



**INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANCY FOR THE FINAL
EVALUATION OF THE (PIMS 4191) “STRENGTHENING THE
NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED COASTAL MARINE
AREAS OF VENEZUELA” PROJECT**

CI/35 /PNUD/2018

FINAL EVALUATION

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FINAL EVALUATION
“STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED COASTAL MARINE
AREAS OF VENEZUELA”

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS (SPANISH Source: Prodoc)

Abbreviation	Name
AB	Áreas Boscosas
ABRAE	Área Bajo Régimen de Administración Especial
ACPT	Áreas Críticas con Prioridad de Tratamiento
AP	Áreas Protegidas
APMC	Áreas Protegidas Marino-Costeras
APOP	Áreas de Protección de Obras Públicas
APRA	Áreas de Protección y Recuperación Ambiental
ARDI	Áreas Rurales de Desarrollo Integrado
BD	Biodiversidad
BDMC	Biodiversidad Marino-Costera
CMAP	Costas Marinas de Aguas Profundas
CO (en inglés)	Oficina de País
DBO	Demanda Biológica de Oxígeno
DTZC	Dirección Técnica de Zonas Costeras
FUNVISIS	Fundación Venezolana de Investigaciones Sismológicas
GEF (en inglés)	Fondo para el Medio Ambiente Mundial
HAE	Hábitat Acuáticos Especiales
IGVSB	Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar
INEA	Instituto Nacional de los Espacios Acuáticos
INPARQUES	Instituto Nacional de Parques
INSOPESCA	Instituto Socialista de Pesca y Acuicultura
INTECMAR	Instituto de Tecnología y Ciencias Marinas
IPC	Instituto de Patrimonio Cultural
MAC	Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría (nombre antiguo)
METT (en inglés)	Herramienta de Seguimiento de la Eficacia en la Gestión
MINEA	Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo y Aguas
MINFRA	Ministerio de Infraestructuras (nombre antiguo)
MINTUR	Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Turismo
MINEC	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Economía Comunal (nombre antiguo)
MN	Monumentos Naturales
MOP	Ministerio de Obras Públicas (nombre antiguo)
MPPAT	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Agricultura y Tierras
MPPCTII	Ministerio del Poder Popular para Ciencia, Tecnología e Industrias Intermedias
MPPD	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Defensa
MPPEP	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Energía y Petróleo
MPPEU	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación Universitaria
MPPPF	Ministerio del Poder Popular de Planificación y Finanzas
MPPRIJ	Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Interiores y Justicia
MPPVH	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Vivienda y Hábitat
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela SA
PN	Parques Nacionales
PNCDZC	Políticas Nacionales de Conservación y Desarrollo Sustentable de Zonas Costeras

PORU	Planes de Ordenamiento y Reglamento de Uso
RB	Reservas de la Biosfera
REFS	Reservas de Fauna Silvestre
RF	Reservas Forestales
RFS	Refugios de Fauna Silvestre
RNH	Reservas Nacionales Hidrológicas
SAPMC	Sistema de Áreas Protegidas Marino-Costeras
SBAA (en inglés)	Acuerdo Básico Modelo de Asistencia
SFS	Santuarios de Fauna Silvestre
SIG	Sistemas de Información Geográfica
SO (en inglés)	Objetivo Estratégico
SPHC	Sitios de Patrimonio Histórico y Cultural
SPV	Sistema de Parques Venezolanos
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USB	Universidad Simón Bolívar
WWF (en inglés)	Fondo Mundial para la Naturaleza
ZAA	Zonas de Aprovechamiento Agrícola
ZIT	Zona de Interés Turístico
ZP	Zona de Protección
ZSF	Zona de Seguridad Fronteriza
ZS	Zona de Seguridad
ZRCPE	Zonas de Reserva para la Construcción de Presas y Embalses

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Table 1: Synopsis of the Project				
Project title:	Strengthening the National System of Protected Coastal Marine Areas of Venezuela			
GEF project identification:	4191		At the time of approval (million USD)	At the end time (millions of USD)
UNDP project identification:	00075653	GEF funding:	\$7.445.455	\$7.346.338
Country:	Venezuela	IA and EA have:		
Region:	Latin America	Government:		
Area of interest:	Biodiversity	Other:		
Operating Program		Total cofinancing:	To define	
Executing agency:	Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo y Aguas (MINEA)	Total project expenditure:	-	
Other partners involved:	Ministries for: Higher Education, Science and Technology, Tourism, Defense, National Institute of Parks and Geographical Institute of Venezuela Simón Bolívar	Signature date on the project document (project start date):		08/2011
		Closing date (operating): 31/12/2016	Proposed: 31/12/2015	Real: 30/06/2018 (Extension granted on date 29/10/2015)

Brief Description of the Project (Source: Prodoc)

This project focuses on a range of threats that currently affect the biodiversity of the coastal marine zone of Venezuela, through the expansion and strengthening of the protected areas system (APs). It also focuses on those areas under special administration (ABRAE) that have the greatest potential to generate benefits in terms of biodiversity. This will result in new protected areas (AP) In priority areas, the expansion of existing AP's selected and development and updating of management tools. This will be complemented and supported by the strengthening of the AP's planning and management capacities and by specific measures to promote the financial sustainability of new and existing AP's.

The project is located in the coastal areas of Venezuela both in the Caribbean Sea and in the Atlantic Ocean and covers 168,054 km² y which is equivalent to 10% of the entire country. Within this area are 91 ABRAEs, of which the project prioritized a total of 49 located in the coastal area.

Venezuela has declared a wide variety of Areas Under Special Administration (ABRAE) throughout the national territory and under different categories for protection and use, but those that are involved in the present project are related to the conservation of biodiversity in the coastal marine areas. In particular, there are 23 areas covering 1.6 million hectares that are under strict scientific, educational and recreational protection categories, and 38 protected areas with regulated use.

This network should include the most representative areas, its main biotic elements and ecosystems, and must be tailored to the various needs and conditions that exist in such areas, taking into account conservation priorities, as well as the local, regional and national development.

Below are the priority areas for the conservation of marine biodiversity in the Venezuelan Caribbean region.

Map 1. Priority areas for marine biodiversity conservation in the Caribbean region



Source: Prodoc. Marine biodiversity conservation priorities for the ecoregional planning for the Venezuelan Caribbean: PDVSA/INTECMAR/USB/The Nature Conservancy.

