

**Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/UNEP project  
“Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Gran Chaco Americano  
Ecosystem”**

**PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW  
Project General Information<sup>55</sup>**

Table 1. Project summary

UNEP PIMS ID: UNDP PIMS ID:		IMIS number:	GFL-2328-2713-4B47
UNEP Sub-programme:		UNEP EA:	
UNEP approval date: UNDP approval date:	01 September 2010 (UNEP) 04 April 2011 (UNDP)		
GEF project ID:	2505	Project Type:	FSP
GEF OP #:		Focal Area(s):	LD-BD-CCM
GEF approval date:	29 September 2009	GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	
Expected Start Date:		Actual start date:	
Planned completion date:	August 2015	Actual completion date:	Under implementation
Planned project budget at approval:		Total expenditures reported as of [June 2014]:	
GEF Allocation:	USD 3,249,800 UNEP USD 3,659,291 UNDP	GEF grant expenditures reported as of [date]:	
PPG GEF cost:	USD 500,000	PPG co-financing:	USD 645,300
Expected FSP co- financing:	USD 18,370,852	Secured FSP co-financing (June 2015):	
First Disbursement:	08 September 2010 (UNEP)	Date of financial closure:	Open
No. of revisions:		Date of last revision:	
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	February 2013		
Mid-term review/ evaluation (planned date):	January 2013	Mid-term review/ evaluation (actual date):	
Terminal Evaluation (actual date):			

<sup>55</sup> Sources: UNEP and UNDP project documents, project identification form, project implementation review 2015.

## Project rationale

1. The Gran Chaco Americano ecoregion covers approximately 1,000,000 km<sup>2</sup> extending to Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. The biome is comprised of different ecosystems including savannahs, wetlands and dry forests<sup>56</sup> and it hosts one of the largest remaining tracts of dry forests in the world and the second largest forested ecosystem outside the Amazon in South America. This area also hosts a considerable diversity of fauna and flora, including endemic species, making it an important area for biodiversity conservation. Despite its global significance, the Gran Chaco ecoregion is however faced with considerable socioeconomic and environmental challenges. The main threats have been identified as deforestation for timber, charcoal production and agricultural conversion; degradation of grasslands due to inadequate grazing management practices; fires; overdependence on forest exploitation and livestock production for livelihoods; and unsustainable management of water resources.

2. In Argentina, the Chaco is one of the largest biomes covering more than 62 million hectares and harbours considerable diversity of species, including an important number of endemics. Land use in the Argentinian Chaco is mainly focused on agriculture, extensive livestock ranching and forestry, with 78% of the land owned by 4.5% of the population. A total of 11% of the Argentinian population lives in the Chaco area. Livestock ranching is mainly focused on goats and the system relies heavily on natural resource base, exceeding its carrying capacity. Agriculture, mainly cultivation of soybean, has expanded in the area partly due to new cultivation technologies and transgenic seeds adapted to dry areas. Forestry is focused on small-scale production of firewood and charcoal. According to a national inventory, the agricultural and livestock sectors in Argentina are the second most important source of greenhouse gas emissions. The deforestation rate in the Argentinian Chaco was estimated at 0.86% around 2009. Fires are a continuous problem that degrades remaining dry forests, erosion affects more than 57% of the ecosystem and forest fragmentation diminishes the health of ecosystems and its biodiversity.

3. In Bolivia, the Chaco covers 12% of the land surface and is one of the most arid ecosystems in the country. However, like the Argentinian Chaco, also the Bolivian Chaco hosts considerable biodiversity, including endemic species. Approximately 4.5% of Bolivia's population lives in the area, nearly 80% of the population is considered impoverished and the region is home to several indigenous groups. Majority of the population in the Chaco area relies on agriculture, utilizing traditional methods for ranching and farming, including direct grazing on native trees and shrubs by cattle. This generally results in degradation of vegetation and land from overgrazing. Farming covers extensive areas but is not intensive. The use of more mechanized production methods is increasing with soybean being one of the crops that is increasing in coverage. Selective logging of hardwood species and the use of non-timber forest products is common. Also fishing and hunting are important activities that supplement diets and incomes of the local populations but the activities are generally not managed and therefore unsustainable. The Bolivian Chaco has also been impacted by infrastructure development, such as petroleum production, construction of roads, dams and irrigation and drinking water intakes. The rate of forest cover loss of the Bolivian Chaco was estimated at 16% of the surface area due to land-use change around 2009, contributing to soil erosion. Also fires impact the Bolivian Chaco ecosystem. Deforestation of the Chaco ecosystem is a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, together with livestock production.

4. In Paraguay, the Chaco covers approximately 60% of the area. The area is rich in biodiversity but a considerable number of species are threatened. Population in the area is relatively low, with indigenous communities making up a large part of the population. More than 60% of the population lives under the poverty line. The main economic activities in the Paraguay Chaco are agriculture and ranching, with 30% of the country's livestock located in the Chaco region. The majority of the small farmers have plots below 20 hectares in size and covering only 7% of the arable land, whilst an estimated 77% of the arable land is included in plantations of more than 1000 hectares. The rate of

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<sup>56</sup> Sources: UNEP project document

deforestation in the Paraguayan Chaco is high mostly contributed to clearing for agriculture and cultivation of pastures for livestock.

5. Since 1996, several agreements have been signed by Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay for regional cooperation to promote the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco. This includes the Framework Cooperation Agreement of the Sub-Regional Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of the Gran Chaco Americano (SRAP). The objective of the Framework Agreement is to "improve the socio-economic conditions of the Gran Chaco inhabitants, preserving and restoring the ecosystem through common actions for a sustainable use of natural resources, through a participative model envisaging the needs, expectations and demands of the different social stakeholders involved". A Tri-national Council and Commission were established in order to facilitate the implementation of the SRAP through supporting a more focused coordination with national and international programs operating in the Gran Chaco area, creating conditions for better involvement of the local stakeholders and the civil society in decision making and promoting actions to reduce poverty.

6. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) joint project "*Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem*" (hereafter called the Gran Chaco project) was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project was designed to reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through supporting sustainable land management in the productive landscape. The project was also planned, with the assistance of UNEP, to contribute to the development and implementation of Sub-Regional Action Programs (SAP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to facilitate the management of shared territories, native forests and hydrological resources in dry lands. In order to establish a solid foundation for sustainable forest and land management in the Gran Chaco, the project sought to establish a Regional Framework for conservation of the natural resources of the Gran Chaco. The Tri-national Council and Commission were to then ensure synergies between the National Action Programs to Combat Desertification (NAPs) and the Regional Framework, whilst facilitating the implementation of the SRAP.

