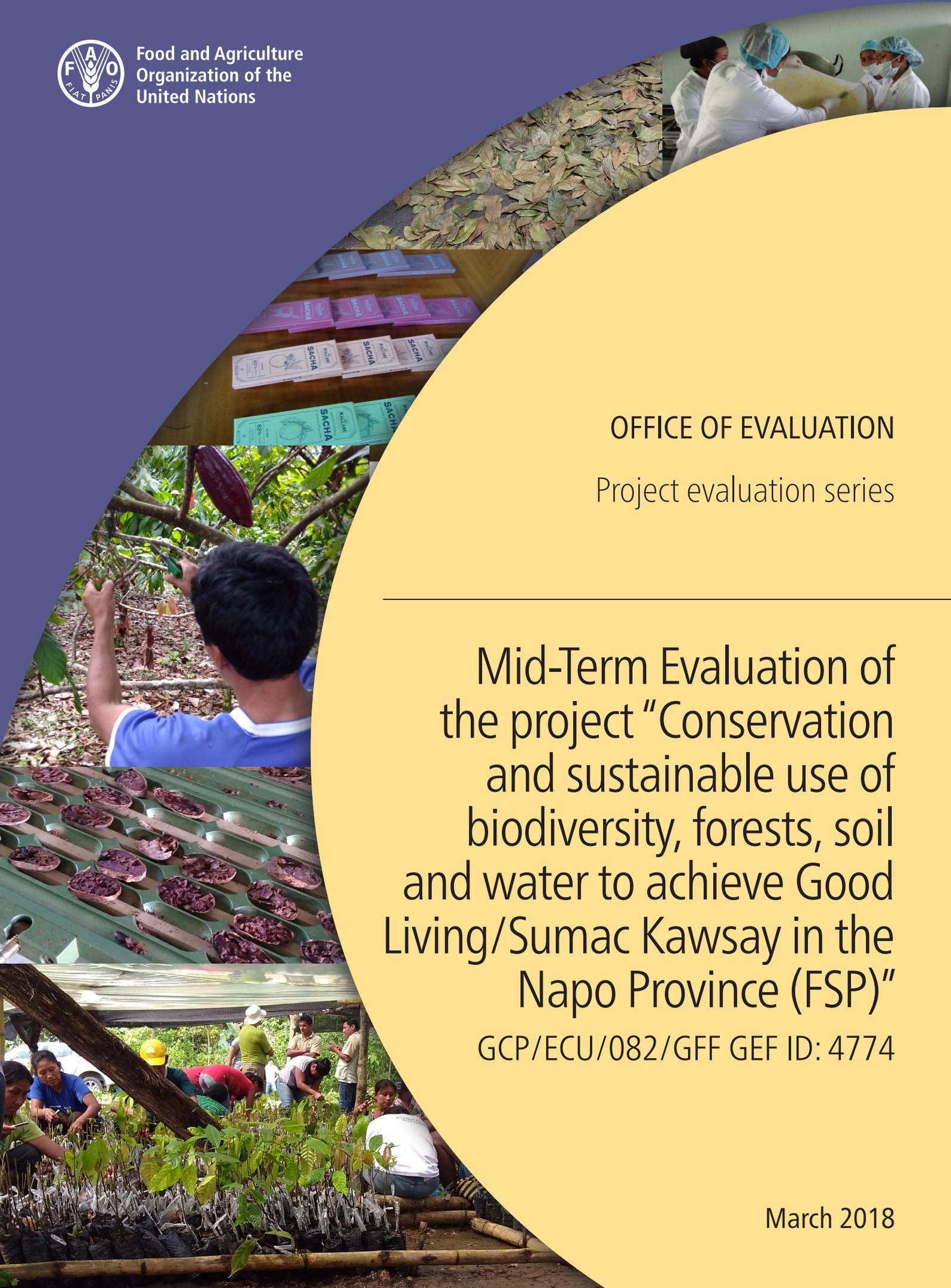




Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



OFFICE OF EVALUATION

Project evaluation series

Mid-Term Evaluation of  
the project "Conservation  
and sustainable use of  
biodiversity, forests, soil  
and water to achieve Good  
Living/Sumac Kawsay in the  
Napó Province (FSP)"

GCP/ECU/082/GFF GEF ID: 4774

March 2018



**PROJECT EVALUATION SERIES**

**Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project  
“Conservation and Sustainable Use of  
Biodiversity, Forests, Soil and Water to  
Achieve Good Living/Sumac Kawsay in  
the Napo Province (FSP)”**

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**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS –  
OFFICE OF EVALUATION**

**March 2018**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

ACOKI	Association of Kiju Communities
AME	Association of Ecuadorian Municipalities
CONGOPE	Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador
COOTAD	Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization Organic Code
CPF	FAO Country Programming Framework
DAG	Decentralised Autonomous Government
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO-EC	FAO Representation in Ecuador
FODESNA	Sustainable Development Fund for the Napo Province
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
GCP	Government/FAO Cooperation Programme
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
GIZ	German Cooperation Agency
ICAA	Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon
ICAA	Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon Support Unit
IEE	Ecuadorian Space Institute
IGM	Military Geographic Institute
IKIAM	Amazon Regional University
ILO	International Labour Organization
LUDP	Land Use and Development Plan
MAE	Ministry of the Environment
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MAGAP	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries
MINTUR	Ministry of Tourism
NPDAG	Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
PNBV	National Plan for Good Living
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

1. The findings and conclusions of the mid-term evaluation conducted from September to December 2017 are presented for the project entitled "Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, forests, soil and water to achieve Good Living/Sumac Kawsay in the Napo Province" GCP /ECU/082/GFF, which received funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
2. Project implementation began on 9 April 2015 and will officially end on 8 April 2019. It has a total budget of USD 14,948,787, of which USD 2,628,283 was funded by the GEF and the rest is provided through co-financing agreed upon by the partners in the initiative and national counterparts.
3. The initiative has 4 components, 6 outcomes and 19 related outputs, implementation of which aims to achieve a specific objective and to contribute to the accomplishment of the objectives below. The full table of intervention logic is available on page 21.
  - a) Global environmental objective: To promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, halt and revert land degradation and deforestation, and improve forest management in the Napo Province.
  - b) Development objective: To increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agricultural, livestock and forestry production in a sustainable manner in the Napo Province.
4. The evaluation took place in conjunction with two other projects that are part of the GEF's FAO portfolio in Ecuador: "Management of Chimborazo's Natural Resources" GCP /ECU/080/GFF (final evaluation) and "Mainstreaming of the Use and Conservation of Agrobiodiversity in Public Policies through Integrated Strategies and *in situ* Implementation in four Andean Highlands Provinces" GCP/ECU/086/GFF (final evaluation). This measure was adopted through a mutual agreement by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), the FAO Representation in Ecuador and the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit (TCI) in an effort to optimise logistical resources, to benefit from the complementary technical skills of the team members and to generate joint lessons learned to be used in managing future GEF projects in Ecuador.
5. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation was to review and assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and mainstreaming of normative values (participation, inclusion and gender) during project implementation with the aim of providing lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations that contribute to improving effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the sustainability of the project's activities and the outcomes achieved.
6. The evaluation timeline covered a period of 30 months, spanning from the beginning of project execution, 9 April 2015, to October 2017. The geographic scope coincides with the project intervention area - the Napo Province and project execution cantons - and it also included national level stakeholders and institutions located in Quito, the capital of Ecuador.

## **Key findings broken down by criterion and evaluation question<sup>1and2</sup>**

### **Overall rating of results: Satisfactory<sup>3</sup>**

#### **Relevance**

**Evaluation question 1:** Were the project strategy and actions appropriate for meeting the needs of all the stakeholders involved in matters of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including support for implementing policies and programmes by the Government of Ecuador, the GEF and FAO (particularly SO2)?

#### **Total relevance rating: Highly Satisfactory**

7. The project design displayed good vertical consistency, and the implementation and design of the components, outcomes and outputs of the project are closely aligned with and relevant to Outcomes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 of FAO's strategic objective 2 and GEF objectives LD-1, LD-3 BD-2 and SFM/REDD+-1, priority areas 1 and 4 of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) of FAO-EC, and the axes, objectives and policies included in the National Plan for Good Living (PNBV) 2013 – 2017 and PNBV 2017 – 2021 of the government of Ecuador.

#### **Effectiveness (Progress towards achieving outcomes)**

**Evaluation question 2:** What outcomes (both intended and unintended) had the project achieved by the time of the evaluation, and are they contributing to and/or positioned to contribute to the achievement of the project's environmental objectives and development objectives?

#### **Total effectiveness rating: Satisfactory**

#### **General considerations**

8. The performance of activities contributes to the promotion of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and to increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agricultural, livestock and forestry production. Key aspects of the project's global environmental objective and development objective.
9. The degree of progress towards the ultimate goals and the level of activity implementation is considered satisfactory for each of the components and for most of the outputs of the project.

#### **Component 1: Institutional strengthening to mainstream conservation strategies and sustainable use of renewable natural resources in participatory land-use planning, based on an ecosystem approach.**

10. Public servants and decision-makers have gradually adopted and promoted the lessons learned through the project at their institutions, and have an understanding of the concepts of land planning, natural resource management and environmental governance that facilitates dialogue and agreement among other national-level stakeholders and civil society, as well as with specialists in the fields of biodiversity, conservation and sustainable production. Furthermore, by strengthening an

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<sup>1</sup> To assess the different aspects of the evaluation criteria and questions, the GEF's scale for rating results was used. These ratings are: Highly Satisfactory; Satisfactory; Moderately Satisfactory; Moderately Unsatisfactory; Unsatisfactory; Highly Unsatisfactory; Unable to Assess.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 4 contains a complete summary of the project outcome scores.

<sup>3</sup> Overall rating of the project in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

infrastructure for the collection, storage, display (geoportal) and analysis of geospatial, territorial and environmental data on the Napo Province, institutional access and management of territorial and environmental information about the province was improved.

**Component 2: Design and promotion of landscape and silvopastoral agro-forestry production systems that include the sustainable management of water, soil, and forests, while improving local population livelihoods in the Napo Province.**

11. The producers have become aware of the importance of conservation and care for the environment, viewing sustainable production as a good alternative, expressed in the planning of sustainable management and conservation areas in protective forests and in the implementation of good practices in forest, water, soil, crop and livestock management on their farms, in addition to setting up both silvopastoral and agroforestry systems. Therefore, the implementation of the value chain plans identified has been successful in organisational strengthening, developing the skills of the producers and improving access to competitive markets. The results have not shown an increase in the livelihood or quality of life of the producers.

**Component 3: Promotion of biotrade and community-based ecotourism as strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and improvement of livelihoods for local communities.**

12. The beneficiary organisations have set a course for consolidation of their tourism undertakings and promotion of biotrade products. However, no clear effects on biodiversity conservation have been seen yet.

**Component 4: M&E and information dissemination.**

**Total monitoring and evaluation rating: Moderately Satisfactory**

13. The FAO office has a centralised monitoring system to which the project team reports monthly on the general progress of the activities performed in each of the components. Thus, a general overview of the technical execution of the initiative is kept up-to-date. Therefore, although the team is creating a monitoring and evaluation system, the project was not fully operational at the time of evaluation.

**Efficiency**

**Evaluation question 3:** Have the intervention methods, institutional structure and financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available helped or hindered the achievement of the project outcomes and objectives?

**Total efficiency rating: Satisfactory**

**Implementation and execution quality<sup>4</sup>**

**Implementation and execution rating: Satisfactory**

14. During the first six months of implementation, the project underwent a technical and administrative adjustment phase that was lengthier than advisable. However, it proved to be responsive, making the human and operating adjustments needed to organise and invigorate the technical and financial execution.

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<sup>4</sup> Execution and implementation quality was considered as a whole, given that FAO directly executes the project and partner agencies such as the NPDAG are co-financers that do not implement resources from the GEF.

15. The DIM intervention modality, which reduced the bureaucracy involved and familiarised the FAO-EC team with administrative standards and procedures, facilitated efficient management of the project. It should be noted that the DIM modality has managed to successfully combine financial and technical administration based in the FAO office with the appropriation and materialisation of the project benefits by the NPDAG.
16. The co-financing experienced a decrease due to the budget cut in conservation programmes at the company Coca Codo Sinclair, which managed to contribute just USD 20,000 of the agreed total (USD 1,000,000). Delays were also seen in the provision of co-financing by the cantonal DAGs, which must still contribute 50% of the planning co-financing. However, the team designed a strategy focused on solving this issue, which was ultimately successful.

### **Normative values**

**Evaluation question 4a:** To what extent has the project, in its work with local communities, ensured that all the stakeholders participated in the decision-making process (including implementation of activities)?

**Inclusiveness and participation rating: Satisfactory**

17. During the stages prior to project implementation (formulation and identification phases), methodologies and strategies focused on ensuring participation by the communities participating in the initiative were considered. Therefore, implementation featured the creation of joint management plans. Due to this, it managed to be inclusive and focused on the acceptance of all the parties involved.

**Evaluation question 4b:** To what extent has the project addressed gender equality issues in its design and is contributing to the empowerment of women, young people and other vulnerable groups?

**Gender rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory**

18. The initiative did not include gap diagnostics, constructing a road map, preparing specific methodologies or specialised human resources for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the initiative. However, it was found that the project managed to promote the participation and leadership of women in most of the initiative activities. They were summoned and participated in 40% (a total of 793) activities in the project. This percentage is satisfactory and represents progress towards the fulfilment of objectives one and three of the FAO gender policy.

### **Sustainability**

**Evaluation question 5:** How sustainable are, and/or will be, the outcomes achieved to date at the environmental, social, financial and institutional level?

**Political, institutional and financial sustainability**

**Political, institutional and financial rating: Moderately Likely**

19. After two years implementing the project, the NPDAG authorities and civil servants, as a result of their active participation and ongoing coordination with the project staff, have begun to interiorise and confirm their commitment to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as a cornerstone of their provincial development strategy. However, institutional and economic sustainability is not yet guaranteed. The NPDAG and the cantonal DAGs are probably not in a position, financially, to

continue working as intensely in the processes implemented. This, along with a potential change of local authorities in 2019, raises additional uncertainty for the continuity of the benefits deriving from the intervention.

### **Social sustainability**

#### **Social sustainability rating: Moderately Likely**

20. Although the farmers have developed skills and implemented good practices, the sustainability of the action will depend on proper technical mentoring and whether the practices developed yield returns in terms of improving the livelihood of the beneficiaries.

### **Political, environmental and institutional risks**

#### **Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability: Likely**

21. The risks of the project were managed well, and most of them are included in the Prodoc and the partial reports. Four new political, institutional and environmental risks were identified, which must be taken into account given that they could affect project sustainability. They are: a. Constitutional referendum: If passed, re-election terms would be restricted, increasing the likelihood of changes in authorities in local governments; b. Commitment to Government institutional: Implementation of the project outputs linked to institutional sustainability, especially FODESNA, will require signatures and approval from several government institutions at the central and local levels; c. Comprehensive Amazon Act: This new law is expected to be passed in early 2018. Among other initiatives, it includes a system of monetary incentives for local governments that have oil-related investments, which could prompt the expansion of the oil industry in the south-east Napo Province; d. Large Agriculture and Livestock Cooperative programme: A public policy designed to promote agriculture and livestock development in Ecuador. One of the measures established is the subsidised delivery of a million kits containing supplies, seeds, fertilisers and fungicides to small-scale farmers.

### **Lessons learned**

22. As a result of the evaluation conducted, it was possible to glean the following lessons learned:
  - **Lesson learned 1:** An inception phase is needed to review the Prodoc, evaluate changes in context and make any adjustments in its logical framework that may be needed before starting the technical implementation of the project. The teams must also be properly selected and trained in the methodologies, standards and technical and administrative procedures of the parties in charge of the project.
  - **Lesson learned 2:** Having a communication strategy from the outset of the project, establishing objectives, deadlines, responsible parties and production of materials, would make it possible to improve internal dissemination and reporting to other FAO-EC initiatives about the methodologies used and outcomes attained, besides helping to ensure the sustainability and replicability of the initiative.
  - **Lesson learned 3:** If training the project technical teams to include cross-cutting perspectives were a widespread practice at the FAO-EC office, in addition to making greater efforts in the socialisation of FAO's global policies and national level strategies, greater adherence to FAO's principles and objectives could be achieved in terms of inclusiveness, indigenous populations and gender.

- **Lesson learned 4:** It is not possible to adopt good practices in conservation and sustainable management and maintain them in the long term if this does not entail a change in the situation of poverty where they are adopted. Projects focusing on sustainable management of natural resources must contemplate and be aligned with this reality in their design and implementation. The project carried out in Napo is a good example of a response to this need and demand by the beneficiaries.

## Conclusions

### Conclusion 1 (Criterion: Relevance)

23. It was found that the implementation and design of the components, outcomes and outputs of the project are closely aligned with and relevant to the participating institutions and the beneficiaries of the project. Furthermore, the intervention logic indicates that the specific objective of the initiative will be achieved, which, in turn, represents a contribution to the expected long-term impact, translated into the development and global environmental objectives, which is evidence of the high vertical consistency of the intervention.

### Conclusion 2 (Criterion: Effectiveness)

24. The degree of progress towards the ultimate goals, the level of activity implementation and, therefore, the project's effectiveness, is considered **satisfactory** for each of the components and for most of the outputs of the project. At mid-term, it has managed to promote the values of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity among decision-makers, public servants and beneficiaries. Thus, it can be confirmed that the project has taken a fundamental step in consolidating an improvement in the provision of goods and services from biodiversity. Proving that the practices promoted under the project give rise to a better livelihood and an increase in the producers' income remains pending.

### Conclusion 3 (Criterion: Effectiveness- component 1)

25. At mid-term, public servants and decision-makers were found to have developed skills and improved the tools for biodiversity management. They also displayed a predisposition to establishing institutional commitments to mainstream the values of conservation and sustainable production in local public policies. The next two years of implementation will be essential in solidifying and formalising these commitments, providing a regulatory framework for them and institutionalising promotion instruments such as the FODESNA, and ensuring environmental governance in the province, based on the creation and launch of the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management.