Evaluation Rating Table

Evaluation Scale

Qualification of results, effectiveness, efficiency, SyE and execution of AyE		Ratings Of Sustainability:		Ratings of Relevance		Ratings of impact	
6	Very satisfactory (MS): did not present deficiencies	4	Probable (P): Negligible risks to sustainability.	2	Relevant (R)	3	Significant (S)
5	Satisfactory (S): Minor Deficiencies	3	Something probable (AP): Moderate risks.	1	No Relevant (NR)	2	Minimum (M)
4	Something Satisfactory (AS)	2	Somewhat unlikely (AI): Significant risks.			1	Insignificant (I)
3	Somewhat unsatisfactory (AI): Major deficiencies	1	Improbable (I): Serious risks.				
2	Unsatisfactory (I): Important Deficiencies				Additional qualifications where relevant: Not applicable (N/C) Cannot be valued (N/V)		
1	Very unsatisfactory (MI): Serious deficiencies						

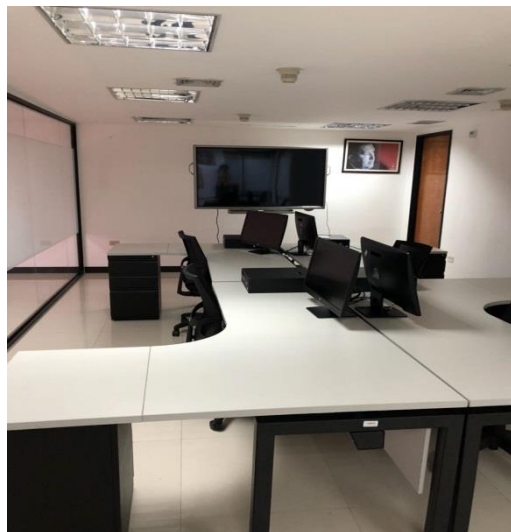
Final qualification of the project.

Project Performance Rating			
1. Project Formulation/design	Rating	2. Monitoring and evaluation	Rating
Conceptualization / Design	S	SyE Input Design	S
National Appropriation	MS	Implementation of the SyE plan	MS
Participation of actors in the design	MS	General quality of SyE	MS
Replicability	N/V		
3. Execution of IA and EA	Rating	4. Evaluation of the results	Rating
Implementation Approach	S		
Quality of UNDP implementation	MS	Relevance	MS
Quality of execution: Executing agency	S	Effectiveness	S
General quality of application and execution	S	Efficiency	S
Participation of Actors	MS	Overall rating of project results	S
Financial Planning	AS		
5. Sustainability	Rating		
Financial Resources	S		
Political Partners	N/V		
Institutional And Governance Frameworks	P		
Environmental	AP		

Summary of Project Achievements (Source: MINEA)

Component 1. Adapt the institutional framework and develop operational capacities for the proper management of the Protected Coastal Marine Areas, structured in 6 products.

- Adaptation of infrastructure for the installation of equipment in multipurpose stations for the real-time monitoring system.
- Acquisition, installation and start-up of equipment in multipurpose stations for the real-time monitoring system.
- Crafting agreements for the protection and handling of the multipurpose stations.
- Designing the Information System of Territorial Management of the Environment (SIGTA) which includes information from the APMC.
- Construction and suitability of the digital visualization room.
- Development of coordination documents and a master plan for the APMC system.



Modern visualization Room

Component 2. To increase the coverage of priority ecosystems with protected coastal marine areas and to strengthen the management in existing areas, structured in 5 products.

- Expansion of the Henri Pittier (Aragua) and the Paria Peninsula (Sucre) National Parks towards marine space.
- Updating PORUs for the Archipelago Los Roques National Park, San Esteban (Carabobo), Cienaga Wildlife Reserve of Juan Manuel, Aguas Blancas and Aguas Negras (Zulia).

- Development of PORUs for the Central Coastal Protective Zone (Vargas and Miranda); Gran Riche Wildlife Reserve, Laguna Blanca Protective Zone and its adjacent areas.
- Development of 18 technical documents for ABRAE.
- Development of 1 technical document for the Ecological Coastal Marine Corridor proposal.
- Development of 1 technical process document for the selection and creation of new protected areas.
- Development of 10 technical documents linked to congestion agreements in 2 pilot communities.
- Preparation of a guide detailing best practices and lessons learned in planning and management.

Component 3. To improve the income and economic efficiency of the APMC, structured in 4 products.

- Propose a Sustainable Financial Plan for the coastal marine protected areas system of the country
- A program document to strengthen the capacities of supervisors and managers of protected coastal marine areas
- A program document outlining partnerships and agreements with the productive sector to attract new funds
- Diagnosis of government funds, income and budgetary allocations different from government, applied in the functioning of the APMC.
- Diagnosis of the capacities of the supervisors in the management of the available APMC funds
- Diagnosis of the government funds of the own income and of the budgetary allocations different to those of the Government, applied in the operation of the APMC
- Design proposal of mechanisms for the increase and diversification of income in two protected marine coastal areas pilots: Archipelago Los Roques National Park and Mochima National Park.

Conclusions

- In spite of the serious difficulties experienced since the beginning of the implementation of this marine-coastal project, it is considered that it has fulfilled in large part (93-94%) the planned results thanks to the enormous drive and dedication of the institutions connected to the project including the Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo y Aguas (MINEA), FUNVISIS, SHN, INPARQUES and the Government of the Archipelago of Los Roques National Park. The financial execution however is 99% of GEF grant funds.
- The project shows a relatively balanced performance in terms of expected results but with some significant gaps. Component 1 did not comply with the preparation of the environmental baseline but made very important progress with Result 1.2, the installation of the environmental monitoring enclosures for real-time monitoring of the environmental parameters of the Venezuelan Caribbean and the visualization room of said environmental parameters in the MINEA. Component 3 made significant progress regarding financial sustainability in the last 18 months of the project.
- Although the execution of activities was particularly concentrated in the last 18 months of the project, at the time of this second Final Evaluation there are some important products to be completed, including the project website and the connectivity with the visualization rooms of the environmental parameters in the environmental monitoring enclosures. MINEA must complete these very important details during the duration of the contract to ensure the sustainability of the investments made by the GEF.
- The project did not meet 100% of the main objectives of its initial formulation, however, it demonstrated the ability to adapt to the economic, political and administrative circumstances because of the dedication of the team led by its Director Econ. Olga Perez

Recommendations

- The main concern is to ensure the sustainability of investments. Both the GEF and the national institutions led by MINEA have invested close to 25 million dollars (USD) in this project. Therefore, ensuring the sustainability of the achievements and the proper functioning of the scientific equipment obtained must be the main goal of the project.
- The dissemination of the products obtained, of learning and results achieved should guide MINEA's strategic decisions. Replicating accomplishments in other protected areas should be a long-term objective of the Ministry. The project should also commit to completing the website to reach a wider audience.
- Financial sustainability is vital for the management of protected areas, a fact that it is perfectly possible after the component 3 accomplishments achieved during the final year of the project.
- Regarding financial sustainability, welcoming the recommendations of the November 2016 Evaluation, it is recommended to create an inter-institutional work platform, similar to those that the project has facilitated with the work committees in the coastal areas. It is important that an issue as sensitive as financing is addressed through institutional institutions that give it a greater anchorage and that facilitate the institutions to share their information and to participate.
- Follow up and support the processes initiated by INPARQUES for collections within protected areas improving the cost structure in these areas. In general, the implementation of the payment mechanisms that have been designed for the Morocco National Park is recommended.
- It is essential that the new projects to be implemented directly by the Government have minimal staff with complete dedication to the project. Projects of the complexity that is analyzed in this document, require adequate and sufficient profiles in the technical and administrative field.
- Finally, it is recommended to carry out a post-project evaluation, after at least three years of validity of the obtained results, to support the government in the management of protected marine-coastal areas. During this time it will be seen if the environmental monitoring is working or not and identify what should be done to make it work better to obtain desired results.
- It is recommended that the actions that have not been completed within the framework of the project be completed and assumed within the MINEA's daily tasks, as well as the

creation, consultation, training and extension processes to other APs during the next years.

