 2019 and 2021, with approximately 53% of the total GEF grant funding disbursed by December 2020. Early implementation delays resulted in a low expenditure ratio, which remained relatively low for 2020 despite an increase in technical capacity. The completeness of project financial information was also rated Moderately Satisfactory. The project's financial management plan included annual budget plans, revised plans, quarterly expenditure reports, and audited financial statements. Delays in past payments were linked to untimely financial report submissions and discrepancies in information provided to the Anubis platform; timely submission remains an issue, though increased effort is being made.

Communication between finance and project management staff was Satisfactory, with adequate communication verified between the National Project Coordinator (NPC) at the executing agency and the Task Manager (TM) and Programme Management Assistant (PMA) at the implementation agency.

## **Efficiency: Moderately Unsatisfactory**

The project experienced significant delays in 2017 and 2018 due to issues like staff turnover, administrative changes, lack of fund disbursement from non-compliance in reporting, and insufficient technical/institutional capacity. Following the project's extension in 2019, numerous adaptive management measures were put in place to achieve results. Fund disbursement has been slow due to previous reporting issues. More recently, the aftereffects of Hurricane Dorian in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated delays in project activities.

## ***Monitoring and Reporting: Satisfactory***

Monitoring of project implementation was rated Moderately Satisfactory. While a detailed results framework with indicators and targets was provided in the Project Document, some indicators were noted as not very specific and difficult to verify, measure, or monitor. Although GEF core indicators are measured using tracking tools, updated versions were unavailable at the time of the review. The project's Mid-Term Review itself was conducted past its initial deadline.

Regarding project reporting, it was rated Satisfactory. The project had faced many delays linked to non-compliance in reporting but has implemented various measures to facilitate monitoring, including PIRs, Half Year reports, and quarterly expenditure reports. Significant improvements in project reporting have been observed since 2019 with the hiring of a dedicated NPC, though timely submittal remains an ongoing issue.

## ***Sustainability: Moderately Likely***

Socio-political sustainability received a Moderately Likely rating. The continuation of project outcomes is highly dependent on political will and social ownership, and stakeholder consultations indicated a strong level of ownership and commitment from both government and community levels. However, there is a risk that a new political administration might not share the same appreciation for the project's achievements. Public perception is crucial, but the project is generally seen as 'low key,' with insufficient public awareness and dissemination of information, an area needing improvement especially under COVID-19 protocols.

Financial sustainability was also rated Moderately Likely. While some outcomes (1.1, 1.2, 2) do not explicitly require further direct financial inputs for maintenance, Outcome 3, focused on sustainable livelihoods, is dependent on future funding to sustain its benefits.

Institutional sustainability was rated Moderately Likely, as the project was designed to build upon existing advancements in land-use planning, the forestry sector, and sustainable livelihoods, thereby improving existing institutional and technical capacity.

## ***Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Satisfactory***

Preparation and readiness were deemed Satisfactory, with sufficient effort made during the mobilization period to ensure project readiness, despite subsequent implementation challenges. The quality of project management and supervision was rated Moderately Satisfactory. The project experienced staff turnover at various agencies since its inception, but communication with lead stakeholders was re-established after the 2019 extension, and issues hindering progress were rectified. The NPC and executing agencies demonstrated satisfactory adaptive management strategies in dealing with external challenges like Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholder participation and cooperation were rated Moderately Satisfactory. Increased efforts to maintain stakeholder participation and cohesion among government agencies and executing stakeholders were

observed. Strong community interest and ownership were evident, particularly for Component 3. However, there is still room for improvement in public engagement.

The project's responsiveness to human rights and gender equity was Satisfactory, ensuring equal gender representation in community meetings and training sessions and a balanced gender representation in consultative processes.

Environmental, social, and economic safeguards were also rated Satisfactory. The initial project design adhered to UNEP policies, and all three components were designed to encourage community participation and monitor outputs/outcomes.

Country ownership and driven-ness received a Satisfactory rating, as the project is executed by various government ministries and departments supporting its initiatives, with main partners providing co-financing commitments accounting for approximately 73% of the total project budget.

Lastly, communication and public awareness were rated Moderately Satisfactory. While communication lines among executing partners were re-established and specific public awareness strategies developed by each partner, the general perception is that the project remains 'low key,' with insufficient public awareness and dissemination of information.

## **B. Stakeholder Engagement**

The ProDoc provided a detailed list of stakeholders and their level of support and contribution to the project. The initial list included a wide range of stakeholders that represented government ministries, statutory bodies, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations. This stakeholder listing has not been maintained during the project implementation and many stakeholders who had initially pledged support to the project have since left. Several had to be re-engaged after the restart and extension of the project in 2019.

There has now been an increased effort to maintain stakeholder participation on the project and there is evidence to suggest that there is an increased cohesiveness and cooperation between government agencies and executing stakeholders responsible for project implementation. PSC meetings are conducted monthly to engage executing stakeholders and ensure continuous progress is being made on the project.

Component 3 is heavily reliant on the participation of NGOs such as Creative Nassau and CBOs. There has been significant effort towards community engagement in Andros and Acklins with respect to the pilot models involving the Sustainable Cultivation of Native Palm and Sustainable Cascarilla Cultivation and Processing. The Andros Artisan Association was formed with persons from Red Bays as well as persons from Central Andros and the Acklins Islanders Cooperative Society was also established. There is a strong interest and ownership at the community level for the project which ensures adequate stakeholder participation. There is also strong effort being made to ensure equitable gender participation and representation at public engagement activities and training.