7. This project was designed to complement the efforts of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay under the SRAP to overcome the most important barriers to the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco ecosystem by building upon the collective commitment of the three Governments to work together around the existing framework of the SRAP through i) mainstreaming sustainable forest management (SFM) and sustainable land management (SLM) principles into policy and legal frameworks; ii) capacity building at regional, provincial/departmental and local levels; iii) developing tools and instruments to mainstream SFM and SLM concerns into regional land use planning and decision making processes; and iv) on-the-ground investments and increased stakeholder participation to implement sustainable management practices to reduce land degradation and combat desertification contributing to poverty alleviation. The project was designed also to be fully consistent with the National Action Programs to Combat Desertification (NAP) of the three countries so as to create conditions for the sustainable development of the local population living in the area.

### **Project objectives and components**

8. The objective of the Gran Chaco project was to *reverse land degradation trends in the Gran Chaco through supporting sustainable land management in the productive landscape*. The overall environmental benefits from the project were described in the project documents (UNEP and UNDP) to be reduced rates of deforestation, increased regeneration of native vegetation and strengthening of conservation areas and biological corridors, contributing to recovery of ecosystem functions and services, namely soil fertility, availability of water resources, CO<sub>2</sub> balance, habitats and plant and animal species, ecosystem carrying capacities and consequently recovery of ecosystem resilience. Further, the achievement of these environmental benefits was to contribute to reduced poverty and improved livelihoods. The project documents include a logical framework for the regional component, as well as separate logical frameworks for each of the three countries. Table 2 presents project outcomes and outputs as defined in the project document narratives.

Table 2. Project outcomes and outputs as defined in the UNEP and UNDP project documents

Component 1. Institutional strengthening (GEF US\$ 1,871,514)	
Outcomes	Outputs
1.1 Institutional capacities have been strengthened at regional, national and local levels to formulate and apply normative frameworks and practices available for SFM and SLM (with increased budgetary allocations or investments), taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables.	<p>Regional Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proposal for a regional Gran Chaco strategic vision and policy integrating SFM/SLM, BD and CC issues developed.</li> <li>• Regional collaboration and coordination mechanisms strengthened.</li> </ul> <p>Country outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SRAP local offices implemented in Argentina (Santiago del Estero), Bolivia (?) and Paraguay (Asunción).</li> <li>• Strengthening of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms that ensure the participation of the main stakeholder groups in decision making processes, especially indigenous peoples and peasants.</li> <li>• SLM, SFM, BD and CC policy and legal frameworks completed and harmonized in each country.</li> <li>• Capacity building programs targeting SLM and SFM technical and financial instruments developed and implemented.</li> </ul>
1.2. SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices have been developed and mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels, taking into consideration climate change and biodiversity conservation variables.	<p>Regional Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gran Chaco GIS and database developed and functioning.</li> <li>• A set of common regional standards and criteria for development of SFM/SLM tools and instruments.</li> <li>• Coordination strategy among the early warning systems for extreme climatic events and wild fires established.</li> <li>• Sustainable traditional and new SLM and SFM technologies identified and systematized, including indigenous knowledge.</li> <li>• Sustainable management manual for the Chaco.</li> </ul> <p>Country Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information systems strengthened.</li> <li>• Economically and environmentally sound unit compatible with SLM and SFM defined for the different sub-regions.</li> <li>• Environmental services identified and valued.</li> <li>• Strategies and action plans for development and implementation of land zoning plans.</li> <li>• Land use change monitoring methodologies and instruments by means of permanent field plots to measure desertification processes, erosion, salinization, regeneration of the native vegetation among other criteria.</li> <li>• Strategies for economic incentives and benefit-sharing for conservation and alternative uses of forests and sustainable use of biodiversity developed.</li> </ul>
Component 2. Field application of SFM and SLM protocols (GEF US\$ 3,842,428)	
2.1 A critical core of priority areas for biodiversity is strengthened through SFM and SLM activities.	<p>Country Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical studies and proposals for establishment of new conservation areas.</li> <li>• Protected areas strengthened through management plans.</li> <li>• Economic incentives for biodiversity conservation</li> </ul>

	and sustainable use in private lands developed,
2.2 CO <sub>2</sub> is captured and emissions avoided through SFM and SLM practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CO<sub>2</sub> balance model and carbon stocks measured and monitored.</li> </ul>
2.3 By the end of the project, the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied reach a critical threshold which, in the absence of major institutional barriers, allows the further adoption of SFM and SLM practices to become self-sustaining.	<p>Regional Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria for design, implementation and M&amp;E of technology validation projects and demonstration projects.</li> <li>• Technology validation projects and demonstration projects evaluated and results systematized.</li> </ul> <p>Country Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology validation and research projects designed and implemented.</li> <li>• Demonstration projects in pilot sites designed and implemented.</li> <li>• Support programs to cover transition costs to SLM and SFM practices implemented in the demonstration sites.</li> </ul>
Component 3. Exit strategy (GEF US\$ 663,490)	
3.1 The end of the project leaves in place a mechanism to ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco.	<p>Regional Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional and national events for dissemination of results/lessons learnt and exchange of experiences.</li> <li>• Integration and adoption of regional vision, policy, SFM/SLM best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the SRAP Chaco.</li> </ul> <p>Country Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replication and up-scaling of best practices through awareness-raising and dissemination of findings across the Chaco region.</li> <li>• Integration and adoption of best practices and a set of performance and sustainability indicators into the NAPs to combat desertification and public policies for the development of the Gran Chaco in each one of the three countries.</li> </ul>
Component 4. Project management (GEF US\$ 609,909)	
Component 5. Monitoring and evaluation (GEF US\$ 281,750)	

9. The purpose of the demonstration projects was to showcase that the alternative sustainable management practices to be promoted are feasible and cost-effective and that a greater benefit will be attained with their adoption compared to the conventional practices. They were implemented in Argentina (Chancani in the Department of Pocho, Province of Cordoba; Santos Lugares and Garza, Province of Santiago del Estero; Riacho Teuguito Biosphere Reserve, Province of Formosa; and Teuco-Bermejito, Province of Chaco), in Bolivia (Charagua; Yacuiba; Monteagudo; and Villamontes) and in Paraguay (three sites in the Central Chaco, Department of Boqueron). According to the project documents, the demonstration projects were to include a series of interventions covering sustainable forest, agricultural, livestock and water management, rehabilitation of degraded areas, diversification of production, training and awareness raising. The demonstration projects were to promote the adoption of best practices already proven to be successful in preventing and reversing land degradation in the region, including crop residue management, minimum and zero tillage, green manure, crop rotation, pasture and stock density management, native forest management, silvo-pastoral management, forest enrichment and regeneration, afforestation and water management.