Lessons Learned

- The consultant perceives that the direct implementation by the beneficiary, in this case MINEA, is the best option to ensure sustainability and build capacities within the institution for coastal marine planning and management of protected areas, provided that the staff has complete dedication to the project or at least dedication between 60-80%. If the project staff has parallel occupation in the daily activities of their Direction or Ministry, the project will suffer from inefficiencies and lack of dedication producing a meager and ineffective result for the country.
- Experience with this project has shown that it takes approximately one year to start and another year to close the project. Therefore, for a minimum performance time with results of three years it is recommended to plan projects with a minimum time of five to six years of execution.
- It is necessary to establish clear responsibilities between the executing agency and the implementing agency to avoid duplication of effort and confusion during critical project processes. The administrative and technical processes must be clearly defined with responsibilities identified for each institution to achieve greater efficiency in the project and future projects
- The Consultant referred directly to a recent study carried out by MINEA prepared by Frederick Alexander Perez Dominguez and supervised by Maria Abogado, a UNDP focal point on the key lessons learned in strengthening the national system of protected marine coastal areas in Venezuela.

FINAL EVALUATION

"STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED COASTAL MARINE AREAS OF VENEZUELA"

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this document is to present the Final Evaluation (EF) of the project "STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED COASTAL MARINE AREAS OF VENEZUELA" according to GEF standards. For these purposes, the evaluation is understood to be the systematic compilation and analysis of information on the results of the project, to serve as a basis for improving and informing future programming decisions of the GEF and its counterparts in Venezuela. In this case the Consultant presents a final evaluation with focus on the results and how they were obtained. In this way, it allows highlighting the achievements achieved by the project in complying with its logical framework, as well as identifying good practices and lessons learned in the design and implementation of the project. The Consultant provides services in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the process CI / 35 / UNDP / 2018 INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANCY FOR THE FINAL EVALUATION PROJECT OF (PIMS 4191) STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED MARINE COASTAL AREAS OF VENEZUELA, within the framework of Project 00075653 Strengthening the National System of Protected Coastal Marine Areas of Venezuela

The consultant has reviewed between 10 to 15 documents that were developed during the eight plus years of project implementation. This EF is based mainly on the Prodoc, the mid-term and final reports completed in 2013 and 2016 respectively by independent consultants as well as MINEA's own products and other institutions. Given the short-term nature of this EF and a short field visit, material generated by others has been used but the original source of information is always cited.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

The evaluation was developed by the Consultant during May 15 to June 25, 2018. The methodology emphasizes the revision of the objectives defined for the EF in its TdR (Annex 1). During the evaluation process, there was an active relationship and interaction between the Consultant, the UNDP Country Office, the project team, and other stakeholders, to expedite the evaluation process and enable timely feedback of the findings.

The EF was guided by the guidelines defined in the UNDP Assessment Guide and its three established objectives. A participatory and inclusive approach was used based on data derived from programmatic, financial and monitoring documents and a reasonable level of direct stakeholder participation. The consultant was strictly guided by the standards of good evaluations of utility, feasibility, accuracy and neutrality.

The evaluation process reached conclusions on the distinct aspects of the Project, the activities carried out and their contribution towards the central objective and to the three proposed results. It was proposed to identify and understand the factors, challenges, weaknesses and strengths that contributed to their final outcome. The analysis focuses on the products achieved and their actual contribution to the results of the project.

As the first key task of the evaluation, the consultant reviewed the project documentation delivered by the contractor and partners. This includes, but is not limited to, the project document, the mid-term evaluation of 2013, the final evaluation of November 2016, the various progress reports, including the monitoring tools of the GEF areas of interest; budget reviews, substantive project reports, national strategic and legal documents, and other documents raised in relation to the project. Based on this review, the Consultant completed a detailed description of the project that covers the identified problem, the established objectives, the components and their respective activities, always considering the results of the EMT.

Based on the project description and the analysis of its logical framework, in the second step of the process, an evaluation framework was established that combines guidance questions for the five key criteria of the evaluation, and the four categories of evaluation of project performance (project formulation and design, execution, monitoring and evaluation, and results). This initial exercise defined the scope and the qualitative and quantitative indicators, which are fundamental to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and

impact of the interventions carried out for the objectives proposed in the logical framework of the project and its sustainability.

During the assessment mission, at least 10 interviews were conducted with different key actors, implementation partners, Project team members and others, the details of which are shown in Annex 2. For this purpose, a questionnaire was used to focus on the participation of the different stakeholders. actors, according to their role in the implementation of the project (Annex 3). The interviews were short but very focused on the results of the project. Different perceptions were sought in situations of interest, to "triangulate" responses and generate less subjective visions. The project office, together with MINEA, coordinated the interview schedule and accompanied the Consultant in the city of Caracas.

(Annex 4).

The analysis of this information enabled the formulation and justification of conclusions and lessons learned, which in turn fed the definition of recommendations for future projects.

The final evaluation considers the results obtained throughout the life cycle of the project, from its design and strategic conception to the final evaluation, as discussed by TdR. However, it should be considered that the EMT already contains a thorough description of the development of the project in its first stage, which is why this final evaluation will give a greater weight to the progress recorded during the last 18 months of the Project. Therefore, the rating given to the project will be based especially on the results obtained in the last stage of implementation after mid-term evaluation and first EF.

According to the UNDP guidelines, the performance evaluation of the project will cover minimally the criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

1.3 Structure of the Final Evaluation Report

This document contains an executive summary, four main chapters and eight annexes.

Chapter 1. Introduction. Presents the purpose of the evaluation, the scope and methodology as well as the structure of the report.

Chapter 2. Description of the project. This Chapter serves to situate the reader with the project, the time of implementation, problems that were addressed, the immediate objectives, indicators of reference and the main stakeholders.

Chapter 3. Findings. This is the most important chapter of the report that summarizes the design and formulation of the project, project execution, and the results obtained during the validity of the project.

Chapter 4. Conclusions and Recommendations. This chapter aims to synthesize eight years of continuous work and the relevant conclusions and recommendations for the benefit of marine-coastal conservation authorities and donors similar to GEF/UNDP.

Annexes. The EF report closes with seven Annexes (in Spanish) which provide basic information for a better understanding of the project results.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

2.1 Duration of the Project and Financing Amount

The project began activities in August 2011. The project is financed by the GEF and is administered by UNDP under the direct national execution modality by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, currently represented by the MINEA through the General Directorate of Territorial Environmental Management.

UNDP contracted a mid-term evaluation (EMT) which was executed in June 2013 and the first Final Evaluation was executed in November 2016. The project requested an extension for 18 months until June 2018 at which time a second Final Evaluation was completed.

The estimated budget for the project is \$7,445,455 (USD) of GEF funds and a counterpart of \$16 million (USD) by the national government. These funds are non-refundable. It is without a doubt a very important donation of the international community and of a super agency in issues of the local, regional and global environment. The project had a budget execution level very similar between the first two years and the last year of work. In the first two years, no more than \$30,000 (USD) were executed and more than \$2,000,000 (USD) were executed in the last 18 months.

2.2 Problems the Project is Seeking to Address

Venezuela ranks ninth among the most megadiverse countries in the world. The country hosts a wide variety of ecosystems, where nearly 10% of the total number of species described in the world have been recorded. The richness in biodiversity constitutes one of the important national patrimonies with the potential to generate wealth to support the fight against poverty in the country.