### Conclusion 4 (Criterion: Effectiveness- components 2 and 3)

26. The producers, besides becoming aware of the importance of care for the environment and gaining access to new knowledge and tools, have actively participated in the identification and sustainable zoning of protective forests, in addition to adopting good practices in forest, water, soil, crop and livestock management on their farms and setting up both silvopastoral and agroforestry systems. These achievements are deemed satisfactory in the evaluation because they focus on accomplishing results related to sustainable production and biodiversity conservation and at the same time, they are well connected to the future implementation of value chain plans for cocoa, *naranjilla* and biotrade products which, if they achieve the effects they seek, would generate an improvement in the livelihood and income of beneficiary families.

**Conclusion 5** (Criterion: Efficiency)

27. The project efficiency is rated as **satisfactory**. The design of an adequate organisational structure (in terms of management and operations), combined with a quality technical team with a clear view of the deadlines and targets for which it is responsible and direct technical and financial implementation by FAO (DIM modality), has afforded effective, efficient, results-based management. These positive features have provided a strong capacity to respond to drawbacks such as the initial delays in implementation and delays in the provision of the co-financing. When faced with these events, the team in general and its leaders in particular designed and implemented strategies to successfully solve them.

**Conclusion 6** (Criterion: Normative Values - Inclusion and Participation)

28. It was found that, during the stages prior to project implementation (formulation and identification phases), participation by the communities benefiting from the initiative was fostered. The process began with the identification of the Kichwa people as an affected indigenous group and a project target and the establishment of dialogue with community and indigenous organisations and leaders. This made it possible to discern their specific needs, unique worldviews, cultural and production practices and ways of organisation, making the design and subsequent execution of the project consistent.

**Conclusion 7** (Criterion: Normative Values - Gender)

29. The initiative did not include gap diagnostics, constructing a road map, preparing specific methodologies (FAO standard 7) or specialised human resources (FAO standard 2) for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the initiative. This circumstance made it difficult to effectively mainstream the gender dimension in the initiative and to measure the progress made in reducing social, power and economic inequality between the male and female beneficiaries. Despite this fact, the project was found to have promoted the participation of women in most of the initiative activities.

**Conclusion 8** (Criterion: Sustainability)

30. **Moderately Likely.** While progress has been made in the right direction, raising awareness, building knowledge, developing skills and tools and implementing good practices in governance, biodiversity conservation and sustainable management among producers, decision-makers and public servants, two years into project implementation, social, institutional and economic sustainability has yet to be secured. Along these lines, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, updating the LUDPs and, especially, the design and launch of the FODESNA, shall be crucial and decisive in providing economic and institutional sustainability to the project. Social sustainability will be dependent upon the ongoing mentoring and technical assistance given to organisations and producers, and on proving that the progress made under the project leads to an improvement in livelihoods and an increase in household income.

## **Recommendations**

### **Strategic recommendations**

#### **For the project team and FAO Representation in Ecuador on project sustainability.**

**Recommendation 1:** As a measure focusing on ensuring the continuity of the project benefits, preparing and implementing an institutional, social and economic sustainability strategy is recommended, placing emphasis on consolidating a link to the DAGs and ensuring the feasibility of the inter-institutional strategy and the FODESNA.

Suggestions:

- The involvement and support of the FAO Representation in Ecuador would be highly necessary in gaining political support at ministry level and in strengthening the good predisposition shown by the prefect of the NPDAG.

#### **For the project team, for securing environmental criteria in public policies and land planning instruments.**

**Recommendation 2:** Proposing and organising the presentation of LUDP evaluations and the creation of EEZ, as a space for learning and political influence for civil servants and authorities in the DAGs, is recommended. This could benefit and facilitate the establishment of commitments to mainstream environmental criteria into public policy in general and, in particular, to update the LUDPs.

#### **For the FAO Representation in Ecuador, for improving the mainstreaming of cross-cutting perspectives.**

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that the FAO-EC draw up a manual that adapts FAO's global policies on indigenous peoples and gender to the Ecuadorian context. This would make it possible to ensure effective inclusion of these dimensions into the different projects that FAO is carrying out in this country.

Suggestion:

- This manual should contain at least the national objectives sought and the appropriate methods for each of the stages in project cycle management.

### **Operational recommendations**

#### **For the project team, to improve management of the knowledge generated.**

**Recommendation 4:** Incorporating a means of tracking the effects and impacts of the initiative into the monitoring system under construction is recommended. Along with this, communication materials that focus on spreading good practices should be generated, thus fostering replicability, multiplying the effects and additionally contributing to the sustainability of the project.

#### **For the project team, to adapt the skills training topics to the interests of the beneficiaries.**

**Recommendation 5:** As a demand arising from the target group, including the development of soft skills (management, leadership, conflict resolution, teamwork, etc.) into the skills training cycle for beneficiaries is recommended, as well as stimulating participation and appropriation by women and, particularly, young people.

**For the project team, on adjustments to targets and indicators of the logical framework.**

**Recommendation 6:** Adjusting the following indicators/targets in the logical framework is recommended:

Targets to be adjusted	Proposed adjustment
<p><b>Component 1/ Outcome 1.1/ Output 1.1.1</b>  <b>Target:</b> 6 LUDPs with environmental criteria mainstreamed, implemented and monitored (1 provincial LUDP, 5 municipal and parochial LUDPs).</p>	<p>Change the wording of the target, replacing it with the following:  <i>The DAGs have established a formal commitment to mainstream environmental criteria into 6 LUDPs (1 provincial LUDP, 5 municipal and parochial LUDPs).</i></p>
<p><b>Component 2/ Outcome 2.2</b>  <b>Indicator:</b> Tons of avoided emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>eq through protection of forests and reduction of deforestation.</p>	<p>The project technical team should consider changing the measurement method and targets (Appendix 1).</p>
<p><b>Component 2/ Outcome 2.2/ Output 2.2.3</b>  <b>Target:</b> Restoration/rehabilitation of degraded forests: 2,500 ha restored with analogue forestry, reforestation or natural regeneration techniques under conservation agreements and incentives.</p>	<p>Based on information collected by key informants and in the opinion of the project team, it would be advisable to revise the target and consider the possibility of lowering it, given that financing under the government incentive programmes was interrupted in 2017.</p>

## 1. Introduction

1. This document presents the findings and conclusions of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the full-sized project entitled<sup>5</sup> “Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, forests, soil and water to achieve Good Living/Sumac Kawsay in the Napo Province”, (hereinafter, “the Project”), GCP/ECU/082/GFF. The Project, implementation of which started on 9 April 2015 and will officially end in April 2019, is directly implemented by FAO, under the DIM modality<sup>6</sup>.
2. The total budget is USD 14,948,787, of which USD 2,628,283 was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The remaining amount comprises co-financing (either monetary or in kind) pledged by the Project partners and other national counterparts: the Decentralised Autonomous Government of the Napo Province (NPDAG), Ministry of the Environment (MAE), COCASINCLAIR EP, German Cooperation Agency (GIZ), Rainforest Alliance, FAO, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Decentralised Autonomous Governments (DAGs) of the cantons of Tena, Quijos, Archidona, Arosemena Tola, El Chaco and Cuyuja (see Appendixes 5 and 6).
3. This evaluation took place in conjunction with two other projects that are part of the GEF’s FAO portfolio in Ecuador: “Management of Chimborazo’s Natural Resources” GCP /ECU/080/GFF (final evaluation) and “Mainstreaming of the Use and Conservation of Agrobiodiversity in Public Policies through Integrated Strategies and *in situ* Implementation in four Andean Highlands Provinces” GCP/ECU/086/GFF (final evaluation). Section 1.3 on methodology provides more detailed information about the evaluation process.

### 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

4. The mid-term evaluation was conducted with a two-fold purpose. In addition to reporting to the donor (GEF) and to the national and provincial governments that are counterparts in the project execution, it has an educational purpose, enabling an assessment of the progress made towards accomplishing the objectives and outcomes proposed, identifying corrective measures needed to improve implementation, optimising its effects and guiding the project team in future decision-making.
5. The intended users and uses of the evaluation include:
  - Project team: they will use the findings and lessons identified in the evaluation to adjust the project activities and to decide, in conjunction with the implementing governments and the donor, the path to follow.
  - MAE, NPDAG, all the municipal governments involved, partners and local community beneficiaries: they will use the results and conclusions of the evaluation to improve the scope of the outcomes in the second half of the project.
  - GEF (donor): in consultation with FAO, they will use the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation to aid in strategic decision-making about

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<sup>5</sup> The GEF defines “Full-sized projects” as projects with a GEF donation that exceeds USD 2 million.

<sup>6</sup> DIM: Direct Implementation Modality

the path to follow in the future. Furthermore, the evaluation will serve as a resource for future evaluations by the GEF of its interventions.

- FAO Representation in Ecuador (FAO-EC): they will take the main outcomes of the evaluation into account in future strategic planning.
- Other donors and organisations interested in supporting projects on integrated management of natural resources in Ecuador.

## 1.2 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

6. The mid-term evaluation timeline covered a period of 30 months, spanning from the beginning of project execution, 9 April 2015, to October 2017. The geographic scope coincides with the project intervention area - the Napo Province and project execution cantons - in addition to national level stakeholders and institutions located in Quito, the capital of Ecuador.
7. The main objective of this evaluation is stated in the project document: "To review the progress and effectiveness of implementation in terms of achieving project objectives, outcomes and outputs. The findings and recommendations of this review will be instrumental for improving the overall project design and execution strategy for the remaining period of the project's term if necessary". Other aspects mentioned in the project document are also included in the specific objectives and evaluation questions (see evaluation matrix, Appendix 4).
8. In particular, the evaluation aims to achieve the following specific objectives:
  - a) To assess the relevance of the intervention in relation to the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries (participating province and municipalities), the Country Development Objectives and FAO Strategic Objective (SO) 2 (focusing especially on the integrated approach of the project) and GEF objectives BD-2, LD-1, LD-3 and SFM/REDD+-1 (GEF-5).
  - b) To evaluate the progress made by the project in two years of execution, particularly the degree to which it has contributed to reaching the project objectives. In doing so, the evaluation will assess the progress made and gaps in compliance vs. the expected targets.
  - c) To assess the progress towards achieving project sustainability and its potential long-term impact, if any.
  - d) To identify lessons learned and corrective measures in relation to project design, implementation and management.

## 1.3 Methodology

9. As mentioned in the introduction, this evaluation took place in conjunction with two other projects that are part of the GEF's FAO portfolio in Ecuador: "Management of Chimborazo's Natural Resources" GCP /ECU/080/GFF (final evaluation) and "Mainstreaming of the Use and Conservation of Agrobiodiversity in Public Policies through Integrated Strategies and *in situ* Implementation in four Andean Highlands Provinces" GCP/ECU/086/GFF (final evaluation).
10. This measure, adopted through a mutual agreement by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), the FAO Representation in Ecuador and the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit (TCI), made it possible to optimise logistical aspects (in terms of field visits and meetings

with stakeholders) and to benefit from the complementary technical skills of the team members. Specifically, each team member evaluated a certain project and, at the same time, provided support to colleagues in the evaluation of specific outputs of other projects that fall within their area of primary experience.

11. The methodology illustrated in this section takes this joint evaluation scheme into account. Although the evaluation tools and some of the sub-questions were designed specifically for each project according to its logical framework and evaluation type (final or mid-term), whenever possible, the evaluation team used shared methods and tools to optimise the resources used. The final output of each evaluation shall be the evaluation report in accordance with GEF requirements. An additional output of the evaluation process is a joint document that combines the lessons learned in each evaluation about the management of the GEF's portfolio in Ecuador.
12. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the guidance and requirements of the GEF. It adopted a consultative and transparent approach in close collaboration with the FAO Office in Ecuador, the Project Steering Committee and the evaluation team of FAO's SO2, under the coordination of the FAO Office of Evaluation.
13. In terms of gender analysis (question 4b), an assessment was made of the project's contribution to the objectives set forth in the FAO Policy on Gender Equality<sup>7</sup>. As a reference for evaluating the work done with local communities (question 4a), the evaluation team used the new FAO Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Manual<sup>8</sup>, taking into account the fact that it was developed two years after the project began. Along with the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, this document served as reference material in terms of FAO's approach and processes for consensus-building with the local communities that are project beneficiaries.
14. In order to fulfil the objectives, respond to reporting needs and achieve the requested outputs, a mixed, learning-oriented, participatory method evaluation approach based on the theory of change (see Figure 3) was used. Thus, qualitative and quantitative collection instruments and techniques were combined. After applying them, each of the resulting findings were retrieved and analysed, subsequently triangulating the background information in order to obtain a reliable basis for explaining the assessment of the different aspects of the project.
15. The reporting needs of the evaluation are determined by 6 criteria and 7 related evaluation questions and sub-questions. Each of these was answered based on description, analysis and measurements, taking the programme design, management structure, processes driven and mid-term results of the intervention into consideration. A list of the evaluation questions related to the evaluation criteria is shown below:

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<sup>7</sup> FAO Policy on Gender Equality <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3205e/i3205e.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The FPIC Manual and FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, respectively, are available at the following links: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6190e.pdf> and <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1857s/i1857s.pdf>

**Table 1:** Evaluation questions and criteria

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Relevance	Question 1. Were the project strategy and actions appropriate for meeting the needs of all the stakeholders involved in matters of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including support for implementing policies and programmes by the Government of Ecuador, the GEF and FAO (particularly SO2)?
Effectiveness	Question 2. What outcomes (both intended and unintended) had the project achieved by the time of the evaluation, and are they contributing to and/or positioned to contribute to the achievement of the project's environmental objectives and development objectives?
Efficiency	Question 3. Have the intervention methods, institutional structure and financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available helped or hindered the achievement of the project outcomes and objectives?
Normative Values	Question 4a. To what extent has the project, in its work with local communities, ensured that all the stakeholders participated in the decision-making process (including implementation of activities)?
	Question 4b. To what extent has the project addressed gender equality issues in its design and is contributing to the empowerment of women, young people and other vulnerable groups?
Sustainability	Question 5. How sustainable are, and/or will be, the outcomes achieved to date at the environmental, social, financial and institutional level?
Lessons Learned	Question 6. What lessons can be learned from the design, implementation and management of the project that could be useful in achieving the expected outcomes and for other present and future projects?

16. Furthermore, with the aim of ensuring a comprehensive analysis, sub-questions were developed that, in association with indicators, assessment criteria, collection methods and information sources, shaped the matrix of this evaluation (see Appendix 4), which guided the collection of data.
17. The evaluation study was conducted from September to November 2017, and included fifteen days of fieldwork, during which time visits were made to the cantons of Tena, Cuyuja, Arosemena Tola and Archidona. Key informants included beneficiaries, decision-makers, civil servants, technicians, professionals and directors of the organisations linked to project execution (Appendix 1). A territorially representative sample of the informants, quantitative data and qualitative background information (opinions, perceptions and assessments of the wording and implementation of the project), as crucial input for preparing this report, were obtained.
18. Different data collection techniques (interviews, focus groups, review of bibliography and *in situ* observation) were applied, based on the information that each of the key stakeholders could supply. The instruments were designed on the basis of the evaluation questions, judgement criteria and consulting objectives (Appendix 8: Data collection instruments).

## 1.4 Limitations

19. During the course of the evaluation, certain limitations affected the collection and analysis of background data relating to project progress. These are isolated factors that do not compromise the work or quality of the investigation. The limitations are as follows:
- a) **Time:** The evaluation budget and other logistical and procedural factors limited the fieldwork to two weeks. An investigation with a lengthier fieldwork period would have yielded better quality in the reflection with key informants.
  - b) **Overlapping evaluations:** As mentioned above, the evaluation was conducted jointly with two other final evaluations of GEF projects, in order to optimise the evaluation process. While this method had certain advantages, such as being able to contrast opinions and prepare joint lessons learned, holding simultaneous interviews with certain key stakeholders in the three projects at the Ministries of the Environment and of Agriculture, as well as with FAO-EC, compromised the degree of detail with which certain relevant questions could be discussed.
  - c) **Indicator measurement:** While a socio-economic study conducted in June 2017 was available (though under review) at the time of the evaluation, there is no baseline data for certain mid-term project targets, mainly regarding the improvement in income and livelihood of the beneficiary population, to compare the results. This situation meant there was no quantitative data to measure the mid-term progress of certain indicators. Such was the case of Outcome 3.1, for example: 10% increase in the current average income of 200 producers (100 women) working in community tourism and sustainable biotrade.
  - d) **Cross-cutting perspectives:** A crucial element of this evaluation is analysing the progress and possible setbacks in gender relations within the project territory. No ex ante diagnosis of the gaps between men and women was available for the project, thus hindering an assessment of the possible closing or widening of such gaps.