## Executing Arrangements

10. The full-sized GEF funded project was jointly implemented by UNEP and UNDP, UNEP being the lead implementing agency. The responsibilities over project activities were to be distributed according to comparative advantages of the respective agencies but so that the agencies were to work in close collaboration. UNEP was to be in charge with implementation of the regional component, including project management and monitoring and evaluation, and at the country level of the development of SFM and SLM tools and instruments. UNDP was to be in charge of implementing the country based activities, including institutional strengthening at the country level and implementation of the demonstrations.

Table 3. Distribution of project responsibilities between UNEP and UNDP

Project Components / Outcomes	Implementing Agency	
Component 1. Institutional strengthening		
Outcome 1.1 Institutional capacities	UNEP	UNDP
Outcome 1.2 SFM/SLM tools and instruments	UNEP	
Component 2. Field application of SFM and SLM protocols		
Outcome 2.1 Priority areas for biodiversity		UNDP
Outcome 2.2 CO <sub>2</sub> captured and emissions avoided	UNEP	
Outcome 2.3 SFM and SLM practices		UNDP
Component 3. Project exit strategy		
Outcome 3.1 Sustainability mechanisms	UNEP	
Component 4. Project management		
Project management	UNEP	
Component 5. Monitoring and evaluation		
Monitoring and evaluation	UNEP	

11. The project management structure was comprised of the Tri-national Commission, Executive Committee and local coordination mechanisms.

12. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was to be comprised of the Tri-National Commission established under the Framework Cooperation Agreement between Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, made up of by representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the UNCCD Focal Points of each country and representatives of UNEP and UNDP. The PSC was to meet at least once a year to oversee project implementation and monitor project progress, to provide strategic and policy guidance and to review and approve annual workplans and budgets.

13. The local coordination mechanism (Federal Environment Council of Argentina (COFEMA), Association of Municipalities of the Bolivian Chaco (MANCHABOL) and SRAP Technical Steering Committee) was to ensure adequate planning and implementation of activities in line with the project objectives and local development and stakeholder priorities, as well as complementarity with on-going and planned programs and projects. According to the project document, both the regional and country inter-institutional coordination mechanisms were to be closely linked, ensuring that stakeholder concerns are up-streamed into higher project management levels (Executive Committee and Tri-national Commission).

14. The project was to be co-executed by the Secretariat for Environment and Sustainable Development (SAyDS) of Argentina, the Vice-ministry of Watersheds and Water Resources (VMCRH) of Bolivia and the Environment Secretariat (SEAM) of Paraguay as UNCCD Focal Points. The SAyDS was to

assume the role of lead executing agency and the project's Regional Director was to be appointed by the executing agencies. According to the project documents, the executing agencies were to meet twice a year and to have responsibilities including jointly selecting, with UNEP and UNDP, the staff for the PCU, planning and monitoring the technical aspects of the project, participating in project activities and maintaining close communication and consultations with project stakeholders.

15. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) was to be established within the SAyDS. The PCU was to work under the overall supervision of the Regional Project Director and to be responsible for day-to-day project coordination and management.

### Project Cost and Financing

16. The total project cost at design was US\$ 25,970,852, from which US\$ 6,909,091 was GEF funds (US\$ 3,249,800 through UNEP and US\$ 3,659,291 through UNDP), and US\$ 18,370,853 was co-financing. By June 2014 the actual project expenditure at UNEP was US\$ 1,131,736. By June 2014, the total realized co-financing was US\$ 4,200,000.

17. Table 4. Cost of the project (source: project documents)

Cost of the Project	US\$	Percentage
Cost to the GEF Trust Fund	7,600,000	29.3%
Co-financing		
<b>Cash</b>		
National Government	5,542,000	21.3%
<i>Sub-total</i>	5,542,000	21.3%
<b>In-kind</b>		
National Government	12,828,852	49.4%
<i>Sub-total</i>	12,828,852	49.4%
Co-finance Total	18,370,853	
Total	25,970,852	100%

18. Table 5. Distribution of GEF funds to UNEP and UNDP (source: project documents)

Implementing Agency	GEF Funds (US\$)	Percentage of share
UNEP	3,249,800	47%
UNDP	3,659,291	53%

Table 6. Total project co-financing (source: project documents)

Co-financing source	Cash	%	In-Kind	%	Total	%
SAyDS Argentina	3,400,000	18.51	7,000,000	38.10	10,400,000	56.6
VMCRH Bolivia	1,400,000	7.62	3,100,000	16.87	4,500,000	24.5
SEAM Paraguay	742,000	40.4	2,728,852	14.85	3,470,852	18.9
Total co-financing:	5,542,000	30	12,828,852	70	18,370,852	100

### Implementation Issues

19. The project document identified the following risks that could affect successful implementation of the project (i) Lack of coordination at national, province/department and municipal levels; excessive bureaucracy to allow for smooth project implementation, (ii) human resources constraints, lack of qualification and frequent mobilization of personnel in public institutions. Lack of knowledge on local customs and traditions, (iii) financial constraints, lack of sufficient allocation of resources on a timely fashion and excessive bureaucracy to be complied with for disbursement, (iv) lack of stakeholder willingness to participate and shift to sustainable management practices, low education and capacity levels to adopt sustainable management within a reasonable period within life of project, (v) unfavourable weather conditions may delay implementation of project activities and slow down

adoption of sustainable management practices by affecting, i.e. access to communities and project sites, temporary displacement of stakeholders in affected areas, and changes in priorities of institutions, producers and other stakeholders.

20. The project underwent a mid-term review (MTR) in September 2014, which reported considerable delays in project initiation and implementation resulting in outputs not being delivered according to the workplan. The main recommendation the MTR provided in order to address the delays was to prioritize the delivery of demonstration projects in all three countries as the first stage and to complete the delivery of the biodiversity and carbon - outputs as a subsequent stage. In the Project Implementation Review (PIR) 2015 the project has rated its overall success as moderately satisfactory, going up from the moderately unsatisfactory rating of the previous years of implementation.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

### Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

21. In line with the UNEP<sup>57</sup> and UNDP<sup>58</sup> Evaluation Policies the terminal evaluation of the UNEP and UNDP joint project *Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem* is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, UNDP and the GEF. Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation.

22. It will focus on the following sets of **key questions**, based on the project's intended outcomes, which may be expanded by the evaluator as deemed appropriate:

- (a) To what extent has the project strengthened institutional capacities at regional, national and local levels so that lack of capacity is no longer a barrier to the adoption of SFM and SLM? Is the capacity enhancement sustainable?
- (b) Do the developed SFM and SLM policies, technical tools and practices adequately incorporate considerations of climate change and biodiversity conservation? Are they mainstreamed at regional, national and local levels and will their application and implementation be sustainable?
- (c) Has the project increased the number of producers and the area in which SFM and SLM practices are being applied? How likely is it that due to the increased number of producers and area, further adoption of SFM and SLM practices becomes self-sustaining? Has the project established adequate mechanisms that ensure sustainability of project-supported structures and programs that result in large-scale adoption of SFM and SLM in the Gran Chaco?
- (d) Was the approach adopted by the project adequate and best possible to support sustainable forest management in the Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem? What was the strength of the project and what could it have done better?