The protected areas (AP) of Venezuela offer environmental services, promote tourism and generate water for 80% of the population. Additionally, they provide water sources for the generation of hydroelectric energy and their vegetal coverage serves as a buffer against possible natural disasters. Much of the extraordinary biodiversity of this country is protected in its SPV, as well as in other protected areas such as refuges, sanctuaries and wildlife reserves, biosphere reserves, protective areas and other categories of protection.

Due to the enormous wealth of natural ecosystems in the Venezuelan coasts, the country has declared a wide variety of "Areas Under Special Administration Regime" (ABRAE)

throughout the national territory. Those areas that correspond to the project are those related to the conservation of biodiversity in the marine-coastal zone of the country. There are 23 areas that fall under the categories of strict scientific, educational and recreational protection, and 38 protected areas with regulated use. Although these areas are protected, their management presents serious difficulties that risks their biological diversity, an important national and global heritage and a potential source of income. There are multiple threats facing natural ecosystems, including urban growth, the use of agrochemicals in agricultural activity, the exploitation and processing of petrochemicals, the development of tourism activities, the construction of infrastructure, the discharge of sewage and garbage in the ocean, mining ventures and the exploitation of aquatic fauna as well as the effect of climate change.

2.3 Immediate Objectives and the Development of the Project

The marine-coastal project was originally designed with a duration of four years and officially began in August 2011. The fundamental idea was to support the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to strengthen the National System of Protected Coastal Marine Areas (APMC) of the country. However, the system was not fully developed at the beginning of the project so rather than strengthening the proposal, it generated the technical and financial-enabling conditions for the creation of this system of protected areas. The project focuses mainly on three areas of work:

- Generation of technical inputs - measurement and monitoring, geographic information systems (GIS) of the Venezuelan marine-coastal region as well as the implementation of the APMC system considering its regulatory framework, coordination mechanisms and Master Plan.
- Preparation and/or updating of management tools (PORU) for existing APMCs, considering co-management agreements with communities;
- Preparation of a Financial Plan for the system and for individual APMCs, which consider increase and diversification of income; and development of capacities for the management of financial resources.

Therefore, the overall objective is to ensure the existence of an APMC network, which is both operational and financially sustainable and that includes representative areas of the biota and key ecosystems, adjusting to existing needs and conditions, as well as considering conservation priorities for local, regional and national development.

2.4 Established Reference Indicators

The reference indicators established are as follows:

Risks	Level	Measures Of Mitigation
Climate change undermines the conservation of biodiversity in Venezuela. Sea-level rise and sea-surface temperature will affect marine ecosystems and their resources.	M/G	The ability of APMC to respond to impacts of climate change (e.g., sea-level rise) will be strengthened through the establishment of operational and financial capacities. The APMC proposals in the project will increase the representation of new marine-coastal ecosystems in the national system of AP and provide new habitats for species that have been forced to migrate as a result of climate change. The project will work in coordination with the Venezuelan Foundation for Seismic Research (FUNVISIS), an entity that studies tsunamis and other threats to coastal areas.
Difficulty in developing inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to establish MCPAs. Difficulties to involve all the actors, which could result in growing threats to the MCPAs	M	The APMCs are located in productive zones and many of the threats to marine-coastal biodiversity have their origin in human productive activities such as fishing, transportation, agriculture, industry and activities related to oil. Through components 1 and 2, the project will aim to integrate biodiversity management with production needs at the terrestrial and marine land level, adapt production systems, as necessary, in order to safeguard biodiversity at the same time as alternative proposals are provided for the needs of human sustenance. Another mitigation measure will highlight the socio-economic benefits in the medium and long term that result from an efficient management of the APMCs and a better representation of marine-coastal ecosystems.
Threats from productive sectors	M	PDVSA, the oil and gas company belonging to the state, and the Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo y Aguas will be members of the Board of Directors of the project, which will facilitate the negotiation of synergies and compensation between objectives for conservation purposes and activities of these sectors. The master Plan for the AP in the marine-coastal zone, predicted in outcome 1, will make possible a long-term regional vision that will be applied in order to identify, characterize and negotiate opportunities of the aforementioned synergies and compensations. The project will also ensure that individual AP-level PORU and management plans are developed based on principles that are completely reliable in environmental terms and with regard to the

		consequences of threats from sectors And that strategies to combat and mitigate these threats are developed jointly with local actors and representatives of the sectors in which these threats originate.
Potential future constraints in the macroeconomic and fiscal fields	M	The project's financial strategy will focus on incentivizing the capacities of APMC supervisors, key decision-makers and key beneficiaries in order to efficiently use financial planning tools and develop diverse strategies to obtain results efficiently. The most important activities of the project will include the analysis of different options with the aim of reducing financial uncertainties through, for example, 1) establishing strategic and long-term joint management agreements; 2) collecting rates for those who benefit from marine-coastal areas; 3) revising tariff collection schemes to effectively allocate these revenues to the management of APMC.

2.5 Main Stakeholders

The main institutions interested in the project are MINAE, FUNVISIS and SHN as well as INPARQUES and local governments throughout the entire marine-coastal zone of the country.

2.6 Expected Results

As indicated by ProDoc, the following intermediate results must be achieved to achieve the Project objective:

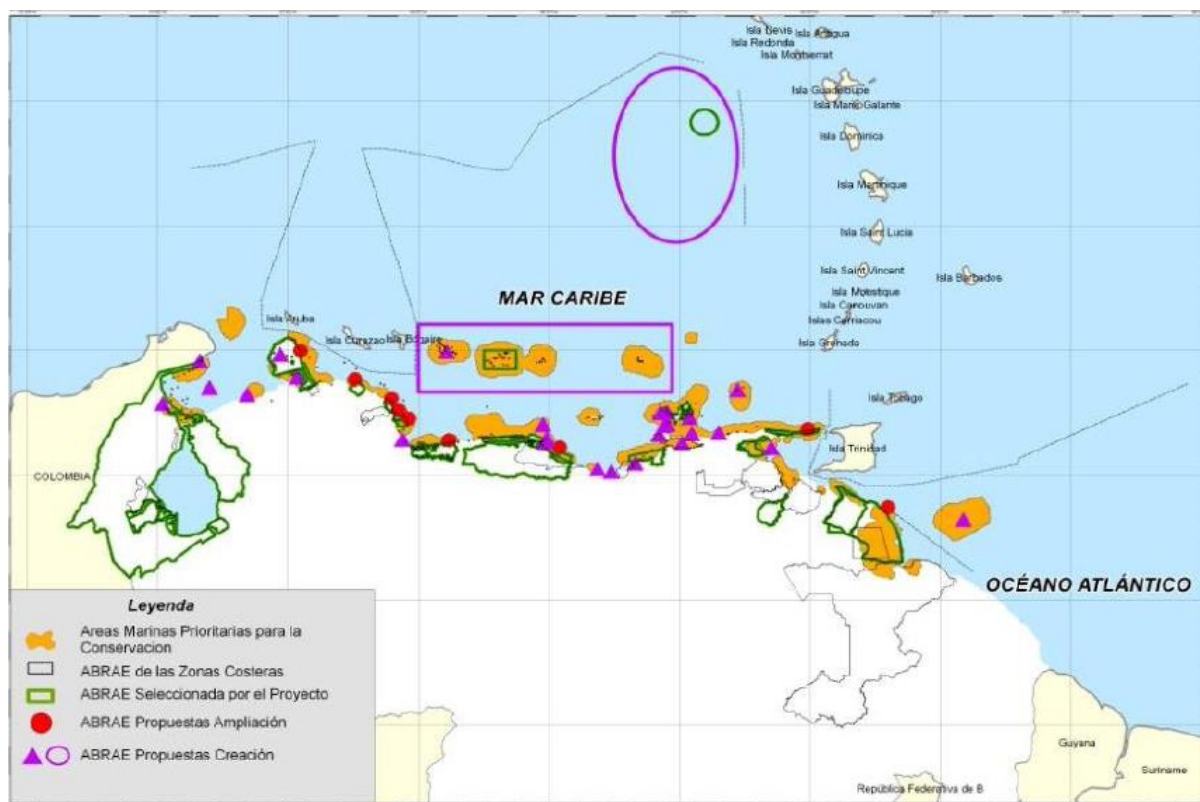
Result 1: Institutional legal and public policy framework improved, and operational capacities developed for the effective management of MCPA;