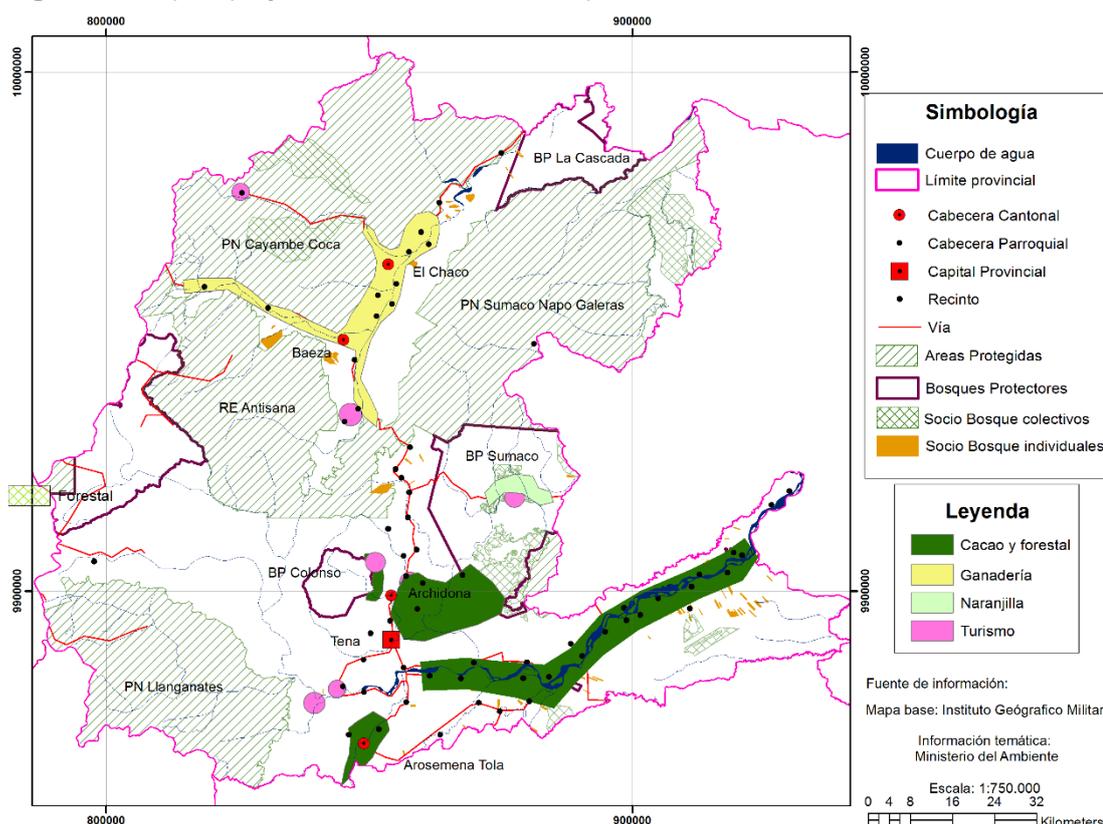
## 1.5 Structure of the report

20. This report is composed of five sections. After this introduction, the initiative background data are mentioned, describing the context in which it takes place and presenting a reconstruction and analysis of its theory of change.
21. The following two sections describe, analyse and discuss the main findings of the evaluation arranged by evaluation questions (section 3) and lessons learned (section 4). A list of conclusions and operational and strategic recommendations is shown in sections 5 and 6. The appendixes and annexes mainly provide information about the evaluation process, methodology and the analysis conducted to back the findings, conclusions and recommendations in the report.

## **2. Background and context of the project**

### **2.1 Project context**

22. Ecuador is biologically highly diverse due to its wide range of altitudes and ecological settings. Despite its relatively small size, it ranks as one of the 17 most megadiverse countries in the world because of the number of endemic species it hosts. Ecuador's flora is estimated to include 20,000 to 25,000 vascular plant species, with endemism rates ranging from 20% to 25%. This biological diversity corresponds to abundant agrobiodiversity, which is essential to food security and the economic development of rural and urban populations. In addition to a wide range of ecosystems, species and genetic resources, the country features a cultural and ethnic richness that is seen in the diversity of traditional practices and methods of land management, crop selection and the use of native cultivars and wild resources.
23. The Province of Napo, the project intervention area, extends over 12,504 km<sup>2</sup>, spanning from the Andes Mountains to the beginning of the Amazon plain, and occupies the upper part of the Napo River system. The province is one of the richest and most diverse biodiversity hotspots worldwide; a total of 19 out of the 91 ecosystems reported for continental Ecuador is distributed across the province. It has a population of 103,697 inhabitants, 56% of which is rural (57,859 inhabitants). The levels of poverty in the province are high; 77.1% of the population live in poverty, while 42.8% live in extreme poverty. Agricultural and livestock activities and extraction of timber are the only source of income in rural areas and at the same time, they are the key factors that jeopardise the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem functions (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Map of project intervention area (Napó Province)

24. Agricultural and livestock activities and extraction of timber are the main sources of income in rural areas and at the same time, one of the key factors that jeopardise the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem functions. Unsustainable **silvopastoral agro-forestry practices** and forest harvesting exert pressure on the natural resources in the buffer zone of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve and the protected areas of the Province of Napó. It is estimated that 40-60% of the soils of the province are degraded, resulting in a continuous expansion of the agricultural frontier. An average of 2,932 ha/year is deforested according to most recent records; with 99% of this area converted for agricultural and livestock use.

## 2.2 Project background

25. In response to the situation described above, taking advantage of the financing opportunity offered by the GEF-5, the NPG designed the evaluated project, with a subsequent review and contributions by FAO, seeking to offer rural communities income opportunities, reducing rural poverty, conserving natural resources, and contributing to the achievement of global environmental benefits. The proposed mid- and long-term solutions offered by the project arise from its top-down logic, arranged into 4 components, 6 outcomes and 19 related outputs. Through the implementation of these outputs, a specific objective is expected to be achieved to contribute to the accomplishment of a global environmental objective and a development objective. The intervention logic is explained in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Top-down logic of the project (objectives – components – outcomes)

<p><b>Global Environmental Objective:</b> To promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, halt and revert land degradation and deforestation, and improve forest management in the Napo Province.</p>	
<p><b>Development Objective:</b> To increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agricultural, livestock and forestry production in a sustainable manner in the Napo Province</p>	
<p><b>Specific Project Objective:</b> To promote biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of soil, forests, and water, through the strategic investment of public resources, participatory environmental governance, incentive mechanisms, community-based ecotourism and biotrade in the Napo Province.</p>	
<b>Components</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<p><b>Component 1:</b> Institutional strengthening to mainstream conservation strategies and sustainable use of renewable natural resources in participatory land-use planning, based on an ecosystem approach.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 1.1:</b> Participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province has improved.</p>
	<p><b>Outcome 1.2:</b> Investments in natural resource management increased.</p>
<p><b>Component 2:</b> Design and promotion of landscape and agro-forestry production systems that include the sustainable management of water, soil, and forests, while improving local population livelihoods in the Napo Province.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 2.1:</b> Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at 4 priority sites in the Napo Province.</p>
	<p><b>Outcome 2.2:</b> Pressure on the forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve was reduced through the implementation of a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy.</p>
<p><b>Component 3:</b> Promotion of biotrade and community-based ecotourism as strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and improvement of livelihoods for local communities.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 3.1:</b> Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based ecotourism and biotrade.</p>
<p><b>Component 4:</b> M&amp;E and information dissemination.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 4.1:</b> Project implementation based on “Results-Based Management” and the application of lessons learned and good practices in future interventions.</p>

26. To do this, the project design, which rightly considered that joint actions would raise the likelihood of success and impact of the initiative, besides promoting dialogue and participatory environmental governance from the outset, encouraged coordination with public and non-public institutions, which participated as follows:

**a) Executing partners and co-executing partners:**

- FAO: The agency responsible for supervision and provision of technical guidance during project implementation.
- Decentralised Autonomous Government of Napo Province (NPDAG): The lead executing partner of the project.
- Ministry of the Environment (MAE): Main co-executing partner.

27. The latter two are responsible for ensuring coordination of the four project components, as well as coordination and collaboration with the DAGs in the cantons, local community organisations and other partners.

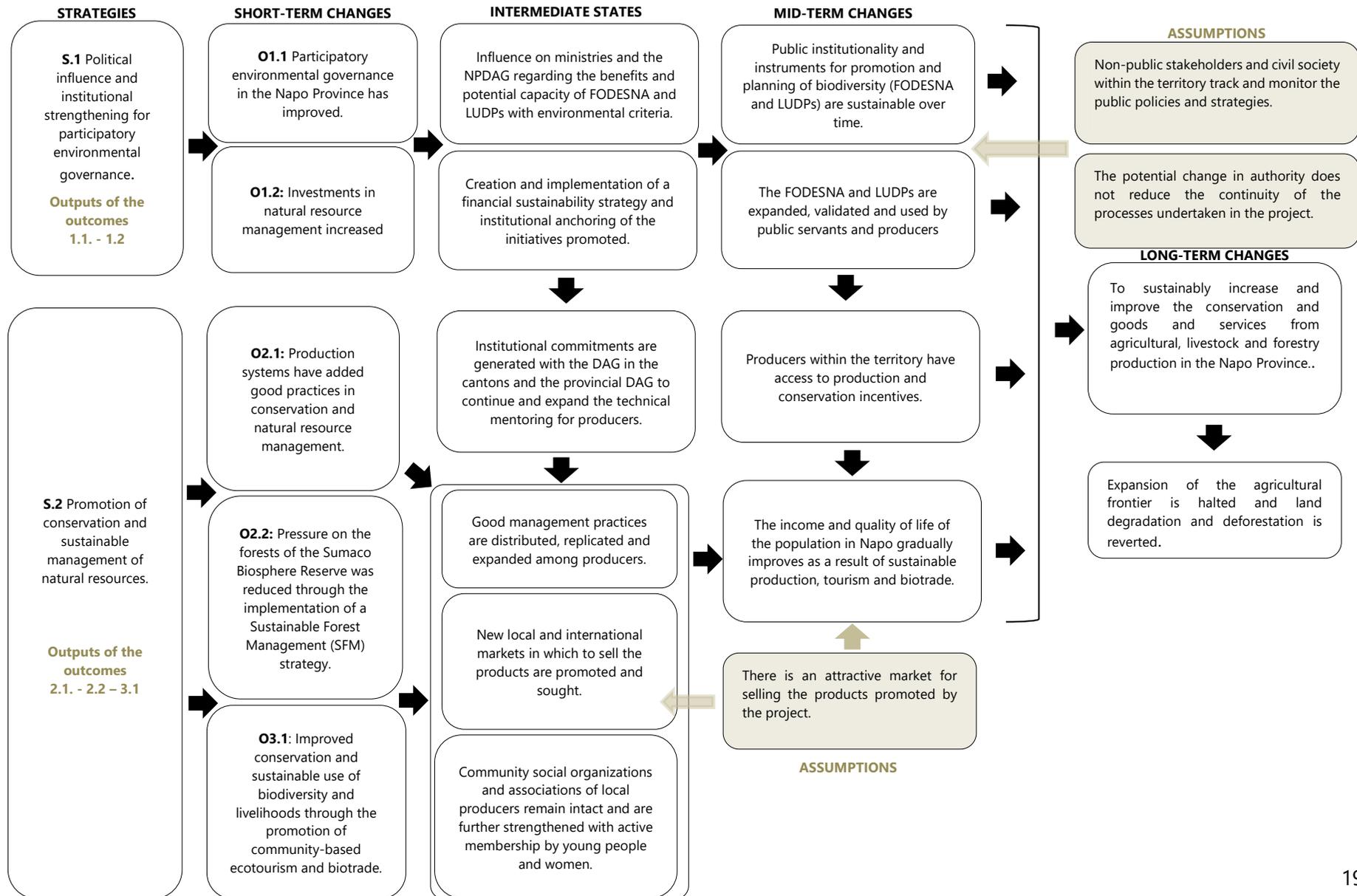
**b) Counterpart institutions:**

- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG), GIZ, municipal governments of El Chaco, Tena, Archidona, Quijos and Arosemena Tola, the parochial Decentralised Autonomous Government of Cuyuja, the Coca-Codo Sinclair hydroelectric project, the NGO Rainforest Alliance, and the Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon Support Unit (ICAA).

### **2.3 Theory of Change**

28. Unlike the project intervention logic, the theory of change, which included the reflection of the project team in its construction, identified two strategies that drive the path of change of the initiative: 1. Political influence and institutional strengthening for participatory environmental governance and 2. Promotion of conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.
29. Each strategy is linked to a set of project outcomes, which, through implementation, drive a chain of changes in the short, medium (pre-conditions) and long terms (impact). These changes, in turn, are directly or indirectly dependent upon the fulfilment of a series of assumptions.
30. The proposed theory of change, on the other hand, does not prompt substantial changes in the outcomes and objectives of the project; instead, it incorporates additional variables, understood as intermediate states, mid-term changes and assumptions that are needed to achieve the local and global changes that project implementation endeavours to generate (see Figure 3).
31. The intermediate states described are essential in ensuring the mid-term and long-term changes, and are related mainly to actions leading to sustainability, replicability, multiplication of effects and effective communication of the benefits of the approach and the actions undertaken. These are: a. Institutional commitments are established with the DAG to continue and scale up the technical mentoring for producers; b. Influence on ministries and the NPDA and dissemination of the potential capacity of FODESNA and LUDPs with environmental criteria; c. Creation and implementation of a financial sustainability strategy and institutional anchoring of the initiatives; d. Community social organisations and associations of local producers remain intact and are further strengthened with active membership by young people and women; e. Good management practices are spread, replicated and expanded among producers; f. New markets in which to sell the products are promoted and sought.

**Figure 3: Reconstruction of the theory of change of the project.**



### 3. Findings of the evaluation

32. The findings are presented following the structure of the evaluation matrix, meeting the reporting needs summarised therein. The questions and sub-questions related to each of the six evaluation criteria are answered. In some cases, the sub-questions, which are included as footnotes, have been grouped together and have an aggregate response.

#### 3.1 Relevance

**Evaluation question 1:** Were the project strategy and actions appropriate for meeting the needs of all the stakeholders involved in matters of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including support for implementing policies and programmes by the Government of Ecuador, the GEF and FAO (particularly SO2)?

**Finding 1:** *The project design displayed good vertical consistency, and the implementation and design of the components, outcomes and outputs of the project are closely aligned with and relevant to the expected outcomes at institutional level, in addition to responding to the needs and interests of the beneficiaries.*

##### 3.1.1 Political, institutional and strategic relevance<sup>9</sup>.

33. A review of the documentation and interviews with key stakeholders in the evaluation process confirmed that the design and implementation of the project outcomes were highly relevant to FAO's strategic objective 2, GEF objectives LD-1, LD-3 BD-2 and SFM/REDD+-1, priority areas 1 and 4 of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) of FAO-EC, and the axes, objectives and policies included in the 2013 – 2017 National Plan for Good Living (PNBV) and the 2017 – 2021 PNBV of the government of Ecuador. Details of this alignment are described below.

##### Alignment with the 2013 – 2017 and 2017 – 2021 PNBV

34. The PNBV is a four-year instrument by the National Decentralised Participatory Planning System which sets out the guidelines for compliance with the government programme and to guarantee citizens' rights, public policies, planning and execution of budgets and prioritisation of public investing.
35. Considering the three components and five outcomes of the project intervention included in the Prodoc, the activities implemented and the mid-term effects achieved, the initiative was found to be closely consistent with the policies contained in

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<sup>9</sup> Sub-questions:

1.1 Political relevance: To what extent does the Project address key needs and priorities in matters of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in support of policies and programmes by the Napo provincial government and adapting to changing needs?

1.3 Synergies -- To what extent are the project focus, strategy and outcomes aligned with the priorities of FAO under SO2 and how have they contributed to it? (section to be developed with the evaluation team of strategic objective 2)

1.4 To what extent are the project focus, strategy and outcomes aligned with the priorities of the GEF (BD2, LD-1, LD-3, SFM/REDD+-1) and how have they contributed to them?

objectives 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the 2013 -2017 PNBV and objectives 3 and 6 of the 2017 - 2021 PNBV. This relevance is specified below<sup>10</sup>:

**Table 2:** 2013 – 2017 and 2017-2021 PNBV objectives aligned with the project

Objectives	Aligned Outcomes				
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1
<b>2013 - 2017 PNBV</b>					
<b>Objective 7.</b> To guarantee the rights of nature and promote territorial and global environmental sustainability	●	●	●	●	●
<b>Objective 8.</b> To consolidate the social and solidary economic system, in a sustainable manner			●		
<b>Objective 9.</b> To guarantee dignified work in all forms			●		●
<b>Objective 10.</b> To promote the transformation of the productive matrix			●		●
<b>2017 – 2021 PNBV</b>					
<b>Objective 3:</b> To guarantee the rights of nature for present and future generations	●	●	●	●	●
<b>Objective 6:</b> To develop production and environmental capacities to achieve food sovereignty and comprehensive rural development		●	●	●	●
Outcome 1.1: Participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province has improved. Outcome 1.2: Investments in natural resource management increased. Outcome 2.1: Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at 4 priority sites in the Napo Province. Outcome 2.2: Pressure on the forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve was reduced through the implementation of a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy. Outcome 3.1: Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based tourism and biotrade.					

#### Alignment with GEF objectives.

36. The initiative, in terms of both design and implementation, is closely related and provides responses to objectives in three of the focal area strategies of the GEF-5: a. Biodiversity, b. Land Degradation and c. Sustainable Forest Management/REDD-Plus (see Table 3).
37. In the field of biodiversity, the project contributed to “Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production sectors and landscapes” (BD 2). Contribution made through support for two of the three main activities of the biodiversity focal area<sup>11</sup>, which are: Promoting certification of producers and producer associations, especially cocoa producers, and support in establishing regulatory and policy frameworks that offer incentives for private actors to align their practices and behaviour with the principles of sustainable use and management and to develop capacity and transfer of knowledge to public institutions, particularly the NPDAG.

<sup>10</sup> A breakdown of the policies and outcomes contained in each objective and their link to the project outcomes can be found in Appendix 9 of this report.

<sup>11</sup> According to the document entitled: The A to Z of the GEF. A Guide to the Global Environment Facility for Civil Society Organisations

38. The Prodoc contemplated the land degradation focal area and the activities implemented have helped “improve the flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain the livelihoods of local communities”(LD-1) and “Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape” (LD-3). This was achieved by performing activities for Outcomes 1.2: Investments in natural resource management increased; 2.1: Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at 4 priority sites in the Napo Province; Outcome 3.1: Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based ecotourism and biotrade.
39. Through support for the creation of a sustainable forest management strategy in the Napo Province, the establishment of co-management plans, promotion of forest restoration, implementation of a timber traceability system (R.2.2) and dissemination of good practices in community forestry and for small-scale producers (R.2.1), they have contributed to the objective “SFM/REDD+-1 Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services” in the Sustainable Forest Management/REDD-Plus focal area.

**Table 3:** GEF objectives aligned with the project

GEF Objectives	Aligned Outcomes				
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1
<b>BD-2</b> Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors.	●	●	●		●
<b>LD-1</b> Maintain or improve the flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain the livelihoods of local communities.			●		●
<b>LD-3</b> Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape.		●	●	●	●
<b>SFM/REDD+-1</b> Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services.			●	●	
Outcome 1.1: Participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province has improved. Outcome 1.2: Investments in natural resource management increased. Outcome 2.1: Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at 4 priority sites in the Napo Province. Outcome 2.2: Pressure on the forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve was reduced through the implementation of a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy. Outcome 3.1: Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based tourism and biotrade.					