### Overall Approach and Methods

23. The terminal evaluation of the project *Sustainable forest management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Americano ecosystem* will be conducted by an independent consultant under the overall responsibility and management of the UNEP Evaluation Office in consultation with the UNEP and UNDP Task Managers, UNDP Evaluation function and UNEP GEF Coordination Office.

24. It will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders (including UNEP, UNDP, and the executing partners) are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. The evaluation will promote information exchange throughout the evaluation implementation in order to increase the project stakeholders' ownership of the evaluation findings.

25. The findings of the evaluation will be based on the following:

- (a) A **desk review** of (but not limited to):

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<sup>58</sup> <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia UNEP and UNDP programme documents (UNEP MTS 2010-2013 and 2014-2017 with the respective Programmes of Work, UNDP Strategic Plans for 2010-2013 and 2014-2017), the relevant UNDAF documents for Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay; documents of the STRAP Framework Agreement; National level policy instruments such as Argentina's National Programme for Climate Scenarios, Bolivia's National Climate change Adaptation Mechanism and Paraguay's 2008-2012 Climate Change Plan;
  - UNEP and UNDP project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); annual work plans and budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project document, the logical framework and its budget and possible revisions;
  - Project reports such as PIRs, six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence etc.;
  - Documentation on project outputs;
  - Mid-term review of the project;
  - Evaluations/reviews / other documentation of similar projects, such as projects implemented within the framework of the SRAP and other regional and national initiatives implemented in the Chaco and other similar projects funded by the GEF with which the Gran Chaco project was to have coordinated actions.
- (b) **Interviews (individual or in group) with** (but not limited to):
- UNEP Task Manager and Fund Management Officer;
  - UNDP Regional Technical Advisor and UNDP County Office staff;
  - The Regional Project Director and other Members of the Project Coordination team;
  - Members of the Project Steering Committee;
  - Relevant staff at the project executing agencies SAyDS, VMCRH and SEAM;
  - Members of the communities of the project demonstration sites, including representatives of indigenous groups, women's groups, producers, peasants, small and large landowners;
  - Project's regional stakeholders, including members of the STRAP Tri-national Council and the Tri-national Commission, members of the Tri-national Indigenous Commission of the Chaco;
  - Project's national stakeholders, including relevant government agencies in the three countries, CCD National Focal Points, NGOs, Universities and other science organizations, and private sector such as producers' associations;
  - Key project staff implementing similar initiatives in the region, including staff of other UN agencies such as FAO.
- (c) The evaluation consultant will visit Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay including meeting the government representatives and other relevant stakeholders in the capitals and visiting all project demonstration sites; Argentina – (i) Chancani in the Department of Pocho, Province of Cordoba, (ii) Santos Lugares and Garza, Province of Santiago del Estero, (iii) Riacho Teuguíto Biosphere Reserve, Province of Formosa, (iv) Teuco-Bermejito, Province of Chaco; Bolivia (i) Charagua, (ii) Yacuiba, (iii) Monteagudo, (iv) Villamontes; Paraguay (i) three sites in the Central Chaco, Department of Boqueron.
- (d) The evaluation can conduct surveys or apply other tools to collect evidence to support the evaluation. A detailed description of the evaluation methods will be provided in the Evaluation Inception Report.

### **Key Evaluation principles**

26. Evaluation findings and judgements should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the evaluation report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) to the extent possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned, however, respecting anonymity. Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

27. The evaluation will assess the project with respect to a **minimum set of evaluation criteria** grouped in five categories: (1) Strategic Relevance; (2) Attainment of objectives and planned results, which comprises the assessment of outputs, effectiveness and likelihood of impact; (3) Sustainability and replication; (4) Efficiency; and (5) Factors and processes affecting project performance, including preparation and readiness, implementation and management, stakeholder participation and public awareness, country ownership and driven-ness, financial planning and management, UNEP and UNDP supervision and backstopping, and project monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation consultant can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

28. **Ratings.** All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Annex 3 provides guidance on how the different criteria should be rated and how ratings should be aggregated for the different evaluation criterion categories.

29. **Baselines and counterfactuals.** In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, the evaluator should consider the difference between *what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. It also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the evaluator, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the evaluator to make informed judgements about project performance.

30. **Theory of Change (ToC).** UNEP project evaluations make use of ToC analysis to help assess several evaluation criteria. The ToC of a project describes the causal pathways from project outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) through outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) towards impact (long term changes in environmental benefits and human living conditions). The ToC also presents any intermediate changes required between project outcomes and impact, called 'intermediate states'. The ToC further describes the external factors that influence change along the major impact pathways; i.e. factors that affect whether one result can lead to the next. These external factors are either drivers (when the project has a certain level of control) or assumptions (when the project has no control). The ToC also clearly identifies the main stakeholders involved in the change processes.

31. A ToC is best presented as a narrative accompanied by a diagram. A diagram is often useful to show an overview of the causal pathways, the cause-to-effect relationship between different results / changes, and where the drivers and assumption intervene along the results pathways. It is also a great tool for discussing the ToC with project stakeholders. The narrative, however, will explain how or why one result is expected to lead to another, and should also present the roles of the main stakeholders in the change processes and how they can be affected by the changes resulting from the project intervention.

32. The evaluation will reconstruct the ToC of the project at design and at evaluation, based on a review of project documentation and stakeholder interviews. Verifying, amending and updating the problem analysis at the origin of the project will be an essential first step in reconstructing the ToC. The evaluator is expected to discuss the problem analysis and reconstructed ToC with key stakeholders during evaluation missions and/or interviews in order to ascertain his/her understanding of the project context, the impact pathways, the roles of various stakeholders and the validity of drivers and assumptions described in the ToC. Annex 9 proposes an approach for reconstructing the ToC of a project at design and at evaluation.

33. **The "Why?" Question.** As this is a terminal evaluation, particular attention should be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the "Why?" question should be at the front of the consultant's mind all through the evaluation exercise. This means that the consultant needs to go beyond the assessment of "what" the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "why" the performance was as it was. This would include reviewing the Theory of Change of the project and the processes affecting attainment of project results (criteria under category F - see below). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project. In fact,

the usefulness of the evaluation will be determined to a large extent by the capacity of the consultant to explain "why things happened" as they happened and are likely to evolve in this or that direction, which goes well beyond the mere review of "where things stand" at the time of evaluation.

34. A key aim of the evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP and UNDP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons.

35. Once the evaluation consultant has obtained evaluation findings, lessons and results, the UNEP Evaluation Office will share the findings and lessons with the key stakeholders. Evaluation results should be communicated to the key stakeholders in a brief and concise manner that encapsulates the evaluation exercise in its entirety. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and preferences regarding the report. The Evaluation Manager at UNEP Evaluation Office will plan with the consultant which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an evaluation brief or interactive presentation.