Result 2: AP supervisors have access to tools and instruments for the management, design and declaration of the expansion of APs within the marine-coastal area;

Result 3: The Marine-Coastal Protected Areas System is based on an efficient and sustainable financial system and the improvement of income;

Below is the national system of protected marine-coastal areas in Venezuela.

Map 2. Existing and proposed protected marine-coastal areas and priority conservation areas in Venezuela



Source: Prodoc

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Design And Development of the Project

The design responds to areas of interest and conservation priorities for the marine-coastal ecosystems of Venezuela. The three proposed results respond to the thematic orientations that are normally found at the international level in the design of projects focused on strengthening national systems of protected areas

Outcome 1 refers to improving the legal and institutional framework of the administration of APMC with the expectation of influencing the institutional environment and current regulatory framework. The Master Plan for the development and management of the national system of protected coastal marine areas is proposed as a strategic tool for territorial organization. The Master Plan proposes to guide the planning and management of the APMCs, seeking to link the policies and actions of the entities and administrative bodies of the different categories and connecting the territorial organization instruments. This result prioritizes the need for monitoring systems, which can be argued as tools. Outcome 3 on financial sustainability is essential to ensure the sustainability of investments.

Among other relevant aspects, past consultations completed an evaluation of the institution which does not correspond to repeat this work in this document.

- **Comparative advantage of UNDP**

UNDP, because of its extensive experience in Latin America and the Caribbean, has proven ability and experience to execute complex projects with a global perspective and specific knowledge of national implementation partners. UNDP represents a multilateral organization of importance to Venezuela because there are few cooperative actors currently operating in the country on issues related to biodiversity conservation and protected area management. Therefore, the potential of UNDP to generate synergies and complementation with other projects of the GEF portfolio in Venezuela as in the rest of the region is highlighted. The proposed project is highly compatible with the proposals contained in the cooperation framework between the UNDP in Venezuela and the Venezuelan Government. One of the expected outcomes of the UNDP country programming document within the framework of cooperation is the expansion of national capacity in relation to the management of protected

areas, and one of the expected results is a management system for these areas, including marine-coastal.

These issues were included in the cooperation framework since the joint country analysis identified a lack of information on the current state of marine-coastal areas and their associated biological resources, combined with the degradation process, especially of terrestrial origin, which affects the marine and coastal ecosystem.

Additionally, the UNDP is mandated to support governments through the scope of sustainable development objectives: In this case the objective 14 is particularly relevant in relation to the incorporation of sustainable development principles into the national policies and programs and reversing the loss of marine resources. The strengthening of the national system of protected coastal-marine areas will be a vital tool in obtaining these objectives. This proposal is aligned with national and UNDP environmental sustainability priorities, which seeks to achieve environmental management that generates sustainable benefits, based on UNDP's strategy of identifying, preserving and preserving natural environments, reinforcing the conservation practices of indigenous peoples, the adequate management of abrae and other protected areas, the preservation, recovery and improvement of coastal areas and the development of agriculture based on sustainable practices.

In the broadest spirit of cooperation with the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and at the express request of MINEA, UNDP has served as an operational arm for the implementation of the coastal marine project for the protection and conservation of biodiversity on the coasts of the Caribbean Sea and of the Venezuelan Atlantic Ocean.

The project will contribute to GEF's Strategic Objective 1, "catalyze the sustainability of protected area systems", and specifically with Strategic Priority 2 "increase the representation of marine PA areas managed efficiently in AP systems". The project will contribute to SP1 "sustainable financing of PA systems at the national level" through its third component and will support the creation of more favorable MCPA financial environment.

3.2 Project Execution

According to previous reports and evaluations, the project had a difficult start due to the lack of appropriation at the highest levels of authority which did not allow specific institutional decisions regarding the scope and focus of the results and products of the project. It is reported that in the first two years of execution only 0.4% of the GEF grant was executed. After the Midterm Evaluation, the project apparently received an important impulse because of the recommendations of said evaluation. After the Final Evaluation of November 2016 and following the recommendations of this evaluation, the project received a strong impulse to specify all the Components, with the GEF and the UNDP approved an extension of up to 18 months. The project ends on June 30, 2018, reaching almost all its execution, but leaving some resources still to be executed and some incomplete tasks. The MINEA is committed to completing these tasks without the support of the project because they are useful for the monitoring and management of marine-coastal protected areas of Venezuela.

- **Management by Adaptation (Changes in the Design of the Project and Results during the Execution)**

According to evaluations that preceded the current Final Evaluation of June 2018, it is reported that the project had two clearly defined stages – prior to and after the Midterm Evaluation. The first stage is characterized by a practically nil level of execution and it is from the EMT that the project is launched to the full execution of all its activities. The second stage shows a significant improvement in physical implementation due to the empowerment of the national work team and political and technical support from the authorities. The EMT as well as the Final Evaluation of November 2016 are rich in details of what occurred, the reason for which this current evaluation has a focus on the last 18 months of the project period in which significant advances and appropriation and commitment of the highest national authorities are registered.

It is reported that the main barrier encountered for the implementation of the project was the high turnover of managers and key personnel (decision makers). Despite this, the technical team demonstrated a high level of ability to adapt to changing circumstances and again adapt its planning to new guidelines and institutional priorities.

The project had a high concentration of multiple activities during 2017. This is the main reason why this evaluation focuses on this period, added to the six months of execution in

2018, which fundamentally completes the purchasing and equipment acquisition processes. The evidence indicates that the extension of the term that benefited the project was a wise decision of the donor to ensure the sustainability of the investments made, and to ensure the generation of local, regional, national and even global benefits.

- **Association Agreements**

The nature of the most relevant activities of the project requires a high degree of coordination and inter-institutional complementation. A practical example is the execution of the PORUs among others. Therefore, a critical element for the execution of the project is the ability of the team and its direction to establish alliances, convene and mobilize the project partners. In the work meetings held at the MINEA, FUNVISIS and the facilities of the Guardia environmental monitoring enclosures, it was evident that the team works with a lot of mysticism and work commitment which translates into positive results for the communities and beneficiaries of the project.