40. Finally, it should be noted that associated indicators were formulated for the four GEF objectives included in the project design, which will make it possible to verify the extent to which these objectives and strategies made a contribution.

#### **Synergies with Strategic Objective 2 and FAO’s CPF.**

41. It was found that all the project components and outcomes are aligned with FAO’s Strategic Objective 2 “Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable” and its four related outcomes (see Table 4).
42. Strong alignment with the Country Programming Framework was also identified, particularly with Priority Area 1 “To contribute to strengthening public policies for

sustainably increasing systemic productivity, and to facilitate activities in the livestock, aquatic and fishing sector linked to the change in the production matrix” and Priority Area 4 “To contribute to the consolidation of the environmental public policy through conservation, valuation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources as a strategic resource of the Government, as well as ensuring ecosystem services and the development of strategies for adaptation and mitigation of climate change and ensuring food sovereignty” (see Table 5).

**Table 4:** Results of FAO’s strategic objective 2 aligned with the project

Strategic Objective 2 /outcomes	Aligned Outcomes				
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1
<b>Strategic Objective 2:</b> Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable	●	●	●	●	
2.1 Producers and natural resource managers adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in agricultural sector production systems in a sustainable manner.	●	●	●	●	●
2.2 Stakeholders in member countries strengthen governance (the policies, laws, management frameworks and institutions that are needed to support producers and natural resource managers) in the transition to sustainable agricultural sector production systems.	●			●	
2.3 Stakeholders approve or adopt international (and regional) instruments and support coordinated governance mechanisms for the sustainable production systems in the agricultural sector.	●				
2.4 The stakeholders make decisions based on proven facts on planning and management of agricultural sectors and natural resources to support the transition to sustainable agricultural production systems through supervision, statistics, evaluation and analysis.	●				
Outcome 1.1: Participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province has improved. Outcome 1.2: Investments in natural resource management increased. Outcome 2.1: Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at 4 priority sites in the Napo Province. Outcome 2.2: Pressure on the forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve was reduced through the implementation of a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy. Outcome 3.1: Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based tourism and biotrade.					

**Table 5:** CPF priority areas aligned with the project

Priority area	Aligned Outcomes				
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1
<b>Priority Area 1:</b> To contribute to strengthening public policies for sustainably increasing systemic productivity, and to facilitate activities in the livestock, aquatic and fishing sector linked to the change in the production matrix.	●	●	●		●
<b>Priority Area 4:</b> To contribute to the consolidation of the environmental public policy through conservation, valuation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources as a strategic resource of the Government, as well as ensuring ecosystem services and the development of strategies for adaptation and mitigation of climate change and ensuring food sovereignty.	●	●		●	
Outcome 1.1: Participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province has improved. Outcome 1.2: Investments in natural resource management increased. Outcome 2.1: Production systems have added good practices in conservation and natural resource management at 4 priority sites in the Napo Province. Outcome 2.2: Pressure on the forests of the Sumaco Biosphere Reserve was reduced through the implementation of a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) strategy. Outcome 3.1: Improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and livelihoods through the promotion of community-based tourism and biotrade.					

43. It is important to highlight that this strong alignment, especially with FAO's Strategic Objective 2, is not the result of a deliberate action taken when formulating the project, but rather is an outcome of the far-reaching interventions afforded by the objective and its harmony with reality and the sustainable production and conservation needs in Ecuador in general and in the Napo Province in particular.

### 3.1.2 Specific relevance<sup>12</sup>.

44. The project was found to respond to the interest and needs of the beneficiaries, who especially appreciated:
- The access to knowledge and development of techniques and skills to implement sustainable, diversified agriculture on their farms.
  - The strengthening of producer organisations as an essential step in promoting better quality and quantity production and in accessing new markets.
  - The opportunity and prospects afforded by the initiative given that it aims to improve their livelihoods through sustainable production and the introduction of incentive mechanisms.
45. This coherence with the beneficiaries' needs is due mainly to the fact that the stakeholders involved in formulating the project, such as NPDAG, the DAGs in the parishes and cantons, and other non-governmental stakeholders, have a history of working in the province and knowledge of the territory, thus enabling the issues identified and possible solutions to be (and remain) aligned with the interests of the communities and organisations that are to benefit from the initiative.

<sup>12</sup> Sub-question 1.2 Specific relevance - Does the project still meet the needs of the local/indigenous communities and other beneficiaries with which the activities are implemented?

46. The harmony identified among the institutional frameworks and strategic interests of the organisations involved in the project, along with the design and execution of an intervention that is coherent with the needs felt by the initiative beneficiaries, was one of the success factors identified, managing to combine support for the creation of public policies at national and provincial levels, biodiversity conservation values and sustainable production with capacity development, the provision of supplies and equipment and access to markets for the target group.

### 3.1.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the project design<sup>13</sup>.

#### Strengths

47. The project design displays good vertical consistency, strong alignment with the policies and strategies of the institutions involved, is highly coherent with the needs and interests of the beneficiaries, has adequately identified partners and rightly supported the continuity of processes underway.
48. The strengths are described as follows:
- **Vertical consistency:** The top-down logic of the intervention (aims – purposes – outcomes – outputs) is highly consistent with the fulfilment of objectives at several levels. In other words, achieving the outputs contributes to reaching the outcomes, and if the outcomes as a whole are reached, the specific objective (purpose) would be accomplished, contributing to the development and environmental objectives of the project (aims).
  - **Alignment:** The components, outcomes and outputs included in the strategy for action, as mentioned in points 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, are consistent with the needs felt by the beneficiaries and are aligned with the strategic interests of the participating institutions.
  - **Identification of partners:** The selection of strategic allies and partners in the project was appropriate, as they have a history of working in the area, are committed and hold an interest in the project actions, and are predisposed to generate synergies. This assertion arises from interviews held with the leaders of the institutions.
  - **Process continuity:** The project was designed (and implemented) with the intention of supporting and strengthening processes already underway (such as the strengthening of producer organisations and promotion of sustainable agriculture), and this strategy of continuity has made it possible to bolster the progress of previous interventions by NGOs and cooperation agencies, optimise resources and expand the prospects for project success.

#### Weaknesses

49. The weaknesses in the project design are mainly related to its timing (lag between design and execution), the formulation of certain indicators, broad subject-matter and mainstreaming of the gender approach.
50. The rationale behind the weaknesses identified is shown below:

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<sup>13</sup> Sub-questions:

1.3 Design - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project design in terms of achieving the expected outcomes?

- **Time between formulation and execution:** A period of three years elapsed between project formulation and the start of implementation. This situation led to the following consequences:
  - It hindered the re-appropriation and connection with the stakeholders related to the initiative (particularly the DAGs in the cantons), requiring the project team to start a lobbying process with the different institutional stakeholders.
  - The country's economic setting changed and these modifications affected the project targets and strategies. The greatest impact was in relation to the funds allocated to national incentive programmes for conservation, which were key to the project design, several of which (national restoration plan and Socio Bosque) halted execution in 2017, thus complicating alignment between the project targets and these incentives.
- **Horizontal consistency:** Some output targets display formulation issues and have not been adjusted in the logical framework during the two years of project implementation. The main issues are described as follows:
  - Planned targets and indicators that are unreachable have not been changed, and their mid-term estimates are equal to the final targets or are not specified. These should be replaced with more realistic targets, taking into account the present context in which the project is being executed. Table 6 details the final targets and indicators that need to be adjusted, with the rationale for each one. In terms of annual targets, it would be advisable to revise them completely given that most of them do not consider progress in project execution.
- **Broad subject-matter:** The high number of outcomes (a total of 4) and related outputs (19 total) has generated dispersion in the execution and disparity in the relationship between activities and dedicated staff, and has made it difficult for the project technicians, partner organisations and beneficiaries to understand the comprehensive nature of the project and the objectives it seeks. For example, evidence was found of a lack of coordination and exchange of methodologies among consultants and professionals in charge of the co-management plans and the preparation of a sustainable forest management strategy.
- **Gender approach:** The project formulation document ("Prodoc") mentions specific actions for promoting the participation of women and includes an indicator related to the differential increase in income. These elements are considered minimal and are not satisfactory in light of the standards for mainstreaming the gender perspective proposed by FAO worldwide (see Section 3.4 for further details).

**Table 6:** Project targets and indicators that need to be adjusted

<b>Targets to be adjusted</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Proposed adjustment</b>
<p><b>Component 1/ Outcome 1.1/ Output 1.1.1</b>  <b>Target:</b> 6 LUDPs with environmental criteria mainstreamed, implemented and monitored (1 provincial LUDP, 5 municipal and parochial LUDPs).</p>	<p>The Land Use and Development Plans for the Napo Province were drawn up in 2015, along with the project commencement, and must be updated in 2019 after the project is completed. This temporary situation hinders project accountability in terms of the creation and implementation of the plans.</p>	<p>Change the wording of the target, replacing it with the following:  <i>The DAGs have established a formal commitment to mainstream environmental criteria into 6 LUDPs (1 provincial LUDP, 5 municipal and parochial LUDPs).</i></p>
<p><b>Component 2/ Outcome 2.2</b>  <b>Indicator:</b> Tons of avoided emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>eq through protection of forests and reduction of deforestation.</p>	<p>Official data from the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Environment for the 2008-2014 period show an inaccuracy in the deforestation scenario calculated in the Prodoc for 2014, thus also rendering the scheduled targets inaccurate. Therefore, the baseline must be calculated again for the deforestation rate for the 2015-2018 period.</p>	<p>The project technical team should consider a change in methodology and measurement and targets (Appendix 2).</p>
<p><b>Component 2/ Outcome 2.2/ Output 2.2.3</b>  <b>Target:</b>  Restoration/rehabilitation of degraded forests: 2,500 ha restored with analogue forestry, reforestation or natural regeneration techniques under conservation agreements and incentives.</p>	<p>Under the project design, the strategy is to finance the start-up costs of restoration, consisting in purchases of materials and installation of nurseries for growing seedlings. Later, the incentives for conservation would be assumed by the Ecuadorian government through its different programmes: 1) Reforestation for production (MAGAP); 2) Reforestation for conservation (MAE); 3) Socio Bosque restoration; and 4) National Concurrent Plan (MAE- GAD). These incentives experienced serious budget cuts in one year (2017), and will be resumed after January 2018. Due to this year-long lag, the project team must assess the feasibility of reaching the target.</p>	<p>Based on information collected by key informants and in the opinion of the project team, it would be advisable to revise the target and consider the possibility of lowering it, given that financing under the government incentive programmes was interrupted in 2017.</p>

### 3.1.4 Risk management<sup>14</sup>

51. Both the formulation document and the annual reports on the project describe and update the risks that may occur during the project, specifying the likely impact, likelihood of occurrence and required mitigation measures. The evaluation team and key stakeholders in the evaluation process have viewed this action in a positive light because it represents risk planning in line with reality, although the implementation of mitigation measures must be expedited, particularly those related to political and institutional risks.

<sup>14</sup> Sub-question 1.7 Risks – Was risk management integrated into the project planning and implementation (including the effects of climate change)?

## 3.2 Effectiveness

**Evaluation question 2:** What outcomes (both intended and unintended) had the project achieved by the time of the evaluation, and are they contributing to and/or positioned to contribute to the achievement of the project's environmental objectives and development objectives?

**Finding 2:** *The degree of progress towards the ultimate goals and the level of activity implementation is considered satisfactory for each of the components and for most of the outputs of the project. This performance is seen as a contribution to the promotion of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and as an increase and improvement in the provision of goods and services from agricultural, livestock and forestry production. Key aspects of the project's global environmental objective and development objective.*

**Finding 3:** *Public servants and decision-makers have gradually adopted and promoted the lessons learned through the project at their institutions, and have an understanding of concepts that facilitate dialogue and agreement with other national-level stakeholders and civil society, as well as with specialists in the fields of biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, institutional access and management of territorial and environmental information about the province was improved and evaluation methods and planning instruments were validated. In addition to this, conditions were generated for the establishment of institutional commitments focusing on ensuring environmental governance in the province through support for and active involvement in the design and future implementation of the FODESNA, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management and conservation agreements.*

**Finding 4:** *Beneficiary organisations have been strengthened and producers have become aware of the importance of conservation and care for the environment. Additionally, sustainable management and production have been deemed as a good alternative, expressed in: The implementation of good practices in forest, water, soil, crop and livestock management on their farms; setting up both silvopastoral and agroforestry systems; the expansion and creation of sustainable management areas and conservation of protective forests in Cerro Sumaco and Colonso; the implementation of the value chain plans identified; and the improvement in access to competitive markets. The positive effects of implementation of the project outputs have not yet led to an increase in the livelihood or quality of life of the producers.*

### 3.2.1 General considerations.<sup>15</sup>

52. The strong correlation between the development and environmental objectives, and their connection to the project components, outcomes and outputs, leads, as a general effect of project execution, to a contribution towards the promotion of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the region, through the development of skills and gradual provision of instruments and tools to producers, organisations, decision-makers, civil servants and government institutions, which in the long run, if sustainability is achieved for the initiative (see Section 3.5), will help halt and revert land degradation and deforestation, and improve forest management in the Napo Province (see Figure 4).

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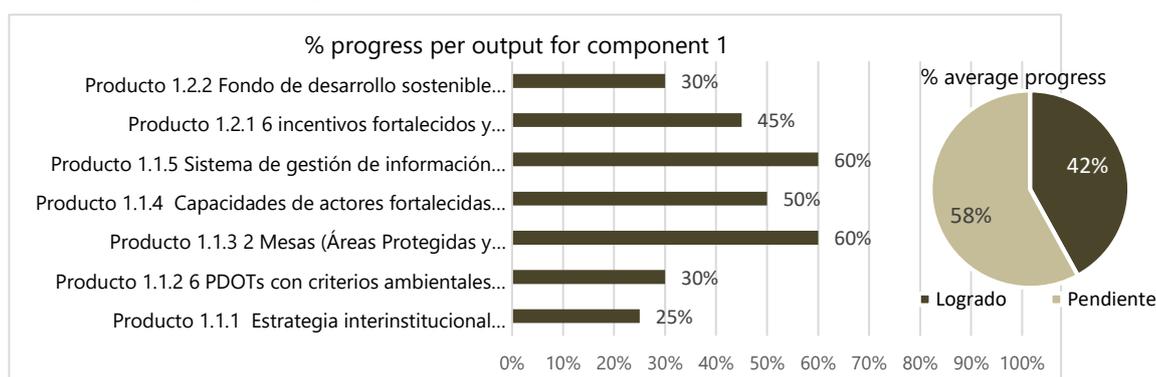
<sup>15</sup> Details of the effects of each component are explained in sections 3.2.2, 3.2.3 and 3.2.4

53. Furthermore, the project has managed to progress in the increase and improvement in the provision of goods and services from agricultural, livestock and forestry production, fostering good forestry, agricultural and livestock practices, strengthening organisations and connecting producers with competitive markets (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Results of the project in contributing to the project objectives

Mid-term strategies and outputs achieved, in progress and/or to be achieved.	General effects achieved by mid-term	Expected long- and medium-term objectives
<p><b>Awareness-raising and capacity development among decision-makers and civil servants:</b>  <b>Achieved and in progress:</b> Training cycle "Napo learns, undertakes and protects"; b. Mentoring and ongoing coordination of the project team.  <b>To be achieved:</b> Institutional commitment that ensures the sustainability of the initiative.</p>	<p>Implementation, gradual adoption and promotion of lessons learned in the workplace.            Understanding of concepts and facilitating dialogue with other government and civil society stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Global Environmental Objective:</b> To promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, halt and revert land degradation and deforestation, and improve forest management in Napo Province.</p> <p><b>Development Objective:</b> To increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agricultural, livestock and forestry production in a sustainable manner in Napo Province.</p>
<p><b>Instruments and tools for government institutions:</b>  <b>Achieved and in progress:</b> a. Information management system for planning; b. Evaluation of environmental criteria mainstreamed into LUDPs; c. Strengthening of protected area roundtable; d. Co-management plans; e. Support and piloting of the national timber traceability system. f. Design and launch of the infonapo.com.ec website; e. Kichwa <i>chakra</i> ordinance.  <b>To be achieved:</b> FODESNA sustainable development fund; inter-institutional strategy; ecological and provincial ecological zoning, SFM strategies.</p>	<p>The conditions have been generated for the creation of institutional commitments for support for and active involvement in the design and future implementation of the FODESNA, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, LUDPs with environmental criteria and conservation agreements.            Drafting of ordinances (<i>chakra</i> eco-label); Better access to and management of territorial and environmental information on the province (GIS); Approval of forest co-management plans with economic and ecological zoning.</p>	
<p><b>Awareness-raising and capacity development for producers and organisations:</b>  <b>Achieved and in progress:</b> a. Good agroecological practices and transition processes; b. Mechanisms and standards for organic certification; c. Sustainable management of livestock and <i>naranjilla</i> and cocoa crops; d. Promotion of agro-silvo-pastoral systems; e. Harvest, post-harvest and traceability; f. Forest restoration technologies. g. Good practices in community-based tourism.  <b>To be achieved:</b> Skills training cycle for producers.</p>	<p>Adoption of organic fertilisers, reduction in the use of agro-chemicals; Implementation of agro-silvo-pastoral techniques; Increase in diversification and biodiversity on farms; Protection of water sources; Development of good harvesting, post-harvest and traceability practices; Access to markets and organic certification.</p>	
<p><b>Instruments and tools for producers and organisations;</b>  <b>Achieved and in progress:</b> a. Farm plans; b. Co-management plans; c. Management plans for biotrade products; d. Value chain plans; e. Manual of good practices and formalisation of community-based tourism undertakings.  <b>To be achieved:</b> Creation of conservation agreements.</p>	<p>Farm planning with focus on sustainable use (farm plans); Community-based undertakings in biotrade and tourism formalised by the competent authority; Value chain plans implemented (prompting improved production and access to markets at better prices); Establishment of conservation and production areas; Community appropriation of co-management plans.</p>	