### Evaluation criteria

#### *Strategic relevance*

36. The evaluation will assess whether the project's objectives and implementation strategies were consistent with global, regional and national environmental issues and needs. The evaluation will assess the project's consistency with the NAPs to combat desertification of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, as well as the SRAP Framework.

37. The evaluation will assess whether the project was in-line with the GEF Land Degradation, Biodiversity and Climate Change focal areas' strategic priorities and operational programme(s). The evaluation will also assess the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's and UNDP's mandates and its alignment with UNEP's and UNDP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval and verify the alignment of the project with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and Programmes of Work (PoW)<sup>59</sup>, and with UNDP's Strategic Plan. The evaluation will briefly discuss the comparative advantage of the two agencies in the project.

38. The evaluation should also provide a brief narrative of the following:

1. *Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP)*<sup>60</sup>. The outcomes and achievements of the project should be briefly discussed in relation to the objectives of the UNEP BSP.
2. *Gender balance*. Ascertain to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation. Are the project intended results contributing to the realization of international Gender Equality (GE) norms and agreements as reflected in the UNEP's Gender Policy and Strategy, as well as to regional, national and local strategies to advance gender equity?
3. *Human rights based approach (HRBA) and inclusion of indigenous people's issues, needs and concerns*. Ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding

<sup>59</sup> UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes [known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs)] of the sub-programmes. Programmes of Work are biennial planning documents that set out, for each sub-programme (SP), the desired outcomes (known as Expected Accomplishments) and outputs. Programme Framework documents are prepared for each sub-programme and present the overall sub-programme's Theory of Change.

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf>

on HRBA. Ascertain if the project is in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and pursued the concept of free, prior and informed consent.

4. *South-South Cooperation*. This is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries. Briefly describe any aspects of the project that could be considered as examples of South-South Cooperation.
5. *Safeguards*. Whether the project has adequately considered environmental, social and economic risks and established whether they were vigilantly monitored. Was the safeguard management instrument completed and were GEF environmental, social and economic safeguards (ESES) requirements complied with?

39. Based on an analysis of project stakeholders, the evaluation should assess the relevance of the project intervention to key stakeholder groups.

### ***Achievement of Outputs***

40. The evaluation will assess, for each component, the projects' success in producing the programmed outputs (products and services delivered by the project itself) and milestones as per the project document and any modifications/revisions later on during project implementation, both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness.

41. While the assessment of achievement of outputs should cover all programmed outputs at design and those outputs added by possible project revisions, it is often impossible to assess all project outputs with the same level of detail. The reconstructed ToC can be used to determine what project outputs are most essential for achieving the project outcomes, and also to establish the minimum characteristics and quality requirements for the project outputs so that they can provide their expected contribution to the project outcomes. The assessment of the achievement of outputs can then focus on the most critical outputs, and verify whether these meet the requisite characteristics and quality.

42. The evaluation should briefly explain the reasons behind the success (or shortcomings) of the project in producing its different outputs and meeting expected quality standards, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F (which covers the processes affecting attainment of project results). Were key stakeholders appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs to promote their ownership and use?

### ***Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results***

43. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project's objectives were effectively achieved or are expected to be achieved.

44. The **Theory of Change** (ToC) of a project depicts the causal pathways from project outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) through outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) towards impact (long term changes in environmental benefits and living conditions). The ToC will also depict any intermediate changes required between project outcomes and impact, called 'intermediate states'. The ToC further defines the external factors that influence change along the major pathways; i.e. factors that affect whether one result can lead to the next. These external factors are either drivers (when the project has a certain level of control) or assumptions (when the project has no control). The ToC also clearly identifies the main stakeholders involved in the change processes.

45. The evaluation will reconstruct the ToC of the project based on a review of project documentation and stakeholder interviews. The evaluator will be expected to discuss the reconstructed ToC with the stakeholders during evaluation missions and/or interviews in order to ascertain the causal pathways identified and the validity of impact drivers and assumptions described in the ToC. This exercise will also enable the consultant to address some of the key evaluation questions and make adjustments to the ToC as appropriate (the ToC of the intervention may have been modified / adapted from the original design during project implementation).

46. The assessment of effectiveness will be structured in three sub-sections:

- (a) Evaluation of the **achievement of outcomes as defined in the reconstructed ToC**. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result of project outputs.
- (b) Assessment of the **likelihood of impact** using a Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) approach<sup>61</sup>. The evaluation will assess to what extent the project has to date contributed, and is likely in the future to further contribute, to the intermediate states, and the likelihood that those changes in turn to lead to positive changes in the natural resource base, benefits derived from the environment and human well-being. The evaluation will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead to unintended negative effects (project documentation relating to Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards). In order for the evaluation to meet UNDP requirements for impact assessment, the evaluation will also specifically assess whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, or 3) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements. The reconstructed ToC will be used as a basis of the assessment and the evaluation will provide a rating for these three criteria.
- (c) Evaluation of the **achievement of the formal project overall objective, overall purpose, goals and component outcomes** using the project's own results statements as presented in the Project Document<sup>62</sup>. This sub-section will refer back where applicable to the preceding sub-sections (a) and (b) to avoid repetition in the report. To measure achievement, the evaluation will use as much as appropriate the indicators for achievement proposed in the Logical Framework (Logframe) of the project, adding other relevant indicators as appropriate. Briefly explain what factors affected the project's success in achieving its objectives, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F. Most commonly, the overall objective is a higher level result to which the project is intended to contribute. The section will describe the actual or likely **contribution** of the project to the objective.
- (d) The evaluation should, where possible, disaggregate outcomes and impacts for the key project stakeholders. It should also assess the extent to which human rights and gender equity were integrated in the Theory of Change and results framework of the intervention and to what degree participating institutions/organizations changed their policies or practices thereby leading to the fulfilment of human rights and gender equity principles (e.g. new services, greater responsiveness, resource re-allocation, etc.).

### ***Sustainability and replication***

47. Sustainability is understood as the probability of continued long-term project-derived results and impacts after the external project funding and assistance ends. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of benefits. Some of these factors might be direct results of the project while others will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not under control of the project but that may condition the sustainability of benefits. The evaluation will ascertain that the project has put in place an appropriate exit strategy and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability.

48. The evaluation consultant can use the ToC to see whether sustainability has been built into the impact pathways and whether the necessary drivers and assumptions (external factors and conditions) affecting sustainability have been adequately considered in the project's intervention logic. The evaluator should assess how likely the sustainability of direct outcomes is, and what the relative importance is of the direct outcomes to sustain higher level changes. Indeed, as outcomes relate most often to individual and institutional capacity building, they are often by themselves expected to ensure sustainability. For instance, a set of new regulations could be at the basis of a lasting change in how a natural resource is being managed. In addition to looking at the direct outcomes, the evaluation consultant will further assess sustainability of changes at intermediate state and impact levels by

<sup>61</sup> Guidance material on Theory of Change and the ROtI approach is available from the Evaluation Office.