During the mission, the Consultant was able to demonstrate that the interinstitutional commitments are being fulfilled by having a Geographic Information System with different layers of operational information already available in MINEA's facilities. The existence of state-of-the-art facilities of a visualization room in the MINEA was also verified, the project awaiting the last details of connectivity with the marine stations in the Venezuelan Caribbean. In the Final Evaluation of November 2016, it is reported that the Visualization Room of the Simon Bolivar Geographic Institute of Venezuela was already in operation.

It is also reported in the Final Evaluation of 2016 that another area of high inter-institutional participation corresponds to the elaboration of the Plans of Regulation and Regulation of Use (PORU). These PORUs require the active participation of the Coastal Work Committees (CTZC), which bring together more than ten institutions with presence in the territory. It is reported that having executed certain products such as PORUs through the CTZCs, resulted in a high level of empowerment and ownership of local actors. It can therefore be concluded that the interinstitutional agreements during the last years of the project were effective and substantive, thus allowing to obtain positive results in the three components of the project.

- **Project Financing**

The Consultant was able to obtain information on the financing of the last 18 months of the project through communication provided by the UNDP focal point. Investments are reported with an amount of **\$2,076,189.89 (USD)** during the 2017 – 2018 period. At the end of the project it is estimated that the amount of the GEF grant will be executed at 99% of the budget. Likewise, a very high percentage of counterparts committed in kind was executed, which has not been monetized to date. The Final Evaluation of 2016 reports that, despite the incomplete budget execution, this project is considered one of the most successful in the recent portfolio of international cooperation.

It is reported that the budget execution shows an important departure from the EMT, and that clearly the execution is concentrated in the last years of management, particularly from April 2016, reaching its maximum capacity during the last semester of 2018.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation: Design of Input and Execution**

The Final Evaluation of November 2016 reports that possibly one of the weakest aspects of execution is related to the Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) of the project. It is reported that the existence of a plan, system or tools for monitoring and monitoring the project could not be verified. Only towards the end of the project is a tracking tool for the products proposed by UNDP. It is reported that the Project Steering Committee only operated during the year 2013, in which six meetings were registered. Apparently, the cause of the weakness in M & E activities include the few available human resources aspect that improved from 2014 when a project team was created with exclusive dedication to its implementation.

- **Coordination of the Application And Execution of UNDP and Partner for the Execution**

The relationship and coordination between the AI and the AE has matured considerably since the beginning of the project. It is reported that at the beginning of the project there was no efficient coordination between the two agencies resulting in delays in the financial implementation of the project. The midterm evaluations as well as the end of November 2016 report in detail this relationship that at the present time, towards the end of the project, has matured in a coordinated and very efficient relationship. The Consultant has seen a high degree of coordination in the technical and managerial level of said institutions. Therefore,

there is not much more that can be recommended in this section, with the project reaching its culmination.

3.3 Project Results

The most relevant aspect of this Final Evaluation is to emphasize the results obtained after the extension of 12 months and 6 months, as a result of the recommendations of the final evaluation of 2016. At the time of project closure to June 30 of 2018, it is estimated that the project achieved 93% progress. There is the commitment of the MINEA to carry out the study of the Environmental Baseline outside the framework of this cooperation so that with that and some specific training as those indicated in Products 3.3 and 3.4, it will reach 100% progress.

Next, the results obtained by the project until now are being analyzed. Apparently, the project has not yet generated a report on the monitoring of the indicators formulated in its logical framework, so that an opinion on the indicators indicated in the logical framework of the Prodoc will not be subject to this evaluation.

In accordance with UNDP criteria, the evaluation will cover the criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. The ratings must be provided in accordance with the following performance criteria. The full table should be included in the executive evaluation summary. Mandatory rating scales are included in Annex D of the ToR.

- **General Results**

Result 1. Improved legal and public policy institutional framework, and operational capacities developed for the effective management of APMC.

The consultant did not obtain any evidence that the environmental baseline was developed. Apparently, this intermediate result could not be realized. The information from the baseline is considered essential to measure the degree of progress (or regression) of the environmental parameters in the oceans. Therefore, it is recommended that MINEA continue with this product and carry it out until its final conclusion.



The star product of this result is without a doubt the real-time monitoring system,

Environmental monitoring station in La Guardia

due to the local, national and global impact that needs to know the key environmental parameters on the Venezuelan coast. This system must provide real-time information for a very large space in the Caribbean. This system has point sensors to monitor pollution levels, Ph, dissolved Oxygen, temperature, currents, climate change and extreme events of precipitation and temperature. Having built this system for seven protected areas, is an unparalleled contribution by the project to the conservation of biodiversity on the Caribbean coasts of Venezuela. The consultant had the opportunity to visit the environmental monitoring station installed in La Guaira and see the quality and quantity of personnel trained to operate the instrumentation with cutting-edge technology. The consultant understands that stations similar to La Guaira have been installed in another seven locations that at the moment of closing of the project are in the phase of calibration of the monitoring results. This product must enter its operational phase at the end of June, when the project activities are officially closed. The responsibility of maintaining, operating and giving sustainability to these donor investments fall upon MINEA, FUNVISIS and in the SHN.

Next, a detailed update and analysis was presented for each product, according to the ProDoc and in the Final Evaluation of 2006 giving credit to its creator, Mr. Jose Galindo:

Summary of Products Obtained Result 1: Improved legal and public policy institutional framework, and operational capacities developed for the effective management of APMC		
Products	Advance	Guest reviews
<u>Product 1.1</u> Offshore Integrated Environmental Baseline Study	0%	MINEA is urged to carry out this study because there will be no other way to measure the progress or regression of the environmental parameters generated by the environmental monitoring stations on the Venezuelan Caribbean Sea coast.
<u>Products 1.2 and 1.3.</u> Real-time measurement and monitoring system of the conditions of the Venezuelan marine-coastal region and Geographic Information System (GIS) for protected marine-coastal areas generated and maintained	Partial (95% and 98% Respectively)	<p>The consultant has visited MINEA and confirmed existence of equipment purchased by the project but without the connectivity to the environmental monitoring stations in seven protected areas. All the institutions have been involved in the process related to the elaboration of the agreements at technical and medium management level.</p> <p>Finally, it should be mentioned that the operation of the system, as such, needs to have real-time connectivity and a web platform that allows to disseminate the information, and at the moment only the terms of reference have been defined for these components. The SIG has been developed by MINEA and is ready for installation and start-up. However, it is necessary that web site designed by MINEA be completed and made available on a public server to facilitate access and information to other entities interested and involved with Venezuelan protected marine-coastal areas.</p>
<u>Products 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6.</u> Coordination mechanisms, PORUs, regulatory framework of the system of protected areas.	Completed at 100%. These products fall outside the POA 2017 which last ran the project	Document of existing coordination mechanisms, PORUs completed, regulatory framework document for existing APMC.

Result 2. The administrators of AP have access to tools and instruments for the management, design and expansion of AP within the coastal marine area.

It is reported in the Final Evaluation of 2006 that this result is the most successful in terms of compliance with the products established in the PRODOC, all its products have been completed. To date, the Consultant has not received any information on more activities in this Component during the last year of the project. Five new protected areas were created, and two existing protected areas were expanded, which is a success for the country to protect the coastal-marine biodiversity of these areas.