54. As mentioned in paragraphs 49 and 52 of sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4, many of the mid-term targets were placed at the same level as final targets, so if this parameter is used to issue an opinion on effectiveness, the rating would be negative. However, in the evaluation team's opinion, these unsatisfactory results can be attributed to a lack of detail and weaknesses in the project design, not to an actual problem in implementation speed.
55. Taking into account the data from the monitoring system from the FAO Office in Ecuador, partial reports and project verification sources, and comparing this information with interviews with the project team, beneficiaries and *in situ* observation, it was verified that the degree of implementation is satisfactory for the 4 components in terms of execution of the initiative activities.
56. As regards component 1, shown in Figure 5, a high rate of progress is seen (50% to 60%) in the implementation of the following outputs:
- **Output 1.1.3:** Two roundtables (protected areas and sustainable livestock), established and functioning
  - **Output 1.1.4:** Stakeholders' capacities strengthened in comprehensive manner with focus on natural resources governance
  - **Output 1.1.5:** Information management system for planning and management of natural resources, developed and managed by MAE and NPDAG
57. These outputs lay the foundations and represent essential inputs for progressing towards the creation of instruments and strengthening of participatory environmental governance in the Napo Province. Along these lines, the next step would be to place special emphasis on and speed up the execution of the following three outputs, given that they are essential in consolidating Outcome 1, progressing towards achievement of the objectives and ensuring the sustainability of the project.
- **Output 1.1.1:** Participatory inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, designed, implemented and monitored
  - **Output 1.2.1** Six incentive mechanisms strengthened, articulated, and operational for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use
  - **Output 1.2.2** Provincial sustainable development fund, established and operational

**Figure 5:** Percentage of progress per output for component 1<sup>16</sup>.

58. In relation to component two, as seen in Figure 6, a good degree of progress was found in the development of the following outputs:

- **Output 2.1.2:** Two value chain plans for cocoa and *naranja*, updated, implemented and monitored
- **Output 2.2.1** Provincial SFM Strategy agreed, implemented and monitored
- **Output 2.2.2** 23 co-management plans for La Cascada, Cerro Sumaco and Colonso PFs prepared, implemented and monitored (40,927 ha)

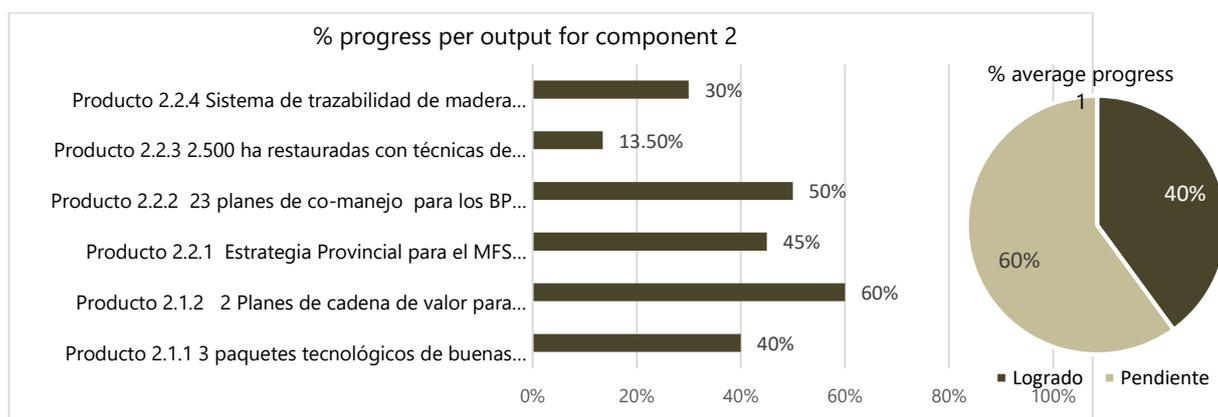
59. Output 2.1.1: Three technology packages of good practices for cocoa, *naranja* and livestock production, and conservation agreements signed with small- and medium-scale producers. Although the technology packages have been implemented, just 40% progress is seen due to the fact that the conservation agreements have yet to be signed with the producers, which is scheduled to take place in 2018.

60. As regards Output 2.2.4: Provincial timber traceability system for SFM, designed and implemented in Cerro Sumaco (Wamani and Akoki communities), as a pilot for the Napo Province. While progress has been made, in close collaboration with the MAE, in terms of conducting diagnostics studies, designing strategies, and creating instruments and regulations, the pilot programme has not yet been implemented.

61. Finally, in relation to Output 2.2.3: 2,500 ha restored with analogue forestry, reforestation or natural regeneration techniques under conservation agreements. As mentioned in paragraph 49 and justified in Table 6, this target should be adjusted to 1,000 ha. If the proposed modification is made, the effectiveness rate should increase by more than 35%.

<sup>16</sup> The percentage of progress of the outputs is a weighting of the information reported in the latest annual report for the project (PIR 2). Background data confirmed in fieldwork.

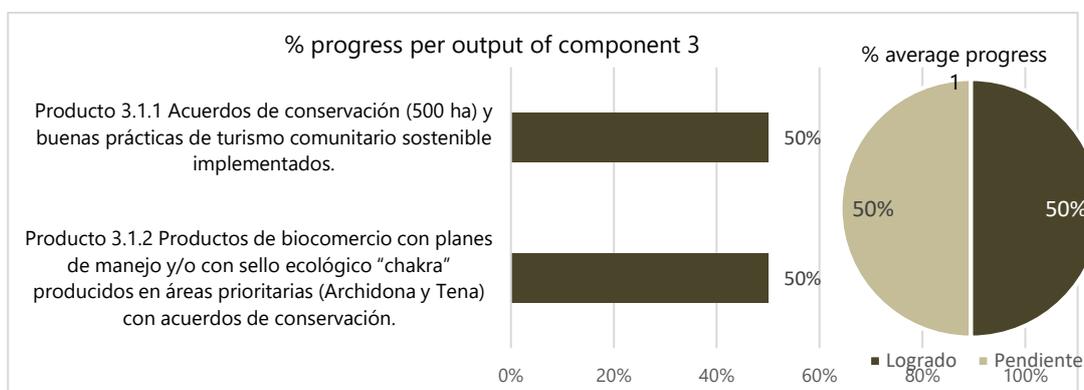
**Figure 6:** Percentage of progress per output for component 2.



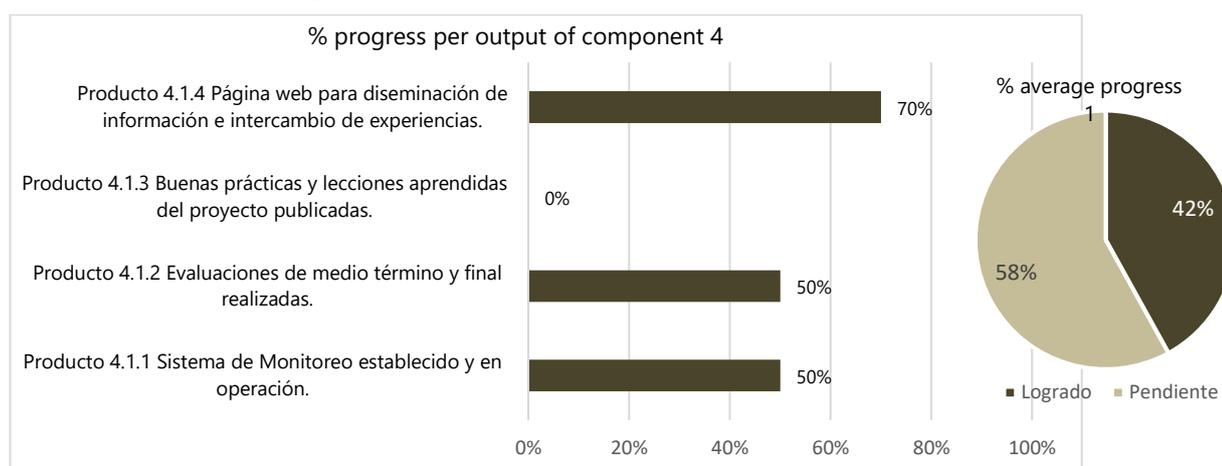
62. Both outputs of component 3 show 50% progress by project mid-term (see Figure 7). According to the evaluation analysis, the prospects for reaching the planned final targets by the end of the project are good, for the following reasons:

- The beneficiaries interviewed have mainstreamed the values and importance of biodiversity conservation. They are well-inclined to sign agreements in exchange for technical assistance and access to productive infrastructure.
- The value chain plans have already been designed and the “Chakra Eco-label” ordinance has been passed by the NPG. This is compounded by the positive expectations of the beneficiaries and the verified capacities of the technical team in managing value chains.

**Figure 7:** Percentage of progress per output of the component 3



63. Component 4 refers to internal project management. The actions in this area are on schedule, and, as shall be explained in section 3.3, it is necessary to focus efforts on strengthening the project monitoring system, and systematizing and disseminating good practices and lessons learned (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8:** Percentage of progress per output for component 4.

### 3.2.2. Component 1: Institutional strengthening to mainstream conservation strategies and sustainable use of renewable natural resources in participatory land-use planning, based on an ecosystem approach<sup>17and18</sup>.

#### Capacity development

64. As a result of the activities implemented, mainly within the framework of Output 1.1.4 (see details in Table 7), and of the coordination and ongoing dialogue between the project team and civil servants and authorities, especially the NPG, it was possible to transfer knowledge, raise awareness and develop capacities at the institutions, related to subjects such as sustainable production, community-based tourism and biotrade, natural resource planning and land use, local economic development, geographical information systems and project management.
65. Through field observation and the opinions of key stakeholders in the evaluation, it was confirmed that, in addition to transferring knowledge, these actions have managed to generate beneficial effects in civil servants in terms of understanding concepts related to the aforementioned topics and to drive emerging processes of change within the participating institutions. The main effects are as follows:
- Awareness of the relevance of land planning and mainstreaming environmental criteria into planning
  - Importance of considering biodiversity conservation in policies for increasing production
  - Starting to search for alternatives to encourage diverse, sustainable production within the area.

<sup>17</sup> Sub-question 2.1 What mid-term outcomes has the project achieved in institutional strengthening to mainstream conservation strategies and sustainable use of renewable natural resources in participatory land-use planning?

<sup>18</sup> The findings for this component also offer a response to sub-question 2.5 How are the understanding and awareness of the values of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity reflected by the decision-makers and beneficiaries? and 2.6 What progress can be identified in the development of capacities in governance and the use of natural resources by key stakeholders?

## **Institutional strengthening**

66. In addition to the training received on geographical information systems, through the execution of Output 1.1.5, an infrastructure for the collection, storage, display (geoportal) and analysis of geospatial, territorial and environmental data on the Napo Province has been generated and strengthened. These actions were jointly designed and implemented with the active involvement of the NPDAG, at their offices, which helped ensure access to the information, appropriation and management by the civil servants involved in launching these tools.
67. Other effects to be highlighted in the field of institutional strengthening include validation of the methodology and subjecting the provincial and canton LUDPs to evaluation (Output 1.1.2), the results of which had not been issued as of the time of this evaluation, but which will certainly pose an opportunity to establish institutional commitments on mainstreaming environmental criteria into land planning instruments.
68. Besides the progress described above, conditions were fostered for the establishment of institutional commitments focusing on ensuring environmental governance in the province through support for and active involvement in the design and future implementation of the FODESNA, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management and conservation agreements. Such outputs are crucial to achieving lasting, substantial changes in the medium and long terms.
69. In this sense, the NPG has been strengthened organisationally and functionally regarding the incentives cycle, and instruments and formats are being drafted for establishing conservation agreements (Output 1.2.1). A consulting firm is also in the process of designing and launching the FODESNA, which is an essential output given that its purpose shall be to conserve provincial biodiversity and support sustainable production initiatives through incentives (financial and/or technical assistance).
70. The institutional stakeholders participated in the actions contained in the aforementioned outputs, expressing, in the interviews held during the field work, strong knowledge about the instruments and objectives sought and high expectations for their usefulness in promoting conservation and increasing production, as well as claiming to be predisposed to establishing institutional commitments to implement and further the aforementioned tools.
71. In the understanding that the effects achieved, such as the development of capacities, land planning, improved access to and management of information, strengthening of institutions, designing of instruments and predisposition to establish agreements, are insufficient to ensure environmental governance in the Napo Province, work is being done to consolidate consensus-building spaces like the protected area roundtable (Output 1.1.3) and, within the framework of Output 1.1.1, to prepare an inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, which will provide an institutional framework that is crucial to the political and institutional feasibility of the processes driven and to the continuity of the benefits achieved by the project.
72. Following the proposed logic, it was confirmed that satisfactory progress has been made in the mid-term outputs and effects. Details of implementation and the achievements in each output of component 1 are shown below:

**Table 7:** Summary of mid-term progress and effects of component 1

Outputs	Mid-term progress of activities	Effects generated
<b>Output 1.1.1:</b> Participatory inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, designed, implemented and monitored	- The strategy is in the process of construction through an external consulting firm. It should be noted that the main inputs and key stakeholders in creating it are linked to the different project outputs. The strategy is essential and represents a success factor of the initiative and its sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public servants and decision-makers have gradually adopted and promoted the lessons learned through the project at their institutions, and have an understanding of concepts that facilitate dialogue and agreement with other national-level stakeholders and civil society, as well as with specialists in the fields of biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use.</li> <li>• Institutional access and management of territorial and environmental information about the province improved and evaluation methods and planning instruments were validated.</li> <li>• Conditions were generated for the establishment of institutional commitments focusing on ensuring environmental governance in the province through support for and active involvement in the design and future implementation of the FODESNA, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management and conservation agreements.</li> </ul>
<b>Output 1.1.2:</b> 6 LUDPs with environmental criteria mainstreamed, implemented and monitored.	- Methodology designed and mainstreaming of environmental criteria evaluated in 6 LUDPs. - Economic and ecological zoning of the Napo Province (in progress).	
<b>Output 1.1.3:</b> Two roundtables (protected areas and sustainable livestock), established and functioning.	- <b>Mapping of parochial and cantonal DAG stakeholders:</b> MAE, MINTUR, IKIAM, and others. - <b>Definition of lines of work:</b> Line 1: Environmental Education; Line 2: Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and Buffer Zones; Line 3: Forest Management and Conservation; Line 4: Spectacled Bear Conflict; Line 5: Land Tenure; Line 6: Forest Restoration in PA Buffer Zones. - Creation and implementation of the annual work plan for the protected area roundtable.	
<b>Output 1.1.4:</b> Stakeholders' capacities strengthened in comprehensive manner with focus on natural resources governance.	- <b>Capacity development for civil servants:</b> <b>a. "Napo learns, undertakes and protects" training course.</b> Modules: 1. Local economic development; 2. GIS applied to land management; 3. Project management for DAG; 4. Environmental governance; 5. Planning and land use for natural resource management; 6. Sustainable production. 7. Community-based tourism and biotrade; 8. LUDP monitoring and evaluation. <b>b. Seminars:</b> 1. Sustainable development and good living in Napo; 2. Economics for natural resources and biotrade - opportunities and challenges. - <b>Beneficiaries:</b> a. 138 civil servants trained; b. 40 political stakeholders participating in seminars; c. Participation by 15 government institutions.	
<b>Output 1.1.5:</b> Information management system for planning and management of natural resources, developed and managed by MAE and NPDAG.	- <b>Consolidation of geospatial data.</b> - <b>Creation and strengthening of spatial data infrastructure:</b> a. Purchase of high performance server; b. Provision of high-end information processing equipment; c. Connection to the NPDAG information security policy; d. Design and launch of geoportal. - <b>Skills development:</b> a. Course on GIS applied to land management; b. Course on implementation, maintenance and support of a Spatial Data Infrastructure	
<b>Output 1.2.1:</b> Six incentive mechanisms strengthened, articulated, and operational for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.	- <b>Organisational and functional strengthening of the NPDAG and the incentives cycle:</b> a. Incentives mapping; b. Incentives analysis (2015 and 2016); c. Mechanisms for coordinating incentives in the NPDAG; d. Feasibility of incentives.	
<b>Output 1.2.2:</b> Provincial sustainable development fund, established and operational.	- <b>The Sustainable Development Fund for the Napo Province (FODESNA):</b> It is in preparation and currently in the feasibility study phase. Establishment and subsequent implementation of a pilot of the fund is expected over the coming months.	

### **3.2.3. Component 2: Design and promotion of landscape and silvopastoral agro-forestry production systems that include the sustainable management of water, soil, and forests, while improving local population livelihoods in the Napo Province<sup>19</sup>.**

#### **Design and promotion of landscape and agro-forestry production systems**

73. Producers have learned about and adopted the approach fostered by the initiative, and have implemented the agroecological techniques spread by the project, which are set out in a manual of good practices.
74. The main effects discerned in the field and positively rated by the beneficiaries are the following:
  - Preparation and use of organic fertilisers on the farms, as an alternative to agro-chemicals, with good financial results (reduced materials costs) and productive results;
  - Identification of degraded areas and demarcation of forest conservation and restoration areas and water source conservation areas on the farms;
  - Increase in biomass through drainage work and sowing grass in the fields;
  - Establishing strips of trees and shrubs to provide shade to livestock, fodder banks and soil conservation;
  - Soil enrichment with pastures.
75. One remarkable achievement of the project are the benefits attained through the so-called "farm plans". Given the good results seen in the pilot experiences, these plans are now being expanded to all the households and farms that are beneficiaries of the project. What is interesting about the plans and their methodology is that, in addition to being conceived as a farm planning instrument that establishes current and future land use and demarcates conservation, restoration and production zones, they become a tool for appropriation by small-scale agricultural producers and a crucial step towards the formalisation of future conservation agreements.

#### **Value chain plans**

76. The implementation of Output 2.1.2 "Value chain plans for cocoa and *naranjilla*, updated, implemented and monitored" is considered a success factor for the initiative.
77. The work was carried out through previously created and strengthened producer organisations (Wiñak, Tsatsayacu Kallari and Sacha Lara), making it possible to bolster processes underway, maximise the possible impacts of the intervention and access organised producers.
78. Thus, capacities were developed that focused on improving production quality, achieving organic certification, establishing process control protocols, innovating in product transformation and expanding the access to new markets. Some good examples, given that the organisations met the required demands, are the contracts concluded by Wiñak with the companies Nutrition (Japan) and Venchi (Italy); this latter company also reached trade agreements with Kallari.