<sup>62</sup> Or any subsequent **formally approved** revision of the project document or logical framework.

verifying the presence of drivers and validity of assumptions that affect sustainability of higher level results, considering their relative importance. Many drivers and assumptions required for progressing along the causal pathways from outputs to impact are also required for sustaining positive changes. Those external factors affecting sustainability are categorized in socio-political factors, financial factors, institutional factors and environmental factors:

- (a) *Socio-political sustainability.* Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts? Is the level of ownership by the main stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained? Are there sufficient government and other key stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to sustain project results? Did the project conduct 'succession planning' and implement this during the life of the project? Was capacity building conducted for key stakeholders? Did the intervention activities aim to promote (and did they promote) positive sustainable changes in attitudes, behaviours and power relations between the different stakeholders? To what extent has the integration of human rights and gender equity led to an increase in the likelihood of sustainability of project results?
- (b) *Financial resources.* To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources<sup>63</sup> will be or will become available to use capacities built by the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?
- (c) *Institutional framework.* To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behaviour and environmental resources, goods or services?
- (d) *Environmental sustainability.* Are there any environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits? Are there any foreseeable negative environmental impacts that may occur as the project results are being up-scaled?

49. **Catalytic role, replication and up-scaling.** The project's *catalytic role* is embodied in its approach of supporting the creation of an enabling environment and of investing in pilot activities which are innovative and showing how new approaches can work. UNEP aims to support activities that upscale new approaches to a national, regional or global level, with a view to achieve sustainable global environmental benefits. The evaluation will assess the catalytic role played by this project, namely to what extent the project has:

- (a) *catalysed behavioural changes* in terms of use and application, by the relevant stakeholders, of capacities developed;
- (b) provided *incentives* (social, economic, market based, competencies etc.) to contribute to catalysing changes in stakeholder behaviour;
- (c) contributed to *institutional changes*, for instance institutional uptake of project-demonstrated technologies, practices or management approaches;
- (d) contributed to *policy changes* (on paper and in implementation of policy);
- (e) contributed to sustained follow-on financing (*catalytic financing*) from governments, private sector, donors etc.;
- (f) created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions ("*champions*") to catalyse change (without which the project would not have achieved all of its results).

<sup>63</sup> Those resources can be from multiple sources, such as the national budget, public and private sectors, development assistance etc.

50. *Replication* is defined as the repetition of project approaches or application of project lessons in different geographic locations, while *up-scaling* is defined as the repetition of project approaches or application of project lessons in the same area, but on a much larger scale. Both replication and up-scaling should be undertaken by other actors and be funded by other sources than the project itself.

51. ToC analysis can help with the assessment of replication and up-scaling potential of an intervention in a similar way it can help with the assessment of sustainability, except that here, the evaluator should focus on those direct outcomes, drivers and assumptions that are most necessary for replication and up-scaling of project results. The evaluation consultant can thus use the ToC to see whether replication and up-scaling have been built into the causal pathways and whether the necessary drivers and assumptions (external factors and conditions) promoting replication and up-scaling have been adequately considered in the project's intervention logic. To assess the likelihood of replication and up-scaling, the evaluator will assess the relative importance of direct outcomes, drivers and assumptions for enabling replication and up-scaling, and verify to what extent the most influential ones have been achieved or are present. The reliability of this assessment can be enhanced by looking for early evidence of replication or up-scaling during the project lifetime.

### ***Efficiency***

52. The evaluation will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. It will describe any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project as far as possible in achieving its results within its secured budget and time. It will also analyse how delays, if any, have affected project execution, costs and effectiveness. Wherever possible, costs and time over results ratios of the project will be compared with that of other similar interventions. The evaluation will also assess the extent to which human rights and gender equity were allocated specific and adequate budget in relation to the results achieved.

53. The evaluation will give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects to increase project efficiency. The evaluation will assess the extent collaboration has been sought and realised with the various other initiatives implemented in the Chaco ecosystem, including other GEF funded projects and projects implemented under the SRAP Framework.

### ***Factors and processes affecting project performance***

54. **Preparation and readiness.** This criterion focuses on the quality of project design and preparation. Were project stakeholders<sup>64</sup> adequately identified and were they sufficiently involved in project development and ground truthing e.g. of proposed timeframe and budget? Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe? Are potentially negative environmental, economic and social impacts of projects identified? Were the capacities of executing agencies properly considered when the project was designed? Was the project document clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project implementation? Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities) and enabling legislation assured? Were adequate project management arrangements in place? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design? What factors influenced the quality-at-entry of the project design, choice of partners, allocation of financial resources etc.? Were any design weaknesses mentioned in the Project Review Committee minutes at the time of project approval adequately addressed?

55. The ToC can be used to assess several aspects of project design, and, as a result, for assessing how well stakeholders were likely involved during project design processes. The UNEP Programme Manual recommends that all projects are designed on the basis of a thorough situation analysis with the development of a problem tree. This problem tree should then be used by the designers to develop

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<sup>64</sup> Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or 'stake' in the outcome of the project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by the project.

the ToC of the project, by inverting problems into positive changes and conditions, and determining which changes and conditions the project will focus on. The necessary changes and conditions that are not part of the project's focus should then be considered as external factors affecting impact (either drivers or assumptions).

**56. Project implementation and management.** This includes an analysis of implementation approaches used by the project, its management framework, the project's adaptation to changing conditions and responses to changing risks including safeguard issues (adaptive management), the performance of the implementation arrangements and partnerships, relevance of changes in project design, and overall performance of project management. The evaluation will:

- (g) Ascertain to what extent the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document have been followed and were effective in delivering project milestones, outputs and outcomes. Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?
- (h) Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of project management and how well the management was able to adapt to changes during the life of the project.
- (i) Assess the role and performance of the teams and working groups established and the project execution arrangements at all levels.
- (j) Assess the extent to which project management responded to the direction and guidance provided by the UNEP and UNDP Task Managers and project steering bodies;
- (k) Identify operational and political / institutional problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how the project tried to overcome these problems.

57. The ToC can help understand the exact role of the project management team in delivering the project outputs and pushing change along the different causal pathways. The evaluation consultant can further assess whether the project team has put sufficient effort in promoting the drivers presented in the reconstructed ToC. Also, a comparison of the ToC at design and the reconstructed ToC can help assess adaptive management by the project to respond to a changing context and react to invalid assumptions.