During the visit to the country, the Consultant received information regarding compliance with a second important product within this result consisting of the preparation and / or updating of 11 of the 13 planned PORUs. It is known that these products were developed through the CTZC, and that the project focused on the logistical support and financing of the socialization workshops of these land use plans and regulations. Given that the CTZC will continue to operate after the completion of the project, it is estimated that this activity is one of those with the best sustainability perspectives.

Next is a detailed analysis for each product, according to the PRODOC format prepared for the Evaluation of 2016 (Source: Jose Galindo):

Summary of Products Obtained Result 2: AP supervisors have access to tools and instruments for the management, design and declaration of the expansion of the AP within the Marine-coastal area		
Products	Advance	Guest reviews
<u>Product 2.1</u> Elaboration Of PORUs of existing protected marine-coastal areas	Full (81%)	PORUs were developed for 11 of the 13 selected APMC. Highlights the participation of the CTZC in the formulation of the PORU. To date three PORUs have been approved by the Official Gazette. The other PORUs were submitted to the approval process that considers a formal public consultation workshop, validation of the polygonal by the IGVSb, approval of the Legal Consultancy, Ministry with competence in Planning, Attorney General of the Republic, and signature of the President of the Council of Ministers.
<u>Product 2.2</u> Specific methodology developed and implemented for the selection and hierarchy of new APMCs	Full (100%)	The methodology of selection and hierarchy has already been validated by the institutions at the central level. This product is considered terminated.
<u>Product 2.3</u> Declaration and development of management instruments (PORUs) of new APMC	Full (75%)	Socialization workshops were held with the communities for the proposals for the creation of five new areas and expansion of three National Parks.
<u>Product 2.4</u> Co-management agreements with communities in the APMC	Full (90%)	This product focused on two national parks as a pilot exercise: Los Roques and Mochima.
<u>Product 2.5</u> Guide for the incorporation of best practices and lessons learned in the planning of protected marine-coastal areas	Full (93%)	In the 2014, ten experiences of AP management institutions were collected. At the time of finalizing the project, it will be possible to collect the best practices and lessons learned from execution, as well as proposals for MCPA management tools.

Result 3. The national system of protected marine-coastal areas is based on a sustainable financing system and income improvement.

Here is a detailed analysis for each product, according to the PRODOC in the format prepared for the Evaluation of 2006. (Source: Jose Galindo):

Summary of Products Obtained Result 3: The national system of protected marine-coastal areas is based on a sustainable financial system and income improvement		
Products	Advance	Guest reviews
<u>Product 3.1</u> Financial Plan for the system of protected marine-coastal areas	(90%)	Fulfilled with the preparation of the financial plan for the APMC system in the project sites.
<u>Product 3.2</u> Creation of specific mechanisms for financial planning and management of pilot APMCs	Completed (100%)	The project strengthened the capacities to manage the financial sustainability of APMCs through training workshops conducted by an international consultant and other national consultants.
<u>Product 3.3</u> Creation of mechanisms and building capacity building for the management of financial resources available to APMC.	(80%)	Seven training events were held at the supervisory level in the management of funds available from the MCPAs. A program to strengthen the capacities of supervisors and administrators was developed. No training was carried out to measure and make use of the management indicators.
<u>Product 3.4</u> Mechanisms for the increase and diversification of the incomes of protected marine-coastal protected	Completed (85%)	Two proposals for mechanisms for increasing and diversifying income were designed in two protected coastal marine areas: Archipelago de los Roques National Park and Mochimba National Park.

- **Relevance**

This project is consistent with national priorities and plans. The projected increase in Protected Marine-Coastal Areas (MCPA) is aligned with the recognition of APs in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Article # 127) and in the National Social Development Plan. The project is highly compatible with the proposals contained in the framework of cooperation between the UNDP in Venezuela and the Venezuelan Government. One of the expected outcomes of the UNDP country programming document within the framework of cooperation is the expansion of national capacity in relation to the management of protected areas.

The response of MINEA project management is as follows: *The project is part of a coherent policy of integrated management and management of coastal zones that began to be implemented in the country since 2001 with the approval of the Decree with Force of Law of Coastal Zones. This Decree with Force of Law favors the implementation of a dynamic process of integrated management whose purpose is to strengthen institutional capacity, optimization of planning and coordination of concurrent competencies among the organs of the Public Power, with the active participation of the organized community.*

It also relates to the proposal for an integrated management Plan for the coastal zones of Venezuela, a document that was developed based on the premise of coordinated, participatory and inclusive work continuously during the period 2004-2014. This work considered fundamental the contributions obtained at local-regional level.

The opinion of the Consultant who carries out the Evaluation is that to date, there is a high degree of appropriation of the national and sub-national and local actors in relation to the actions that the project executed. There is a high degree of responsibility to continue the activities to the extent that the investments bear fruit and the management of the Protected Areas is for the benefit of the communities.

- **Effectiveness and efficiency**

The response of MINEA project management is as follows: *By December 2017 the project had been executed in 80.87%, pending culminating the processes associated with component 1 (connectivity of multipurpose stations) as well as the declarations of new protected areas and public consultations of the proposals of plans of ordering and regulation of use (PORU) which are commitment of the Minea to execute in the year 2018.*

This percentage of execution is considered very satisfactory, emphasizing that the objective and results posed in the project covered the expectations, with the development of lines of action related to the maintenance and increase of the coverage of protected areas (AP) coastal-marine, the extension of knowledge with the monitoring of marine environmental variables through the implementation of the monitoring system in real time (multipurpose environmental monitoring stations) and the development of tools for financial sustainability of these areas, which are undoubtedly tools that have been strengthened and will influence the improvement of the management and administration of coastal marine areas of Venezuela.

The project points out that monitoring by the UNDP-Venezuela contributed to compliance with efficiency and effectiveness regulations.

In the opinion of the Consultant and after having interviewed multiple authorities of MINEA, the direct execution by the Ministry is the most desirable as long as it is accompanied by a political decision that the officials identified to execute the project are at least committed to 80% time. If this is not the case, in definitive the project is delayed and will not meet the objectives set between the AI and the AE.

- **National Involvement**

The national appropriation of the project has been slow, but nevertheless as of 2016 it was possible to verify a high degree of political commitment from the highest levels in MINEA.

It is reported that the project has generated an institutional endorsement by multiple institutions related to the most successful products that were executed, a support that could be perceived both politically and technically.

- **Sustainability**

Due to the high sophistication of the donated equipment for monitoring and evaluation regarding the Real Time Monitoring System (Multipurpose Environmental Monitoring Stations), there is a sustainability concern for the MINEA. The other products such as the GIS, and the Mechanisms for Inter-institutional Coordination and Regulatory Framework are more likely to be sustained over time. The high participation at the central level of the development of the PORUs, methodology to prioritize new protected areas and others are more prone to sustainability. In any case, this Final Evaluation recommends a final evaluation within 3 years after the project has been closed, that is, for June / July 2021.

Project management reports the following: there are high risks in financial, institutional, socio-economic and environmental areas long-term. These risks have been evaluated in previous PIRs that have resulted in modifications of the strategies proposed to meet the project's objectives.