While there have been strong efforts towards public engagement, there is still room for improvement. It is generally expressed by stakeholders, especially those at the community level, that there is not sufficient public awareness and dissemination of information and updates on the project. Furthermore, with the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholder interaction and engagement has become difficult and there is a need for the development of new methods of community engagement to adapt to the current situation. The overall rating was Moderately Satisfactory.

## C. Gender Equality

The activities under Component 3 of the project have been designed specifically to ensure equitable gender participation and benefits. This includes surveys with gender disaggregated data to provide insight into the possible gender inequalities in access to, and Component 3 of the project seeks to empower those at the community level who depend on the forest resources.

The stakeholder interviews and PIRs have indicated that there was equal gender representation the community meetings as well as throughout the training sessions that were held and that the project makes a concerted effort to ensure that there is a balanced gender representation in the consultative processes so that there is equitable gender engagement in the livelihood opportunities. The overall rating for gender-responsiveness was Satisfactory.

## D. Knowledge Management

The project itself has faced many issues and many of the project partners have indicated that there was a gap in communication amongst the various agencies involved during the former years of the project (prior to 2019). There is evidence however to suggest that this issue has been rectified. With the project being granted an extension in time in 2019, communication lines with the executing project partners were re-established and concerted efforts have been made since to facilitate the frequent and efficient communication amongst stakeholders.

There have been specific public awareness strategies developed by each project partner for the respective component. An example of this is Forestry awareness week which is carried out by the Forestry Unit on an annual basis as part of co-finance to raise awareness of SFM as well as infomercials and documentaries on sustainable harvesting methods have also been created and disseminated to promote awareness, learning and sharing of experiences.

Based on stakeholder consultations, however, the general perception of the project is that the project is still very “low key” and the objectives and benefits of the project are not effectively conveyed. There is not sufficient public awareness and dissemination of information and updates on the project. In the past, a lack of communication and cohesion between the various agencies resulted in delays in the project implementation. While there has been increasing efforts to maintain communication and engagement of the key stakeholders, as evident by the monthly PSC meetings, there is still room for improvement.

The COVID-19 restrictions make the public awareness strategies difficult to implement and as such. New methods of public engagement and awareness under COVID-19 restrictions and management protocols and new channels of communication for the dissemination of project information need to be developed.

## III. Core Indicators

### Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
		50	

### Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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### Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
		50.00	

### Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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### Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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### Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
		165921	

### Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
		165,921.00	

### Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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### Type/Name of Third Party Certification

### Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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### Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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### Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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**Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)**

Title
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**IV: Co Financing**

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO(\$)	Materialized at MTR(\$)
Recipient Country Government	BEST Commission Min of Env & Housing	In-kind		651,118.00	
Recipient Country Government	Forestry Unit, Min. of Env & Housing	Grant		150,000.00	26,096.09
Recipient Country Government	Forestry Unit, Mln. of Env & Housing	In-kind		2,161,140.00	2,242,013.63
Recipient Country Government	BAIC	Grant		400,000.00	122,358.57
Recipient Country Government	BAIC	Grant		1,475,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	BNGIS	In-kind		657,500.00	
Recipient Country Government	DLS	Grant		20,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	DLS	In-kind		788,500.00	
Recipient Country Government	DPP	Grant	Recurrent expenditures	20,000.00	3,118.20

Recipient Country Government	DPP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	732,000.00	123,862.34
Bilateral	USGS EROS Center	In-kind		200,000.00	
NGO	ICC	In-kind		400,000.00	
GEF Agency	UNEP	Other	Recurrent expenditures	40,000.00	20,782.49
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-kind			1,831,455.00
Recipient Country Government	BAIC	In-kind			142,148.22
Private Sector	US Forestry	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures		4,942.00
Private Sector	TNC	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures		21,910.00
Private Sector	Wild-land Internationl	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures		10,000.00
<b>Total Co-financing</b>				<b>7,695,258.00</b>	<b>2,031,237.71</b>

Comments

## V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

### Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
		Low	

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

The project has been designed and is envisaged to have positive environmental, economic and social impacts. It aspires to ensure equitable gender participation and benefits. The project promotes mainstreaming of environmental considerations into enhanced land-use planning in The Bahamas through integrated land-use plans that integrate biodiversity and concepts of SLM and SFM (Component 1), the

establishment of the National Forestry Estate and sustainable conservation forest areas (Component 2) and the development of models of sustainable livelihoods and practices (Component 3).

Component 3 in particular involves the implementation of two (2) pilot site projects that are geared towards providing socio-economic benefits through the commercialization of non-timber forest products. This component is highly dependent on the involvement of the community and has triggered the formation of the Acklins & Crooked Island Cooperatives and the Andros Association in Red Bays.

All three (3) components of the project have been designed to include project activities that encourage community participation as well as provide monitoring to project outputs and outcomes. Output 1.2.2 specifically aims to achieve greater public awareness through the achievement of various activities. Generating greater public awareness and encouraging community involvement is also captured in other project activities under outputs 2.2 and 2.3.

The initial project design completed the checklist for Environmental and Social Issues in accordance with UNEP policies and requirements.

## VI. ANNEX

### Uploaded Document

Document Category	Title
M and E Document	4847_2022_CF-UNEP_Bahamas_Pinelands
M and E Document	4847_2022_MTR_UNEP_Bahamas_Pinelands
M and E Document	4847_2022_CF-UNEP_Bahamas_Pinelands
M and E Document	4847_2022_MTR_UNEP_Bahamas_Pinelands