**58. Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships.** The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation with external stakeholders and partners. The term stakeholder should be considered in the broadest sense, encompassing both project partners and target users of project products. The ToC and stakeholder analysis should assist the evaluators in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathways from activities to achievement of outputs, outcomes and intermediate states towards impact. The assessment will look at three related and often overlapping processes: (1) information dissemination to and between stakeholders, (2) consultation with and between stakeholders, and (3) active engagement of stakeholders in project decision making and activities. The evaluation will specifically assess:

- (a) The approach(es) and mechanisms used to identify and engage stakeholders in project design and at critical stages of project implementation. What were the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches with respect to the project's objectives and the stakeholders' motivations and capacities?
- (b) How was the overall collaboration between the different functional units involved in the project? What coordination mechanisms were in place? Were the incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP adequate?
- (c) Was the level of involvement of UNEP's Regional, Liaison and Out-posted Offices in project design, planning, decision-making and implementation of activities appropriate?
- (d) Has the project made full use of opportunities for collaboration with other projects and programmes including opportunities not mentioned in the project document? Have complementarities been sought, synergies been optimized and duplications avoided?
- (e) What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during design and

implementation of the project? This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report.

- (f) To what extent has the project been able to take up opportunities for joint activities, pooling of resources and mutual learning with other organisations and networks? In particular, how useful are partnership mechanisms and initiatives to build stronger coherence and collaboration between participating organisations?
- (g) How did the relationship between the project and the collaborating partners (institutions and individual experts) develop? Which benefits stemmed from their involvement for project performance, for UNEP, UNDP and for the stakeholders and partners themselves? Do the results of the project (strategic programmes and plans, monitoring and management systems, sub-regional agreements etc.) promote participation of stakeholders, including users, in environmental decision making?

59. The evaluation consultant can refer to the ToC to verify whether it includes an approach for sharing information and cooperation with partners, national/local project stakeholders and across UNEP and UNDP. Also, the ToC, stakeholder analysis and partner analysis should assist the evaluator in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathways from activities to achievement of outputs, outcomes and intermediate states towards impact, and should help to answer many of the questions asked above.

60. **Communication and public awareness.** The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of any public awareness activities that were undertaken during the course of implementation of the project to communicate the project's objective, progress, outcomes and lessons. This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report. Did the project identify and make use of existing communication channels and networks used by key stakeholders? Did the project provide feedback channels?

61. **Country ownership and driven-ness.** The evaluation will assess the degree and effectiveness of involvement of government / public sector agencies in the project, in particular those involved in project execution and those participating in the Project Board:

- (a) To what extent have the Governments of the participating countries assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?
- (b) How and how well did the project stimulate country ownership of project outputs and outcomes?

62. **Financial planning and management.** Evaluation of financial planning requires assessment of the quality and effectiveness of financial planning and control of financial resources throughout the project's lifetime. The assessment will look at actual project costs by activities compared to budget (variances), financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. The evaluation will:

- (a) Verify the application of proper standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) and timeliness of financial planning, management and reporting to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners;
- (b) Assess other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. to the extent that these might have influenced project performance;
- (c) Present the extent to which co-financing has materialised as expected at project approval. Report country co-financing to the project overall, and to support project activities at the national level in particular. The evaluation will provide a breakdown of final actual costs and co-financing for the different project components (see tables in Annex 4).
- (d) Describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective. Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of

approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector.

63. Analyse the effects on project performance of any irregularities in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management, and the measures taken UNEP and UNDP to prevent such irregularities in the future. Determine whether the measures taken were adequate.

64. **Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping.** The purpose of supervision is to verify the quality and timeliness of project execution in terms of finances, administration and achievement of outputs and outcomes, in order to identify and recommend ways to deal with problems which arise during project execution. Such problems may be related to project management but may also involve technical/institutional substantive issues in which UNEP and UNDP has a major contribution to make.

65. The evaluator should assess the effectiveness of supervision, guidance and technical support provided by the different supervising/supporting bodies including:

- (a) The adequacy of project supervision plans, inputs and processes;
- (b) The realism and candour of project reporting and the emphasis given to outcome monitoring (results-based project management);
- (c) How well did the different guidance and backstopping bodies play their role and how well did the guidance and backstopping mechanisms work? What were the strengths in guidance and backstopping and what were the limiting factors?

66. **Monitoring and evaluation.** The evaluation will include an assessment of the quality, application and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, including an assessment of risk management based on the assumptions and risks identified in the project document. The evaluation will assess how information generated by the M&E system during project implementation was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensuring sustainability. M&E is assessed on two levels:

- (a) *M&E Design.* The evaluator should use the following questions to help assess the M&E design aspects:
  - Arrangements for monitoring: Did the project have a sound M&E plan to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives? Have the responsibilities for M&E activities been clearly defined between UNEP and UNDP and the executing agencies? Were the data sources and data collection instruments appropriate? Was the time frame for various M&E activities specified? Was the frequency of various monitoring activities specified and adequate?
  - How well was the project logical framework (original and possible updates) designed as a planning and monitoring instrument?
  - SMART-ness of indicators: Are there specific indicators in the logframe for each of the project objectives? Are the indicators measurable, attainable (realistic) and relevant to the objectives? Are the indicators time-bound?
  - Adequacy of baseline information: To what extent has baseline information on performance indicators been collected and presented in a clear manner? Was the methodology for the baseline data collection explicit and reliable? For instance, was there adequate baseline information on pre-existing accessible information on global and regional environmental status and trends, and on the costs and benefits of different policy options for the different target audiences? Was there sufficient information about the assessment capacity of collaborating institutions and experts etc. to determine their training and technical support needs?
  - To what extent did the project engage key stakeholders in the design and implementation of monitoring? Which stakeholders were involved? If any stakeholders were excluded, what was the reason for this? Was sufficient information collected on specific indicators to measure progress on human rights and gender equity (including sex-disaggregated data)?

- Did the project appropriately plan to monitor risks associated with Environmental Economic and Social Safeguards?
- Arrangements for evaluation: Have specific targets been specified for project outputs? Has the desired level of achievement been specified for all indicators of objectives and outcomes? Were there adequate provisions in the legal instruments binding project partners to fully collaborate in evaluations?
- Budgeting and funding for M&E activities: Determine whether support for M&E was budgeted adequately and was funded in a timely fashion during implementation.

(b) *M&E Plan Implementation.* The evaluation will verify that:

- The M&E system was operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period;
- PIR reports were prepared (the realism of the Task Manager's assessments will be reviewed)
- Half-yearly Progress and Financial Reports were complete and accurate;
- Risk monitoring (including safeguard issues) was regularly documented;
- The information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.