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<sup>19</sup> Sub-question 2.2 Component 2 - What mid-term outcomes has the project achieved in the design and promotion of landscape and silvopastoral agro-forestry production systems that include the sustainable management of water, soil, and forests?

79. Besides strengthening the links in the value chains, the activities were skilfully coordinated with other project outputs, particularly the promotion of good practices and forest restoration.
80. Given the success of the approach and the mid-term outcomes attained, it is deemed advisable to take advantage of the specialised human resources to replicate these good practices in the implementation of the value chain plans for biotrade products and community-based tourism that fall under project component 3.

#### **Establishment of conservation areas**

81. By project mid-term, sustainable management and conservation areas spanning approximately 9,000 ha had been established. They were created through the preparation of 7 co-management plans in protective forests in Cerro Sumaco and Colonso in the Napo Province.
82. The drafting and approval of the co-management plans is one of the remarkable experiences of component 2. The approach used and the methodology applied have highly replicable features for the execution of other project activities (such as Output 1.1.2 - economic and ecological zoning) and also for other initiatives and contexts. The following aspects can be highlighted:
  - **Cross-cutting approaches:** The methodology for drawing up the co-management plans integrates the gender, intercultural and intergenerational approaches through tools and instruments designed ad hoc, understanding the importance of these perspectives in land planning and development.
  - **Coordination:** For the preparation and approval of these plans, collaboration relationships were generated among the different influential stakeholders in the territories, most significantly, the MAE, the DAG in the cantons and provinces, community-based organisations and civil society organisations.
  - **Community approach:** the involvement of more than 170 people in its construction shows that community participation was deemed essential in the land planning. The dreams, needs and alternative solutions raised by the different groups and individuals that live in the territory, their contributions and considerations were effectively incorporated into the co-management plans, thus enhancing the community appropriation through the plans formulated.
  - **Alignment:** They are explicitly aligned with the constitution, national legislation and regulations (COOTAD, Forestry act, rule 265 for land allotment, etc.) and the different international instruments and conventions (ILO Convention 169, Convention on Biological Diversity, and others).
  - **Multidimensionality:** In its construction and conceptualisation, the territory is conceived of as a whole, and this concept is expressed in the mainstreaming of social, economic, cultural, biophysical and ecosystemic criteria.

#### **Investigation and influence of regulations for sustainable forest management**

83. The generation of knowledge and the participation by the project team, in alliance with the MAE, in spaces for national debate about sustainable forest management has yielded good results.
84. Relevant information has been gathered on the economic, technical and procedural variables of timber traceability, which are essential inputs for the creation and

application of a developed regulation proposal. These advances, along with the construction of a provincial sustainable forest development strategy, which is in the socialisation and validation process with the stakeholders of the institutions involved, represent the main outcomes of Outputs 2.2.1 and 2.2.4 (Table 9). It must be noted that these achievements are on national level and, at the time of the evaluation, it was not possible to confirm whether the mechanisms, policies and instruments created reflect at the provincial and canton levels the effects achieved.

### **Improvement in livelihoods**

85. Although positive effects that are well-aimed at the fulfilment of the project objectives have been achieved, taking into account the review of secondary information and the perceptions expressed by the beneficiaries, this progress was not found to have yielded an improvement yet in the livelihoods and incomes of the households participating in the project.
86. This issue must be highlighted, given that, based on the interviews and focus groups held with the project beneficiaries, it was found that it is not deemed possible to maintain sustainable biodiversity management over the medium or long term unless tangible and intangible returns are generated for the households that own the farms.

**Table 8:** Summary of mid-term progress and effects of component 2

Outputs	Mid-term progress of activities	Effects generated
<p><b>Output 2.1.1</b> Three technology packages of good practices for cocoa, <i>naranjilla</i> and livestock production, and conservation agreements signed with small- and medium-scale producers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of good practices in managing agroforestry systems for cocoa -100 households, <i>naranjilla</i> -110 households, and livestock -46 households.</li> <li>- Practical training workshops in accordance with the good practices promoted in the three locations.</li> <li>- Development of a manual of good agroecological management practices and transition processes</li> <li>- Definition of farm planning proposal and application at pilot sites.</li> <li>- Development and implementation of activity monitoring system with families: field notebook.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The producers have become aware of the importance of conservation and care for the environment, viewing the implementation of good practices on their farms, as well as silvopastoral and agroforestry systems, as a good alternative.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Output 2.1.2</b> Two value chain plans for cocoa and <i>naranjilla</i>, updated, implemented and monitored (40,927 ha).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation and implementation of value chain plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a. Production:</b> 1. Drawing up information in hectares and related productivity; 2. Evaluation and management of cocoa collection established at the Kallari farm.</li> <li><b>b. Organic certification:</b> Training for internal inspectors of organic agriculture production systems.</li> <li><b>c. Post-harvest:</b> 1. Establishment of protocols and records for process control in the cocoa value chain, quality control and management, traceability management; 2. Consolidation of containers to be exported with their respective authorisations and permits.</li> <li><b>d. Transformation:</b> 1. Support in applying for health certificates and barcodes for cocoa derivative products; 2. Industrial safety, business management and stability and durability testing; 3. Support and coordination for the preparation of <i>naranjilla</i> pulp and juice; 4. Preparation of recipes for Wiñak, Kallari and Tsatsayacu chocolates; 5. Training workshop for cocoa and chocolate tasters.</li> <li><b>e. Commercialisation:</b> 1. 8 customer visits for cocoa and derivatives; 2. Commercialisation of 8 containers of cocoa; 3. 5 commercial arrangements for cocoa and derivatives; 4. Promotion and participation in local and national trade fairs; 5. Creation of the Napo cocoa-growers' consortium.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational strengthening, developing the skills of the producers and improving access to competitive markets.</li> <li>• Sustainable management and conservation areas have been established, expanded and agreed in the Cerro Sumac and Colonso protective forests.</li> <li>• Knowledge generated based on investigation and political influence to progress towards sustainable forest management and to establish a nationwide timber traceability system.</li> </ul>
Outputs	Mid-term progress of activities	Effects generated
<p><b>Output 2.2.1</b> Provincial SFM Strategy agreed, implemented, and monitored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A proposal has been prepared, which is in the process of socialisation and validation by the stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The producers have become aware of the importance of conservation and care for the environment,</li> </ul>

<p><b>Output 2.2.2</b> 23 co-management plans for La Cascada, Cerro Sumaco and Colonso PFs prepared and implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 co-management plans prepared (GEF-Napo) and approved by the MAE by means of resolutions, ACOKI communities (Association of Kiju Communities), María Antonieta de Llaucana within the Cerro Sumaco protective forest and the Nueva Libertad community in the Colonso protective forest, with implementation underway.</li> <li>- 4 management plans, Challwayacu, Volcán Sumaco, Wawa Sumaco, Jatun Sumaco, Wamani and Pucuno Chico communities, approved by the MAE in the Cerro Sumaco protective forest, ready for implementation phase.</li> <li>- Management plan for the Kichwa people of Rukullakta in the preparation process.</li> </ul>	<p>viewing the implementation of good practices on their farms, as well as silvopastoral and agroforestry systems, as a good alternative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational strengthening, developing the skills of the producers and improving access to competitive markets.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Output 2.2.3</b> 2,500 ha restored with analogue forestry, reforestation or natural regeneration techniques under conservation agreements and incentives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Forest restoration has progressed at farm and community level, to which end the following has been established and implemented:</b> a. water source protection zones; b. identification of pasturelands that will be converted into forest; c. regenerated secondary forest/stubble areas that are to become forest. d. technical assistance in conservation and restoration. The farm plans are essential in demarcating and establishing conservation commitments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable management and conservation areas have been established, expanded and agreed in the Cerro Sumac and Colonso protective forests of the Napo Province.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Output 2.2.4</b> Provincial timber traceability system for SFM, designed and implemented in Cerro Sumaco (Wamani and Akoki communities), as a pilot for the Napo Province.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The following studies have been conducted:</b> a. Economic analysis of the implementation of the national traceability system for timber forest products; b. Strategy for implementation of the TFP timber traceability system in native forests in Ecuador; c. Technical instruments for implementation of the NTFP timber traceability system in native forests in Ecuador; d. Diagnosis and evaluation at local level of the proposed timber traceability system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge generated based on investigation and political influence to progress towards sustainable forest management and to establish a nationwide timber traceability system.</li> </ul>

### 3.2.4. Component 3<sup>20</sup>: Promotion of biotrade and community-based ecotourism as strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and improvement of livelihoods for local communities.

87. The biotrade and tourism outputs were conceived by the beneficiaries as an opportunity for individual producers and communities to earn supplementary income and, at the same time, as an alternative for promoting biodiversity conservation within the territory. However, it is not yet possible to observe tangible effects of these latter dimensions.
88. Despite this, based on field observation and the opinions of those interviewed, the beneficiaries express satisfaction with the mid-term progress achieved because they have been able to formalise their tourism undertakings with the competent authority (a total of 7) and have value chain plans approved by the MAE for the *tikaso* (or *sacha inchi*), vanilla, fibre palm, guayusa and orchid biotrade products (see Table 9).

<sup>20</sup> Sub-question 2.3. Component 3 - What mid-term outcomes has the project achieved in the promotion of biotrade and community-based ecotourism as strategies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources?

89. In relation to community-based tourism, it was confirmed that it is necessary to continue supporting and mentoring the communities in improving the quality offered and to financially support the construction of minimal infrastructures.
90. Regarding biotrade, it is important to emphasise that the economic feasibility studies of each of these products did not consider labour costs. This decision was made because such costs raised the prices and reduced the returns on the products.
91. Another element to highlight is the joint work done with the NPDAG to prepare and pass the “Ordinance to declare the KICHWA Chakra a sustainable system that promotes production, investigation and commercialisation of agroecological food products in the Napo Province”. This provincial public policy is aligned with the different project components and is presented as a certification alternative for local producers and as a contribution to project sustainability, given that the purpose of the ordinance is: “To generate a system of incentives, measures and mechanisms to strengthen and/or promote the establishment and expansion of the *chakra* system with healthy, nutritional food, agrobiodiversity plant and animal species, and cultural ways and customs. Appropriate research, production, dissemination and commercialisation shall accompany this dynamic”.

**Table 9:** Summary of mid-term progress of component 3

Outputs	Mid-term progress of activities	Effects generated
<b>Output 3.1.1</b> Conservation agreements (500 ha) and good practices in sustainable community-based tourism, implemented.	- <b>Seven communities have been supported in the development of sustainable tourism undertakings in the following ways:</b> a. Creation of a manual of good practices in community-based tourism; b. Support in legalizing the undertakings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalisation of tourism undertakings will make it possible to promote and improve the offer.</li> </ul>
<b>Output 3.1.2</b> Biotrade products with management plans and/or “chakra” ecolabel produced in priority areas (Archidona and Tena) with conservation agreements.	- <b>Identification and value chain plans prepared for the following products:</b> a. <i>Tikaso</i> ; b. <i>Vanilla</i> ; c. <i>Fibre palm</i> ; d. <i>Guayusa</i> ; d. <i>Orchid</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value chain plans approved by the MAE raise the beneficiaries’ expectations for generating supplementary income and at the same time conserve biodiversity.</li> </ul>

### 3.2.5. Component 4<sup>21</sup>and<sup>22</sup>: M&E and information dissemination.

92. The FAO Office has a centralised monitoring system to which the project team reports monthly on the progress made in executing each of the components, offering an updated general overview of technical execution of the initiative.
93. However, the monitoring and evaluation system of the project itself was not fully operational at the time of evaluation. This made it difficult to obtain reliable, timely information about partial progress (for example, monthly progress) on fulfilment of

<sup>21</sup> Sub-question 1.6 Monitoring and evaluation - Was a monitoring and evaluation plan containing baselines, indicators and SMART goals with a focus on gender designed and implemented?

<sup>22</sup> Sub-question 5.3 Have the knowledge and native practices and/or those introduced by the project been established in a sustainable communication system to disseminate them throughout the country and in the provinces involved in order to stimulate dialogue about the lessons learned and good practices, to bolster and replicate them?

indicators, goals and the identification of the beneficiaries of the activities. However, a review of the documentation confirmed that the annual reports include a section and matrixes referring to the progress made in the technical implementation of each component and their related goals.

94. Another shortcoming in the project design, as mentioned in section 3.1.3, is that some mid-term targets were placed at the same level as the final ones, hindering mid-term achievement, on the one hand, and systematic, realistic monitoring, on the other.
95. As regards the mainstreaming of the gender approach, as also explained in section 3.1.3, a single indicator containing the gender dimension in its formulation was included, namely: "10% increase in the current average income of 200 producers (100 women) working in community tourism and sustainable biotrade". This is considered insufficient, given the standards and policies that FAO has set for mainstreaming this dimension into the projects it executes.
96. When it comes to knowledge management, at the time of the evaluation, the creation of a communication strategy was in the final stages. An essential part of this strategy is a media plan that, when implemented, will make it possible to disseminate and spotlight the project processes and outcomes internally and externally.
97. The creation and management of communication products such as guides, manuals and systematisation of experiences focused on disseminating and replicating knowledge, good practices and lessons learned through project implementation shall be a crucial contribution to expanding the impact, replicating successful experiences and bolstering project sustainability.

### 3.3 Efficiency

**Evaluation question 3:** Have the intervention methods, institutional structure and financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available helped or hindered the achievement of the project outcomes and objectives?

*Finding 5: The organisational structure designed has functioned as expected, especially in the area of project management and operation, enabling effective, efficient implementation and results-based management. This progress is reflected in its good capacity to respond to initial delays, the design of strategies aimed at solving shortcomings and delays in the provision of co-financing and in the generation and performance of activities in alliance with peasant producer organisations, NGOs, universities and other GEF projects. These features have significantly contributed to the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes.*

#### 3.3.1 Organisational structure<sup>23</sup>.

98. The organisational structure and chain of accountability have functioned as planned. The team and the stakeholders know and understand the organisation chart, the duties that each party must perform and the established procedures. One weak aspect identified is the coordination and dialogue between the management team and technicians and the project developers, and vice versa.
99. It should be noted that the specialists and technical chief successfully incorporated results-based management, which prompted effective and efficient implementation of the project activities and outputs.
100. The project team has a clear idea of the targets, outcomes and deadlines established in the formulation document for each of the outputs for which they are responsible and they have applied a work approach that focused on compliance in a timely fashion, thus reducing possible implementation deviations and optimizing the resources and time devoted to performing the activities.

#### 3.3.2 Management of delays and down time<sup>24</sup>

101. Early on, during the preparation and implementation of the project, there was a technical and administrative adjustment phase that was lengthier than advisable (approximately six months). The reasons for this delay have to do with difficulties in forming and consolidating the technical team, solving operational and logistical issues to facilitate fieldwork, and a lack of clarity at the beginning about responsibilities and the intervention logic.
102. Thanks to the adjustments made and the leadership shown by the technical chief, these difficulties were overcome. Resources were reassigned to better equip the project (mainly transportation and office equipment), administrative support was

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<sup>23</sup> Sub-question 3.1 Has the institutional/organisational structure of the project helped to achieve efficient, results-based management?

<sup>24</sup> Sub-questions:

3.2 Delays – Has the project experienced delays in execution that hindered the achievement of the project objectives?

3.4 Project execution - To what extent has the down time in implementation and execution facilitated or hindered the achievement of the project objectives?

added, priorities were set, project comprehension was bolstered, and the individual and group targets and responsibilities were more clearly defined for the teams.

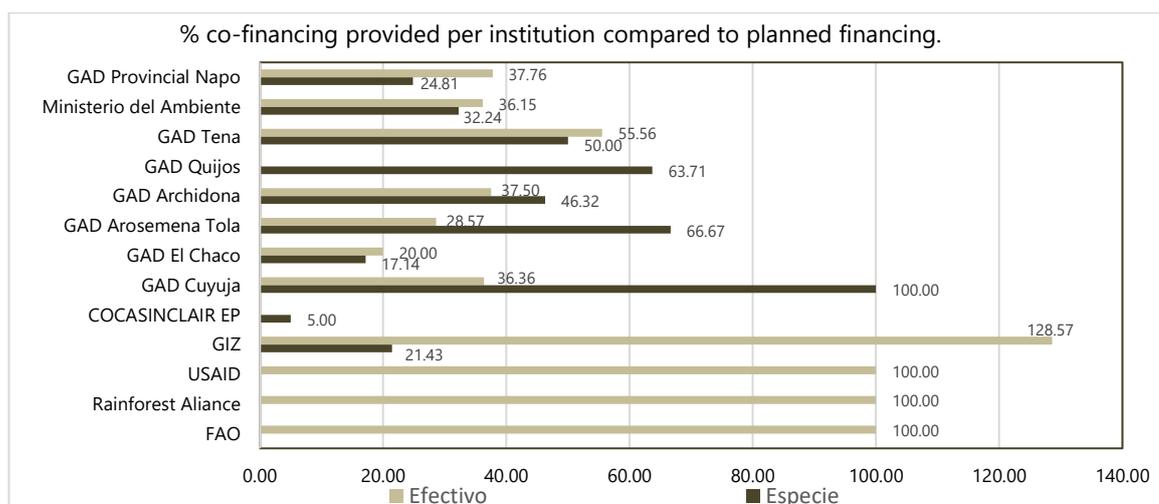
103. Finally, it is worth highlighting that the involvement of numerous institutional stakeholders in performing the activities has facilitated the achievement of the project targets, outcomes and objectives. The will of the parties and the collaboration strategies developed have made it possible to establish synergies, particularly with the NPDAG, managing to enrich the processes, optimise available resources and jointly plan the intervention.