- **Impact**

Undoubtedly the biggest contribution that the project leaves is the Real Time Monitoring System (Multipurpose Environmental Monitoring Stations), which has a local, regional and global connotation.

The directorate of the project indicates the following: *Implementation has made it possible to move towards the results that will reduce environmental stress and, in the short term, contribute to improving the ecological status of the protected coastal marine areas in Venezuela.*

The processes of appropriation by the communities involved in coastal areas and who participated in the construction of the results of some products such as regulation plans and usage regulations and in the proposals for the creation of new protected marine areas, are a clear example of the level of understanding and commitment to the environmental issue. In particular the need to address vulnerabilities. Likewise, this behavior could be seen at the regional and local level of institutions and other actors.

4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

CONCLUSIONS

- Despite the serious difficulties experienced during the implementation of this marine-coastal project, expected results are considered to have been largely fulfilled (93-94%) as a result of the enormous drive and dedication of the institutions connected to the project including MINEA, FUNVISIS, SHN, INPARQUES and the Archipelago of Los Roques National Park Government. The financial implementation of GEF funds is 99% (source: UNDP Venezuela, email communication).
- The project shows a relatively balanced performance in terms of expected results. Component 1 did not comply with the development of the environmental baseline and the financial sustainability in Component 3 still needs to be seen in tangible form. During the last 18 months the project made very important progress in the three components, especially with Result 1.2, the installation of the multipurpose environmental monitoring stations for real-time monitoring of the environmental parameters of the Venezuelan Caribbean as well as with Result 3 related to financial sustainability.
- Although the execution of activities was particularly concentrated in the last 18 months of the project, at the time of this Final Evaluation there are still some important products to be completed, including the project website and the connectivity with the visualization rooms of the environmental parameters in the environmental monitoring stations. The MINEA must complete these very important details during the term of the contract to ensure the sustainability of the millions of investments made by the GEF.
- The project did not achieve 100% of the main objectives of its initial formulation, however, it demonstrated the capacity to adapt to the economic, political and administrative circumstances thanks to the dedication of the team led by its Director. Econ. Olga Perez.
- The project had a high level of cost/efficiency despite the processes of devaluation of the national currency during implementation. Most of the investments were made in US dollars and were purchases of goods and services abroad. The financial audit of the Deloitte company of 2017 is positive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The main concern is to ensure the sustainability of investments. Both the GEF and the national institutions led by MINEA have invested close to 25 million dollars (USD) in this project. Therefore, ensuring the sustainability of the achievements and the proper functioning of the scientific equipment obtained should be the main goal of the project.
- The dissemination of the obtained knowledge products and achieved results should influence MINEA's strategic decisions. Replicating achievements in other protected areas should be a long-term objective of the Ministry. Completing the website to reach a wider audience should be an activity committed by the project.
- Financial sustainability is vital to the management of protected areas and it is perfectly possible after the accomplishments achieved in component 3 during the last year of the project.
- In terms of financial sustainability, encouraging the recommendations of the November 2016 Evaluation, it is recommended to create an inter-institutional work platform, similar to those that the project has facilitated with the work committees in coastal areas. It is important that an issue as sensitive as the financial one is addressed through institutional instances that give it greater anchorage and that facilitate the institutions to share their information and participate.
- Follow up and support the processes initiated by INPARQUES for collections within protected areas and improve the cost structure in these areas. In general, the implementation of the payment mechanisms that have been designed for the Morrocoy National Park is recommended.
- During the last month of the project's validity and beyond its completion at the end of June, the team could give a very important support in the formulation of the new GEF portfolio. It is understood that MINEA currently has project ideas for the new portfolio, but these are not yet formulated, so we see the opportunity for the project to help accelerate these processes and take advantage of these short and medium-term funding sources.
- This project is not the only one within the recent portfolio of international cooperation in Venezuela, which has found limitations to ensure a successful start-up. Lessons learned should be collected regarding the acquisition of equipment, hiring of personnel, administrative arrangements, communication systems, monitoring and evaluation among others. This document could gather the lessons learned and guide the AI and AE

towards arrangements and agreements that favor a smooth implementation and a quicker start-up in the projects.

- There is much that is being done in other Latin American countries, especially in Peru, Colombia, Panama and Costa Rica in the area of protected area management. The project should finance technical exchanges so that technicians and Venezuelan authorities can understand firsthand the operation and operation of the financing mechanisms in force within the region.
- It is essential that the new projects to be implemented directly by the government have a minimum staff with full dedication to the project. Projects of the complexity of which is analyzed in this document, require having adequate and sufficient profiles in the technical and administrative field.
- Finally, it is recommended to carry out a post-project evaluation, after at least three years of validity of the results obtained, to support the government in the protection and management of marine-coastal areas. During this time it will be seen if the environmental monitoring stations are working or not and what should be done to make it work better and the desired results.
- It is recommended that the actions that have not yet been completed within the framework of the project be completed and assumed within the daily tasks of the MINEA, as well as the creation, consultation, training and extension processes to other APs during the next years.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The consultant perceives that the direct implementation by the beneficiary, in this case MINEA, is the best option in order to ensure sustainability and create capacities within the institution for the planning and management of protected coastal marine areas, provided that this staff has complete dedication to the project or at least dedication between 60-80%. If the project personnel have a parallel occupation in the daily activities of their Direction or Ministry, surely the project will suffer from inefficiencies and lack of dedication, producing a meager and ineffective result for the country.
- Experience with this project has shown that it takes approximately one year to start and another year to close the project. Therefore, for a minimum execution time with results of three years it is recommended to plan projects with a minimum time of five to six years of execution.

- It is necessary to establish clear responsibilities between the Executing Agency and the Implementing Agency to avoid duplication of effort and confusion during the critical processes of the project. The administrative and technical processes must be clearly defined with responsibilities identified in each institution to achieve greater efficiency in the project and future projects.
- The Consultant makes direct reference to a recent study carried out by the MINEA prepared by Frederick Alexander Perez Dominguez and supervised by Maria Abogado of the UNDP on the key lessons learned in strengthening the system of protected coastal marine areas of Venezuela.

4.1 Corrective measures for the design, execution, monitoring and evaluation of the Project

This Final Evaluation suggests that the design of the next project to be financed by the GEF and implemented by the UNDP Venezuela be broadly participatory. A couple of workshops should be convened at a minimum to gather information and then return the concepts to the beneficiary. Only in this manner will it be possible to achieve the empowerment of local, regional and national authorities in the future project. Therefore, the design of a new project should be broadly participatory and not limited to a single institution. The MINEA must be the leading institution for its mandate of environmental conservation in the country supported by the Coastal Zone Working Committees (CTZC).

4.2 Actions to Follow or Reinforce the Initial Benefits of the Project

Once the project is completed, the sustainability actions for investments in equipment and training depend exclusively on the beneficiary. The impression of this Final Evaluation is that there is a marked empowerment of the results of this project in the 3 components. The leading institution such as MINEA must include in its annual budget actions to follow up on all the results obtained with the GEF / UNDP donation. Only by ensuring funding can the project's achievements be continued, and the benefits obtained strengthened.

Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Itinerary

Annex 3. List of people interviewed

Annex 4. Summary of field visits

Annex 5. List of revised documents

Annex 6. Questionnaire used and summary of results

Annex 7. Evaluation Consultant Agreement