67. The ToC of the project can help with assessing the quality of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, and how information gathered by the M&E system was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensuring sustainability, replication and up-scaling. More specifically, the assessment of the ToC at design and the reconstructed ToC can help with the assessment of the quality of the logical framework (original and possible updates) as a planning and monitoring instrument. The quality of the ToC can also be very telling about the adequacy of baseline information, for instance on the problem context, lessons learned from previous experience on what works and doesn't work and the capacity of partners.

68. The evaluator can compare the ToC at design and the reconstructed ToC to verify whether monitoring and mid-term review findings have been used to bring possible adjustments to the project focus, increase attention on key drivers and put in place measures to deal with possible false assumptions, in other words whether the information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.

### **The Evaluation Consultant**

69. This evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluation consultant. The evaluation consultant should have ten years of technical / evaluation experience, including experience in evaluating GEF funded projects and using a theory of change approach. The consultant should have a good understanding of the Gran Chaco ecosystem, sustainable land management, sustainable forest management and sustainable management of water resources. Details about the specific qualifications and responsibilities of the consultant are presented in Annex 1 of these ToRs.

### **Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures**

70. The evaluation consultant will prepare an **inception report** (see Annex 2(a) of ToRs for Inception Report outline) containing a thorough review of the project context, project design quality, a draft reconstructed theory of change of the project, the evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule.

71. It is expected that a large portion of the desk review will be conducted during the inception phase. It will be important to acquire a good understanding of the project context, design and process at this stage. The inception report will present a draft, desk-based reconstructed theory of change of the project. It is vital to reconstruct the ToC *before* most of the data collection (review of progress reports, in-depth interviews, surveys etc.) is done, because the ToC will define which direct outcomes,

drivers and assumptions of the project need to be assessed and measured – based on which indicators – to allow adequate data collection for the evaluation of project effectiveness, likelihood of impact and sustainability. The inception report will also include a stakeholder analysis and a review of project design. The evaluation framework will present in further detail the overall evaluation approach. It will specify for each evaluation question under the various criteria what the respective indicators and data sources will be. The evaluation framework should summarize the information available from project documentation against each of the main evaluation parameters. Any gaps in information should be identified and methods for additional data collection, verification and analysis should be specified. Evaluations/reviews of other large assessments can provide ideas about the most appropriate evaluation methods to be used.

72. Effective communication strategies help stakeholders understand the results and use the information for organisational learning and improvement. While the evaluation is expected to result in a comprehensive document, content is not always best shared in a long and detailed report; this is best presented in a synthesised form using any of a variety of creative and innovative methods. The evaluator is encouraged to make use of multimedia formats in the gathering of information, such as video, photos, sound recordings. Together with the full report, the evaluator will be expected to produce a two-page summary of key findings and lessons. A template for this has been provided in Annex 10.

73. The inception report will also present a tentative schedule for the overall evaluation process, including a draft programme for the country visit and tentative list of people/institutions to be interviewed.

74. The inception report will be submitted for review and approval by the UNEP Evaluation Office before the any further data collection and analysis is undertaken.

75. **The main evaluation report** should be brief (no longer than 40 pages – excluding the executive summary and annexes), to the point and written in plain English. The main evaluation report will also be provided in Spanish. The report will follow the annotated table of contents outlined in Annex 2. It must explain the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used (with their limitations). The report will present evidence-based and balanced findings, consequent conclusions, lessons and recommendations, which will be cross-referenced to each other. The report should be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. Any dissident views in response to evaluation findings will be appended in footnote or annex as appropriate. To avoid repetitions in the report, the authors will use numbered paragraphs and make cross-references where possible.

76. **Review of the draft evaluation report.** The evaluation consultant will submit a zero draft report to the UNEP Evaluation Office (EOU) and revise the draft following the comments and suggestions made by the EOU. Once a draft of adequate quality has been accepted, the EOU will share this first draft report with the UNEP and UNDP Task Managers, who will alert the EOU in case the report would contain any blatant factual errors. The UNEP Evaluation Office will then forward the first draft report to the other project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. It is also very important that stakeholders provide feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Comments would be expected within two weeks after the draft report has been shared. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to the UNEP EOU for collation. The EOU will provide the comments to the evaluation consultant for consideration in preparing the final draft report, along with its own views.

77. The evaluation consultant will submit the final draft report no later than two weeks after reception of stakeholder comments. The consultant will prepare a **response to comments**, listing those comments not or only partially accepted by them that could therefore not or only partially be accommodated in the final report (see Annex 11 for UNDP-GEF evaluation audit trail template). The consultant will explain why those comments have not or only partially been accepted, providing evidence as required. This response to comments will be shared by the EOU with the interested stakeholders to ensure full transparency. The audit trail will be annexed to the main evaluation report.

78. **Submission of the final evaluation report.** The final report shall be submitted by e-mail to the evaluation manager at the UNEP Evaluation Office who will share the report with the Director of the UNEP Evaluation Office and the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office will finalize the report and share it with the interested Divisions and Sub-programme Coordinators in UNEP. The final evaluation report will be published on the UNEP Evaluation Office web-site [www.unep.org/eou](http://www.unep.org/eou).

79. As per usual practice, the UNEP EOU will prepare a **quality assessment** of the zero draft and the final evaluation report, which is a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultants. The quality of the report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in Annex 3.

80. The UNEP Evaluation Office will assess the project evaluation ratings in the final evaluation report based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the evaluation consultant and the internal consistency of the report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and UNEP Evaluation Office on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The UNEP Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.

81. At the end of the evaluation process at UNEP, the UNEP Evaluation Office will prepare a Recommendations Implementation Plan to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the UNEP Task Manager. After reception of the Recommendations Implementation Plan, the Task Manager is expected to complete it and return it to the EOU within one month. (S)he is expected to update the plan every six months until the end of the tracking period. As this is a terminal evaluation, the tracking period for implementation of recommendations will be 18 months, unless it is agreed to make this period shorter or longer as required for realistic implementation of all evaluation recommendations. Tracking points will be every six months after completion of the implementation plan.

### Logistical arrangements

82. This terminal evaluation will be undertaken by an independent evaluation consultant contracted by the UNEP Evaluation Office. The consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Evaluation Office and will consult with the EOU on any procedural and methodological matters related to the evaluation. It is, however, the consultant's individual responsibility to obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, plan for her/his travel in coordination with the Evaluation Office, arrange for her/his travel visa, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP and UNDP Task Managers and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings, assistance in demonstration site visits etc.) allowing the consultant to conduct the evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

### Schedule of the evaluation

83. Table 7 below presents the tentative schedule for the evaluation.

Table 7. Tentative schedule for the evaluation

Milestone	Deadline
Consultant contracted	September 2016
Inception Report	October 2016
Evaluation Missions	November 2016
Zero draft report	December 2016
Draft Report shared with UNEP and UNDP Task Managers	December 2016
Draft Report shared with other stakeholders	January 2017
Final Report	January 2017