### **3.3.3 Co-financing<sup>25</sup>.**

104. By July 2017, the co-financing provided amounts to a total of USD 4,686,000.00, corresponding to 38% of the total estimated in the project formulation, which comes to USD 12,320,504.00. (See Figure 9, Table 10 and Appendix 6).
105. The drop in co-financing seen to date was mainly caused by the budget cut in conservation programmes at the company Coca Codo Sinclair, which managed to contribute just USD 20,000 of the agreed total (USD 1,000,000), and by the delay in updating the agreements with the DAGs in the cantons, which have yet to provide more than 50% of their planned co-financing.
106. In the case of Coca Codo Sinclair, the company has confirmed that it will no longer act as a co-contributor of the project; as for the cantonal DAGs, the team has begun to approach the local governments again, showing them project outcomes achieved up to now in order to prove the positive effects garnered by the initiative. According to key informants for the project, this strategy has been successful, the commitments are in the process of being updated and, should this take place, the established co-financing targets would be met.

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<sup>25</sup> Sub-question 3.5 To what extent has the co-financing proposed in the Prodoc been provided as of project mid-term?

**Figure 9:** Percentage of co-financing provided per institution**Table 10:** Co-financing provided per institution

Institution	Type of co-financing	Total planned co-financing (USD)	Co-financing provided (USD)	% of co-financing actually provided
Napo Province DAG	Monetary	3,972,660.00	1,500,000.00	37.76
	In kind	2,015,000.00	500,000.00	24.81
Ministry of the Environment	Monetary	2,005,533.00	725,000.00	36.15
	In kind	930,467.00	300,000.00	32.24
Tena DAG	Monetary	90,000.00	50,000.00	55.56
	In kind	80,000.00	40,000.00	50.00
Quijos DAG	In kind	78,480.00	50,000.00	63.71
Archidona DAG	Monetary	80,000.00	30,000.00	37.50
	In kind	86,364.00	40,000.00	46.32
Arosemena Tola DAG	Monetary	35,000.00	10,000.00	28.57
	In kind	30,000.00	20,000.00	66.67
El Chaco DAG	Monetary	45,000.00	9,000.00	20.00
	In kind	175,000.00	30,000.00	17.14
Cuyuja DAG	Monetary	22,000.00	8,000.00	36.36
	In kind	5,000.00	5000	100.00
COCASINCLAIR EP	Monetary	600,000.00	0	0.00
	In kind	400,000.00	20,000.00	5.00
GIZ	Monetary	140,000.00	180,000.00	128.57
	In kind	560,000.00	120,000.00	21.43
USAID	Monetary	50,000.00	50,000.00	100.00
Rainforest Alliance	Monetary	500,000.00	500,000.00	100.00
FAO	Monetary	420,000.00	420,000.00	100.00
TOTAL		12,320,504.00	4,686,000.00	38.03

Source: Data provided by FAO Ecuador and confirmed by the evaluation team

### 3.3.4 Alliances<sup>26</sup>

107. During the early years of implementation, in addition to bolstering relationships with partner and co-party organisations, the project managed to define reciprocal relationships with other institutions and initiatives.

108. These synergies have led to an increase in positive effects for the beneficiaries and the intervention area, thanks to the exchange of knowledge and experiences with other institutions, and to a reduction in the costs associated with implementation of certain activities, as well as raising the co-financing by approximately USD 79,000. The following alliances and synergies generated can be highlighted:

- **Integrated Amazon Programme for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Production (MAE-GEF):** This enabled parties to join forces to develop and launch the national timber traceability system in certain provinces in the country within the framework of project outcome 2.2. This synergy represents both a substantial contribution to meeting the project objectives and an opportunity for the intervention area to impact the reflection made on public policy at regional level.
- **IKIAM:** The project team's approach with this university made it possible to generate relevant agreements on sustainable development and conservation in the Napo Province. IKIAM provided university facilities and instructors to teach the "Napo learns, undertakes and protects" training cycle modules. Institutional collaboration has also begun for the design and launch of the new agroecology degree and progress is being made in terms of mutual support activities for the launch of a pilot method for measuring carbon emissions in the project intervention area.
- **UEA:** Through the arrangements made by the project team, the Amazon State University agreed to and officially recognised and granted institutional certification for the training cycles for civil servants and for the training modules for producers and project beneficiaries to be held in 2018. Besides providing explicit recognition of the quality of the space generated, the university's endorsement represents an additional incentive for the participants to take part in the training sessions offered.
- **CONGOPE:** Given their experience and proven capacity in training and mentoring provincial governments in Ecuador, the project coordinated specific support in providing certain modules of the "Napo learns, undertakes and protects" training cycle.
- **Climate-smart livestock project - CSL (FAO-GEF-MAG) GCP /ECU/085/GFF:** The intervention area of this project includes the Napo Province, among others. This overlap was used to establish reciprocal relationships between the projects, an approach that offered support in the inclusion of environmental criteria in the evaluation of the LUDPs, gathering experiences in good agricultural and livestock practices and exchanging lessons learned in order to improve the capacity development of local producers.  
In addition, the CSL project has a gender approach and specialist, which offers an opportunity to receive support in the capacity development of the team and to

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<sup>26</sup> Sub-question 3.6 To what extent are the Project's association and collaboration agreements with partners, local organisations and other projects (whether by the GEF or not) implemented in Ecuador contributing to the achievement of the Project outcomes?

direct the effective mainstreaming of this dimension into the GEF-Napo project, as well as construct a gender strategy for the FAO Office in Ecuador.

- **Maquita Cushunchic:** Support in the creation of the ordinance related to the chakra initiative and in the process of systematizing good practices and field application.
- **AME, IEE and IGM:** Technical support and instruction for capacity development, especially during the “Napo learns, undertakes and protects” training cycle sessions, in developing the provincial information management system and in preparing the Ecological Economic Zoning (EEZ) map generation process.

109. In addition to these alliances, exploring coordination options with the following initiatives could be beneficial in enhancing the project activities and furthering sustainability:

- **Inclusive value chains project (GIZ-CEFA-MAG):** Reciprocity in strengthening the value chains identified by the project.
- **The Nature Conservancy - International Conservation:** Support in furthering and monitoring updates of the LUDPs.

### 3.4 Normative values

#### 3.4.1 General considerations

110. In line with the institutional interest in effectively mainstreaming the gender dimension, in particular, into its interventions, the FAO-EC Office is in the process of an internal reflection and construction of a strategy to mainstream this approach into its projects.
111. Although FAO has manuals and policies in place at global level to promote gender equality and to include indigenous peoples and local communities in its institutional work<sup>27</sup>, there is no national level instrument that localises the objectives, standards and mechanisms described in these policies through specific methodologies, procedures and instruments.
112. This situation posed a challenge in mainstreaming and evaluating the mainstreaming of these dimensions in the initiatives carried out by FAO-EC given that it leaves the field open to the discretion of the project teams in terms of interpreting and implementing the global policies within the Ecuadorian context, subjecting the mainstreaming of these issues to individual training, knowledge and/or sensitivities.
113. Within this setting, the inclusion of normative values is evaluated, using the aforementioned global policies as a reference, retrieving the actions promoted and mid-term outcomes of the project that, in the opinion of the key stakeholders and the evaluation team, indicate the right direction, along with a critical reflection that affords recommendations in order to enhance the mainstreaming in the future.

**Evaluation question 4a:** To what extent has the project, in its work with local communities, ensured that all the stakeholders participated in the decision-making process (including implementation of activities)?

**Finding 6:** *During the stages prior to project implementation (formulation and identification phases), methodologies and strategies focused on ensuring participation by the communities participating in the initiative were considered. The implementation therefore managed to be inclusive and focused the execution of activities on the acceptance of all the parties involved.*

#### 3.4a.1 Prior consultation and decision-making<sup>28</sup>.

114. FAO has a Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples drawn up in 2010 and a manual for ensuring the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of local communities and indigenous peoples in the development of their initiatives. This manual specifies six steps that every project manager and initiative must consider during the project cycle phases (see Figure 10). Keeping in mind that the FPIC was drafted two years after the project began, it was used only as a reference to evaluate the work done with the local communities.

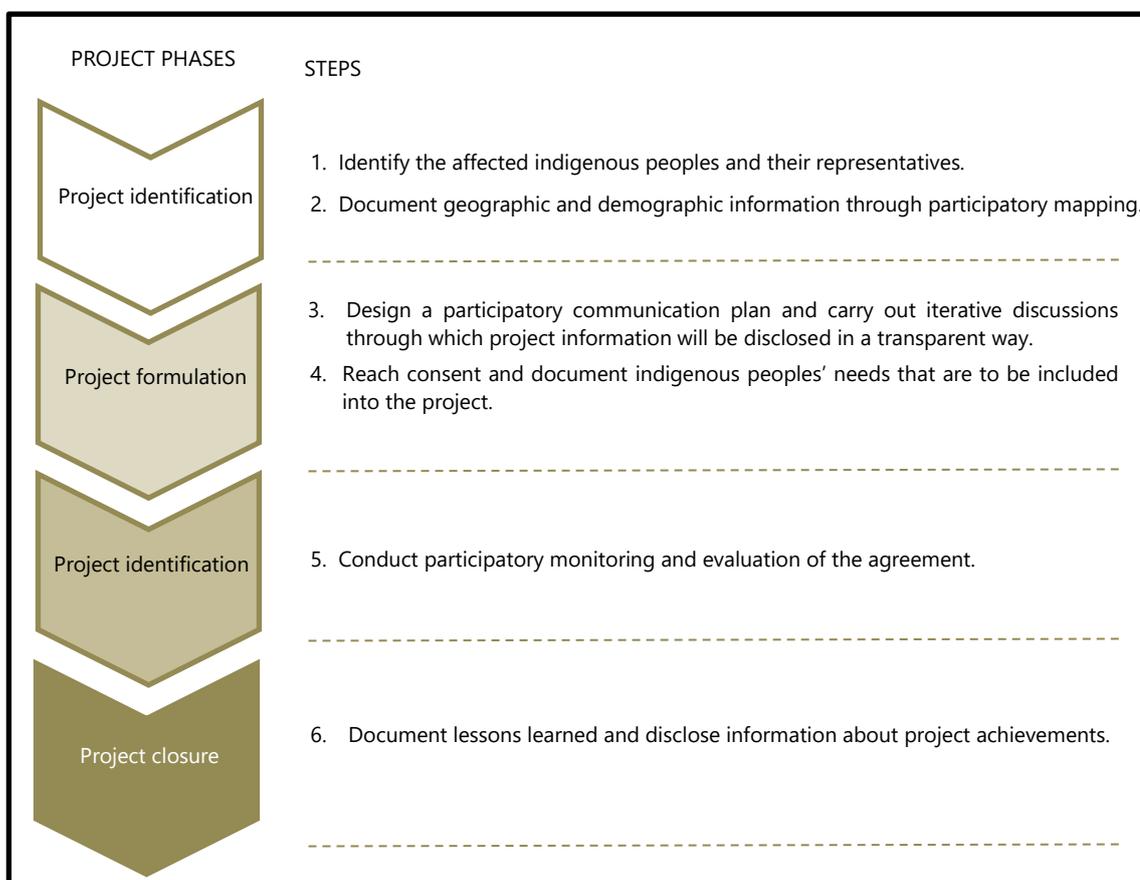
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<sup>27</sup> The documents mentioned are: a. Free, Prior and Informed Consent. An indigenous peoples' right and a good practice for local communities. Manual for field practitioners; b. FAO Policy on Gender Equality; c. FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

<sup>28</sup> Sub-question 4.1a To what extent were the local communities duly informed, consulted and involved in the decision-making process prior to project implementation?

115. For the stages prior to implementation, i.e. project identification and formulation, in order to achieve a successful consultation and decision-making process, the manual describes four steps and details the activities related to each one.

**Figure 10:** Steps for effective mainstreaming of FPIC into project cycle management.



116. In the understanding that this process should be adapted to local characteristics, that financial and human resources, which were limited, are needed to do so, and that this manual prepared by FAO was not used as a guide, it was found that, in the identification and formulation phases, the terms set out in the reference document were partially fulfilled, particularly as regards steps 1 and 2. Compliance was seen specifically in:

- Identification of the Kichwa people as an affected indigenous group and a project target:** The identification process considered communities pertaining to the Kichwa people, the team responsible for the design researched and had prior knowledge of the customs, organisational systems, leaders and needs felt by the communities. This information was reflected in the formulation of the initiative, and aspects related to facilitating their participation as beneficiaries were included in the Prodoc.
- Dialogue with community and indigenous organisations and leaders:** The project was prepared and implemented considering the interests and respecting the forms of association of the leaders and community, peasant and indigenous organisations. These elements were bolstered by the inclusion of bilingual promoters (Spanish - Kichwa) on the team. Such features as a whole lend the intervention social and cultural relevance.

### **3.4a.2 Inclusiveness<sup>29</sup>.**

117. While a sensitivity and concern about the importance of issues related to inclusion was found to exist, and certain specific activities were observed - such as the mainstreaming of gender indicators in the LUDP evaluation methodology and the requirement established in the ToR of including cross-cutting approaches in the different consultations related to drawing up public policies - it was found that the participatory creation of the co-management plans was the most noteworthy project output in terms of effective inclusion of indigenous populations, young people, women and men.

### **3.4a.3 Communication<sup>30</sup>.**

118. As mentioned in paragraphs 96 and 97 of section 3.1.5, at the time of the evaluation, the creation of a communication strategy is in the final stages. A review of the initial drafts did not confirm the mainstreaming of the inter-cultural perspective in this strategy.

119. It is important to mention the selection of bilingual local promoters, hiring of specialists and consultants with knowledge and a record of working in the area and conducting of field training to reduce the use of written materials to a minimum as a good practice that has fostered communication and improved the outcomes with the beneficiaries.

**Evaluation question 4b:** To what extent has the project addressed gender equality issues in its design and is contributing to the empowerment of women, young people and other vulnerable groups?

**Finding 7:** *The initiative did not include gap diagnostics, constructing a road map, preparing specific methodologies (standard 7) or specialised human resources (standard 2) for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the initiative. However, it was found that the project managed to promote the participation and leadership of women in most of the initiative activities. It should be emphasised that cross-cutting the gender approach was explicitly considered in certain outputs such as LUDP evaluation, preparation of co-management plans and the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management in construction.*

### **3.4b.1 Consideration of FAO policies and standards.**

120. The FAO Policy on Gender Equality is the framework that guides the technical work and evaluation of outcomes that lead towards the institutional goal: To achieve equality between men and women in terms of sustainable agriculture and rural development, to eliminate hunger and poverty.

121. To this end, the policy sets out five objectives and fifteen standards, and has defined an accountability structure to ensure that outcomes are monitored and achieved. Of the fifteen standards, the evaluation team has considered and adapted three

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<sup>29</sup> Sub-question 4a.2 To what extent were the land planning processes, provincial and national policies inclusive and focused on the acceptance of all the parties involved (including indigenous populations, young people, women and men)?

<sup>30</sup> Sub-question 4a.3 Communication - Was the information available to everyone through the use of local languages and keeping written materials to a minimum where literacy is limited?

standards to their analysis needs: 1,2 and 7<sup>31</sup> (see Figure 11). These elements shall be used as reference to provide the grounds for some of the findings related to mainstreaming of the gender dimension in the project.

**Figure 11:** Objectives and standards of the FAO policy on gender equality subject to evaluation.

<b>Objectives</b>
<p><b>Objective 1.</b> Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes.</p> <p><b>Objective 2.</b> Women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources.</p> <p><b>Objective 3.</b> Women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development and to markets.</p> <p><b>Objective 4.</b> Women’s work burden is reduced by 20% through improved technologies, services and infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Objective 5.</b> Percentage of agricultural aid committed to women/gender-equality related projects is increased to 30% of total agricultural aid.</p>
<b>Standards subject to evaluation</b>
<p><b>Standard 1.</b> All major FAO statistical databases shall incorporate sex-disaggregated data, where relevant and as available.</p> <p><b>Standard 2.</b> FAO shall invest in strengthening the capacity of member countries to develop, analyse and use sex-disaggregated data in policy analysis and program and project planning and evaluation.</p> <p><b>Standard 7.</b> Gender analysis shall be incorporated in the formulation of all field programs and projects and gender-related issues are taken into account in project approval and implementation processes.</p>

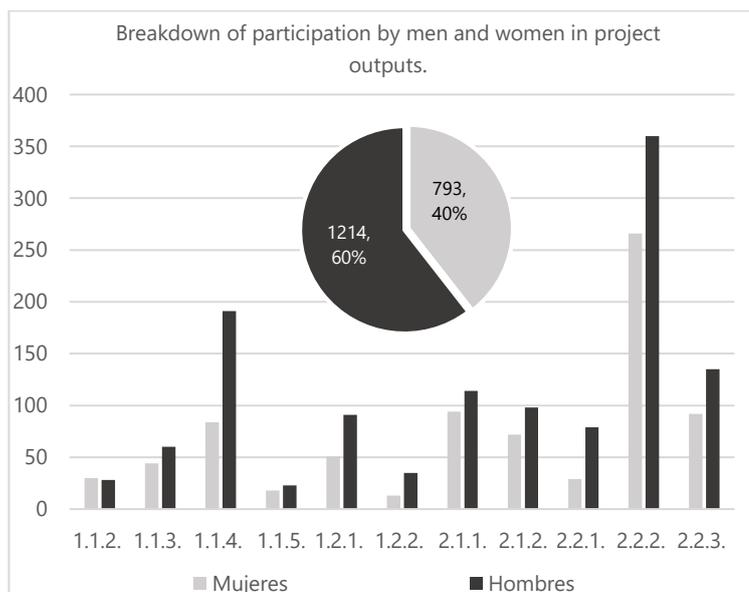
122. While the Prodoc does indicate specific actions for mainstreaming the gender dimension into the project execution, these do not correspond to the implementation of a specific strategy aimed at reducing a clearly defined gap during the design phase.
123. Furthermore, it was found that, although there is awareness of the importance of mainstreaming this dimension for the development of the areas, no specific budget or specialised human resources were allocated to use this approach across the board.
124. In conclusion, the project has not invested in strengthening the capacities of its team and has not included a gender analysis in its formulation, thus preventing it from properly complying with standards 2 and 7 of the FAO policy on gender equality.

<sup>31</sup> Standards recommended by OED/FAO for project evaluation considered in the document. Framework for Harmonising Gender Analysis Across the Different types of Evaluations in OED.

### 3.4b.2 Participation and leadership<sup>32</sup>

125. Women were invited and accounted for 40% (793 total) of the participants in the planning processes, training and implementation of the project activities (see Figure 12). This percentage is satisfactory and represents progress towards the fulfilment of objectives one and three of the FAO gender policy.
126. In addition, the availability of participation information disaggregated by gender for almost all the project outputs ratifies compliance with standard one of this policy.

**Figure 12.** Breakdown of participation by men and women in the project outputs<sup>33</sup>.



- 1.1.2. Six (6) Land Use and Development Plans (...)
- 1.1.3. Two (2) roundtables established and functioning.
- 1.1.4. Stakeholders' capacities strengthened (...)
- 1.1.5. Information management system (...)
- 1.2.1. Six (6) incentive mechanisms strengthened and articulated
- 1.2.2. Sustainable development fund (...)
- 2.1.1. Three (3) technology packages of (...)
- 2.1.2. Two (2) value chain plans (...)
- 2.2.1. Provincial SFM strategy (...)
- 2.2.2. Twenty-three (23) co-management plans (...)
- 2.2.3. Two thousand five hundred (2,500) hectares (...)

### 3.4b.4. Inclusion of gender approach in public policies<sup>34</sup>.

127. The evaluation of the LUDPs and the inter-institutional strategy for resource management have considered the inclusion of the gender perspective in their execution, as described in the Prodoc, although further detail would be needed in the future and specific methodologies must be adopted, in line with objective one of the policy.
128. Within the evaluation parameters on the mainstreaming of environmental criteria, the LUDPs included two gender indicators, namely:
- Revival of the ancestral knowledge and role of women in conservation, forest management and ecosystemic services.

<sup>32</sup> Sub-questions:

4b.1 To what extent have women participated and been represented in the planning processes, training and implementation of the project activities?

4b.2 In what ways is the project supporting women to take leadership roles and actively participate in decision-making at all levels?

<sup>33</sup> The outputs for which there is a sex-disaggregated record of participants are displayed.

<sup>34</sup> 4b.3 Which project outcomes are supporting mainstreaming the gender approach in the land development plans and in the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management?

- Revival of the role of women in the conservation and diversification of agrobiodiversity for food security.

129. The inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management is in the early stages of the construction process, but it was confirmed that the consulting firm's terms of reference do specify that including the gender approach when creating the strategy is necessary.

### **3.4b.5 Reduction of gender gaps<sup>35</sup>.**

130. As a result of the evaluation, given the lack of evidence at the start of the project, it was not possible to confirm any relative increase or any reduction in the gaps between men and women in terms of improving their livelihoods and access to goods, services and financial resources.

131. Notably, in June 2017, a full socio-economic study was conducted of the producers, association undertakings and communities in the intervention area. Despite the delay in doing this research and the fact that it was not useful in meeting the reporting needs of the evaluation, it will be useful in assessing the effects and impact of the project in the medium and long terms.

## **3.5 Sustainability of the outcomes**

**Evaluation question 5:** How sustainable are, and/or will be, the outcomes achieved to date at the environmental, social, financial and institutional level?

**Finding 8:** *After two years implementing the project, the NPDAG authorities and civil servants, as a result of their active participation and ongoing coordination with the project staff, have begun to interiorise and confirm their commitment to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as a cornerstone of their provincial development strategy. The farmers have also developed skills and implemented good practices. However, institutional, economic and social sustainability is not yet guaranteed. It will be dependent upon proper mentoring for producers, whether the practices developed yield returns in terms of improving the livelihood of the beneficiaries and effective mitigation of the risks identified.*

### **3.5.1 Appropriation and institutional capacity<sup>36</sup>**

132. The civil servants and decision-makers, especially the NPDAG, have been committed and actively linked to the processes fostered and the benefits generated by the

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<sup>35</sup> Sub-questions:

4b.4 To what extent is the project managing to improve the livelihoods of men and women equally?

4b.5 To what extent has the project addressed inequality between men and women in the access to funds, goods, services, information and markets?

4b.6 To what extent is the project contributing to the economic empowerment of women through the creation of income-earning opportunities for women?

<sup>36</sup> Sub-questions:

5.1 In what ways and to what extent has the provincial government expressed, throughout the first two years of project execution, the importance of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in its programmes for reducing poverty and for sustainable development through the allocation of resources and planning specific programmes?

5.5 Are the national and local institutions in a position to: a) commit the necessary resources to continue performing relevant activities after project closure b) support them with an effective communication strategy to facilitate the up-scaling of agrobiodiversity?

project, they have developed capacities and shown interest in providing institutional and economic sustainability for the initiative. This situation is expressed in the ratification of the importance of promoting sustainable use of biodiversity and conservation of the natural resources in the territory.

133. Despite the appropriation by decision-makers, there are other institutional-level aspects that could pose a risk to the sustainability of the outcomes after project completion. In particular, the NPDAG and the cantonal DAGs are not in a position, financially, to continue working as intensely in the processes implemented. This, along with a potential change of local authorities in 2019, raises additional uncertainty for the continuity of the benefits deriving from the intervention.
134. Along these lines, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, updating the LUDPs and, especially, the design and implementation of the FODESNA, shall be crucial and decisive in providing economic and institutional sustainability to the project.
135. Since the three outputs mentioned above are still under construction, placing special emphasis on the process and outcomes is essential. Mentoring is also needed in the preparation of the design and implementation of a sustainability and institutional anchoring strategy, in addition to communicating and disclosing its importance in ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the long run.

### **3.5.2 Appropriation by beneficiaries and organisations<sup>37</sup>**

136. Despite the fact that the producers and organisations have implemented the good practices promoted under the project and have developed their capacities, the social sustainability of the initiative is not assured.
137. Mentoring in the field must continue and expand, and it is essential to create attractive local and international markets and connect the producers to them so that the beneficiaries can see that sustainable production and biodiversity conservation is a feasible alternative that leads to an improvement in their livelihoods, reduced production costs and increased income according to the producers and organisations themselves. As mentioned in paragraph 90, this has not yet been achieved.

### **3.5.3. Risks**

138. The risks of the project were managed well, and most of them are included in the Prodoc and the partial reports. Four new political, institutional and environmental risks were identified, which must be taken into account given that they could affect project sustainability. They are:
  - **Constitutional referendum:** On February 4, 2018, a referendum will be held to amend certain articles of the constitution, including a proposal to limit the re-election of Government authorities. If the referendum passes, the likelihood of changes in authority within local governments would increase, and measures to mitigate this risk would be necessary.

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<sup>37</sup> Sub-questions:

5.2 What is the degree of appropriation by the farmers, indigenous communities and local organisations that participate in the implementation of project activities? How likely is independent replication after project closure?

5.4 Have changes been made in peasant organisations and individually to promote the sustainability of the outcomes after project closure?

- **Commitment to Government institutionalility:** Implementation of the project outputs linked to institutional sustainability, especially FODESNA, will require signatures and approval from several government institutions at the central and local levels. Aware of this situation, a dialogue process should be undertaken in advance with national and provincial decision-makers.
- **Comprehensive Amazon Act:** This new law is expected to be passed in early 2018. Among other initiatives, it includes a system of monetary incentives for local governments that have oil-related investments, which could prompt the expansion of the oil industry in the south-east Napo Province.
- **Large Agriculture and Livestock Cooperative programme:** A public policy designed to promote agriculture and livestock development in Ecuador. One of the measures established is subsidised delivery of a million kits containing supplies, seeds, fertilisers and fungicides to small-scale farmers. This initiative could jeopardise the sustainability of the progress made in terms of production and sustainable use of biodiversity.

## 4. Lessons learned

139. As a result of the evaluation conducted, it was possible to glean the following lessons learned:

**Lesson learned 1:** An inception phase is needed to review the Prodoc, evaluate changes in context and make any adjustments in its logical framework that may be needed before starting technical implementation of the project. The teams must also be properly chosen and trained in the methodologies, standards and technical and administrative procedures of the parties in charge of the project.

**Lesson learned 2:** Having a communication strategy from the outset of the project, establishing objectives, deadlines, responsible parties and production of materials, would make it possible to improve internal dissemination and reporting to other FAO-EC initiatives about the methodologies used and outcomes attained, besides helping to ensure the sustainability and replicability of the initiative.

**Lesson learned 3:** If the project technical teams were trained to include cross-cutting perspectives, which is a widespread practice at the FAO-EC office, in addition to making greater efforts in the socialisation of FAO's global policies and manuals, as well as the national level strategies, greater adherence to FAO's principles and objectives could be achieved in terms of inclusiveness, indigenous populations and gender.

**Lesson learned 4:** It is not possible to adopt good practices in conservation and sustainable management and maintain them in the long term if this does not entail a change in the situation of poverty where they are adopted. Projects focusing on sustainable management of natural resources must contemplate and be aligned with this reality in their design and implementation. The project carried out in Napo is a good example of a response to this need and demand by the beneficiaries.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

140. Taking into consideration the main findings related to the questions and criteria in this mid-term evaluation, the following conclusions can be reached:

**Conclusion 1** (Criterion: Relevance): It was found that the implementation and design of the components, outcomes and outputs of the project are closely aligned with and relevant to the participating institutions and the beneficiaries of the project. Furthermore, the intervention logic indicates that the specific objective of the initiative will be achieved, which, in turn, represents a contribution to the expected long-term impact, translated into the development and global environmental objectives, which is evidence of the high vertical consistency of the intervention. As a result of this scenario, the project relevance is rated as **highly satisfactory** and, thanks to the relevance and quality of the intervention design, the activities implemented by mid-term foster the active participation of, and generate positive effects among, the beneficiaries.

**Conclusion 2** (Criterion: Effectiveness - general): The degree of progress towards the ultimate goals, the level of activity implementation and, therefore, the project's effectiveness, is considered **satisfactory** for each of the components and for most of the outputs of the project. At mid-term, it has managed to promote the values of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity among decision-makers, public servants and beneficiary producers. Thus, it can be confirmed that the project has taken a fundamental step in consolidating an improvement in the provision of goods and services from biodiversity. Proving that the practices promoted under the project give rise to a better livelihood and an increase in the producers' income remains pending.

**Conclusion 3** (Criterion: Effectiveness- component 1): At mid-term, public servants and decision-makers were found to have developed skills and improved the tools for biodiversity management. They also displayed a predisposition to establishing institutional commitments to mainstream the values of conservation and sustainable production into local public policies. The next two years of implementation will be essential in solidifying and formalizing these commitments, providing a regulatory framework for them and institutionalizing promotion instruments such as the FODESNA, and ensuring environmental governance in the province, based on the creation and launch of the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management. .

**Conclusion 4** (Criterion: Effectiveness- components 2 and 3): The producers, besides becoming aware of the importance of care for the environment and gaining access to new knowledge and tools, have actively participated in the identification and sustainable zoning of protective forests, in addition to adopting good practices in forest, water, soil, crop and livestock management on their farms and setting up both silvopastoral and agroforestry systems. These achievements are deemed satisfactory in the evaluation because they focus on accomplishing results related to sustainable production and biodiversity conservation and at the same time, they are well connected to the future implementation of value chain plans for cocoa, *naranjilla* and biotrade products which, if they achieve the effects they seek, would generate an improvement in the livelihood and income of beneficiary families.

**Conclusion 5** (Criterion: Efficiency): The project efficiency is rated as **satisfactory**. The design of an adequate organisational structure (in terms of management and operations), combined with a quality technical team with a clear view of the deadlines and targets for which it is responsible and direct technical and financial implementation by FAO has afforded effective, efficient, results-based management. These positive features have provided a strong capacity to respond to drawbacks such as the initial delays in implementation and delays in the provision of the co-financing. When faced with these events, the team in general and its leaders in particular designed and implemented strategies to successfully solve them.

**Conclusion 6** (Criterion: Normative Values): In line with the institutional interest in effectively mainstreaming cross-cutting perspectives into its interventions, the FAO-EC Office is in the process of an internal reflection and construction of a strategy to mainstream the gender approach in its projects. However, at the time of formulation and during project execution, no guidelines were available to clearly and systematically direct the promotion and mainstreaming of inclusive, intercultural and gender approaches in project cycle management. This situation posed a challenge in mainstreaming and evaluating the inclusion of these dimensions into the initiatives carried out by FAO-EC given that it leaves the field open to the discretion of the teams in terms of interpreting and implementing the global policies within the Ecuadorian context, subjecting the outcomes to professional training, knowledge and/or personal sensitivities.

**Conclusion 7** (Criterion: Normative Values - Inclusion and Participation): It was found that, during the stages prior to project implementation (formulation and identification phases), participation by the communities benefiting from the initiative was fostered. The process began with the identification of the Kichwa people as an affected indigenous group and a project target and the establishment of dialogue with community and indigenous organisations and leaders. This made it possible to discern their specific needs, unique worldviews, cultural and production practices and ways of organisation, making the design and subsequent execution of the project consistent. Likewise, during implementation, measures were taken to facilitate communication, such as the presence of bilingual promoters on the team and the design and implementation of participatory and socio-culturally relevant planning methods for biodiversity conservation.

**Conclusion 8** (Criterion: Normative Values - Gender): The initiative did not include gap diagnostics, constructing a road map, preparing specific methodologies (FAO standard 7) or specialised human resources (FAO standard 2) for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the initiative. This circumstance made it difficult to effectively mainstream the gender dimension in the initiative and to measure the progress made in reducing social, power and economic inequality between the male and female beneficiaries. Despite this fact, the project was found to have promoted the participation of women in most of the initiative activities, with women accounting for 40% (793 total) of the participants in the planning processes, training and implementation of the project activities. This percentage is **satisfactory** and represents progress towards the fulfilment of objectives one and three of the FAO gender policy.

**Conclusion 9** (Criterion: Sustainability) **Moderately Likely**: While progress has been made in the right direction, raising awareness, building knowledge, developing skills and tools and implementing good practices in governance, biodiversity conservation and sustainable management among producers, decision-makers and public servants, two years into

project implementation, social, institutional and economic sustainability has yet to be secured. Along these lines, the inter-institutional strategy for natural resource management, updating the LUDPs and, especially, the design and launch of the FODESNA, shall be crucial and decisive in providing economic and institutional sustainability to the project. Social sustainability will be dependent upon the ongoing mentoring and technical assistance given to organisations and producers, and on proving that the progress made under the project leads to an improvement in livelihoods and an increase in household income.

## 5.2 Recommendations

### Strategic recommendations

#### **For the project team and FAO Representation in Ecuador on project sustainability.**

**Recommendation 1:** As a measure focusing on ensuring the continuity of the project benefits, preparing and implementing an institutional, social and economic sustainability strategy is recommended, placing emphasis on consolidating a link to the DAGs and ensuring the feasibility of the inter-institutional strategy and the FODESNA.

Suggestion:

- The involvement and support of the FAO Representation in Ecuador would be highly necessary in gaining political support at ministry level and in strengthening the good predisposition shown by the authorities of the NPDAG.

#### **For the project team, for securing environmental criteria in public policies and land planning instruments.**

**Recommendation 2:** Proposing and organizing the presentation of LUDP evaluations and creation of EEZ, as a space for learning and political influence for civil servants and authorities in the DAGs, is recommended. This could benefit and facilitate the establishment of commitments to mainstream environmental criteria into public policy in general and, in particular, to update the LUDPs.

#### **For the FAO Representation in Ecuador, for improving the mainstreaming of cross-cutting perspectives.**

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that the FAO-EC draw up a manual that adapts FAO's global policies on indigenous peoples and gender to the Ecuadorian context. This would make it possible to ensure effective inclusion of these dimensions into the different projects that FAO is carrying out in this country.

Suggestion:

- This manual should contain at least the national objectives sought and the appropriate methods for each of the stages in project cycle management.

## Operational recommendations

### For the project team, to improve management of the knowledge generated.

**Recommendation 4:** Incorporating a means of tracking the effects and impacts of the initiative into the monitoring system under construction. Along with this, communication materials that focus on spreading good practices should be generated, thus fostering replicability, up-scaling the effects and additionally contributing to the sustainability of the project.

### For the project team, to adapt the skills training topics to the interests of the beneficiaries.

**Recommendation 5:** As a demand arising from the target group, including the development of "soft skills" (management, leadership, conflict resolution, teamwork, etc.) into the skills training cycle for beneficiaries is recommended, as well as stimulating participation and appropriation by women and, particularly, young people.

### For the project team, on adjustments to targets and indicators of the logical framework.

**Recommendation 6:** Adjusting the following indicators/targets in the logical framework is recommended:

Targets to be adjusted	Proposed adjustment
<p><b>Component 1/ Outcome 1.1/ Output 1.1.1</b>  <b>Target:</b> 6 LUDPs with environmental criteria mainstreamed, implemented and monitored (1 provincial LUDP, 5 municipal and parochial LUDPs).</p>	<p>Change the wording of the target, replacing it with the following:  <i>The DAGs have established a formal commitment to mainstream environmental criteria into 6 LUDPs (1 provincial LUDP, 5 municipal and parochial LUDPs).</i></p>
<p><b>Component 2/ Outcome 2.2</b>  <b>Indicator:</b> Tons of avoided emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>eq through protection of forests and reduction of deforestation.</p>	<p>The project technical team should consider changing the measurement method and targets (Appendix 2).</p>
<p><b>Component 2/ Outcome 2.2/ Output 2.2.3</b>  <b>Target:</b> Restoration/rehabilitation of degraded forests: 2,500 ha restored with analogue forestry, reforestation or natural regeneration techniques under conservation agreements and incentives.</p>	<p>Based on information collected by key informants and in the opinion of the project team, it would be advisable to revise the target and consider the possibility of lowering it, given that financing under the government incentive programmes was interrupted in 2017.</p>

## **6. List of Annexes**

Published separately and only in Spanish at [www.fao.org/evaluation/](http://www.fao.org/evaluation/)

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Annex 2: Proposed change in methodology for measurement and targets of Indicator: Tons of avoided emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>eq through protection of forests and reduction of deforestation

