**PART A - Executive SummarY**

The Final Project Evaluation (FE) is the final part of the Monitoring and Evaluation plan of the UNDP/GEF Project: “Capacity Building for Improved Decision Making Related to the Global Environment”. This project was operationally concluded and closed in April 30th. 2019 The FE mission to Paraguay was conducted from April 1st. to 12th. 2019. Extensive consultations with the project partners were also conducted prior to and following the mission to ensure a proper understanding of the project’s relevance, design, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, national ownership, management structure, budgetary level and the adequacy of financial support, implementation arrangements, and M&E planned results, all of which leads to the submission of this FE report.

## Background

Paraguay is a country that has a proven vocation for the preservation of the environment, as well as the fight against climate change, food security and harmonious and sustainable development. In compliance with this, Paraguay is a signatory to the Rio conventions such as: the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought; and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It has also ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Kyoto Protocol on the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions. Paraguay has also acceded to and/or ratified other treaties and protocols related to the protection of wetlands, the protection of endangered species, the protection of the ozone layer, the control of hazardous wastes, the control of the transfer of hazardous chemicals, the control of persistent organic pollutants, the conservation of migrant species, the preservation of phylogenetic resources, and mercury pollution.

To meet all these commitments, through Law 1561/00 of December 30, 1999, created the National System of the Environment (SISNAM) comprising two key bodies:

(1) The National Council of the Environment (CONAM) whose members are the representatives of the environmental units of the ministries, secretariats and sectorial public organs, the secretariats and environmental departments of the departmental and municipal governments; and the representatives of the guild entities, as well as of the private productive sectors and of the environmental non-governmental organizations without profit aims.

(2) The Secretariat of the Environment (SEAM), which presides over CONAM and serves as its secretariat. The objective of this body is to formulate, coordinate, execute and oversee national environmental policy.

In its first years of operation, it became evident that, despite advances in the production of policies and instruments, there was still a lack of technical capacities in the various agencies involved, a lack of coordination among these agencies, a lack of involvement of the main stakeholders and the institutions involved in CONAM’s work, deficiencies in both the quantity and quality of the data collected by the different SISNAM actors, as well as mechanisms for processing, analysing and converting them into reports that serve as a basis for taking the required decisions.

In order to remedy these shortcomings, over time the Government of Paraguay took a number of measures, among them:

• through SEAM requested the cooperation of UNDP and the GEF to co-finance and carry out a project: (1) strengthen the Ministry of the Environment and the entire SISNAM in order to alleviate deficiencies in data collection and management, (2) improve SISNAM coordination in support of environmental obligations under the treaties, protocols, and conventions of which the country is a member, and (3) sensitize and strengthen all social actors to formulate and implement better environmental plans.

• raised the political profile of SEAM, making it part of the Ministerial Cabinet by turning it into the Ministry of the Environment; and

• through SEAM requested the cooperation of UNDP and the GEF to co-finance and carry out a project: (1) strengthen the Ministry of the Environment and the entire SISNAM in order to alleviate deficiencies in data collection and management, (2) improve SISNAM coordination in support of environmental obligations under the treaties, protocols, and conventions of which the country is a member, and (3) sensitize and strengthen all social actors to formulate and implement better environmental plans.

It is important to note that the CONAM met only twice and it became clear that coordination at that level was not possible. The CONAM was dissolved by law.

## Project Objective, Components, Results and Products

The objective of the project is to: Improve decision-making for the global environment in Paraguay. The project was conceived to achieve this by strengthening the SEAM (now MADES) and through the CONAM provide the SEAM with a platform to influence the planning process at the national and local levels.

To this end, the project was to focus on strengthening capacities to create and access better data and information, as well as develop the analytical skills to implement the obligations of the Rio Conventions.

The project contemplated the following three components:

*Component 1: Strengthening the management of data and information related to the global*

*Environment.*

*Component 2: Improved institutional arrangements to catalyse the implementation of the Rio*

*Conventions.*

*Component 3: Strengthening technical capacities to implement the obligations of the Rio Conventions*

Each component was designed to lead to an outcome at the end of the project.

The expected Outcomes were:

*Outcome 1:* *At the end of the project, better data and information will be more readily available.*

*and accessible to inform planners and decision-makers when formulating and*

*implementing development plans for the sector.*

*Outcome 2: At the end of the Project, the institutional mechanisms and structures will enable*

*the best practices for the implementation of the Rio Conventions are*

*incorporated into development plans for the sector.*

*Outcome 3: At the end of the Project, the awareness and knowledge of social actors and others.*

*stakeholders to formulate and implement development plans that are*

*environmentally sound and sustainable are considerably increased.*

Each result in turn entails obtaining certain Products by carrying out Activities that use Inputs in a logical chain known as the Logical Framework. In order to know whether the outputs have been achieved, a series of Baseline Indicators describing the situation at the beginning of the Project and a series of Success Indicators describing the expected situation at the end of the Project have been predetermined in the design of the Project itself. The FE mission will follow this logical chain.

The main project data are summarized in **TABLE 1** - **PROJECT SYNOPSIS**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Title: | | Capacity Building for Improved Decision Making Related to the Global Environment | | | | |
|  | GEF Project  identification: | | 5471 |  | At the time of approval (in USD ) | At time of completion  (in USD ) |
|  | UNDP identification of the: | | 4925 (PIMS)  00084609 (Atlas  Award ID)  00092545 (Atlas  Project ID) | GEF Financial Contribution | 880,000.00 | 880,000.00 |
|  | Country: | | Paraguay | IA y EA poseen: | 200,000.00 (PNUD)  (en especie) | 200,000.00 |
|  | Region: | | Latin America and the Caribbean | Government Contribution: | 640,000.00 (in kind)  160,000.00 (in cash) | 1,222,094.00 (in kind) |
|  | Area of interest: | | Multi­Focal |  |  |  |
|  | Executing Agency | | MADES | Total Project Expenditures: | 1.720.000,00 | 2,302,094.00 |
|  | Other Partners: | | PNUD | Date of signature of the Project Document (Start date of the project): | | 15 Sep 2015 |
|  | Project Operational Closing date: | Proposed:  15 Sep 2018 | Real:  30 Abril 2019 |

## TABLE 2 – OVERALL RatingS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1. Monitoring and Evaluation** | ***Rating*** | **2. IA& EA Execution** | ***Rating*** |
| M&E design at entry | HS | Quality of UNDP Support | HS |
| M&E Plan Implementation | HS | Quality of Execution - MADES | HS |
| Overall quality of M&E | **HS** | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | **HS** |
| **3. Assessment of Outcomes** | **Rating** | **4. Sustainability** | **Rating** |
| Relevance | HS | Financial resources: | ML |
| Effectiveness | HS | Socio-political: | ML |
| Efficiency | HS | Institutional framework and governance: | MU |
|  |  | Environmental: | ML |
| **Overall Project Outcome Rating** | **HS** | Overall likelihood of sustainability: | **ML** |

**Note:** Ratings Key is given in Table 7: Evaluation Criteria.

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## Key Project Achievements (as of 30 April 2019).

#### Component 1:

* 33 environmental indicators validated
* 3 agreement signed with: the Government of Boqueron, Senatics, DINAC & 9 agreements in process
* MADES Web totally updated
* Environmental Information System (SIAM) control module operational
* Modules for climate change, biodiversity & desertification designed and operational by 30 Apr.
* Training plan for 5 years in planning completed
* 639 persons trained in data management & the use of the SIAM system (over 55% were women)

#### Component 2:

* Thematic analysis CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC elaborated
* Comprehensive training program developed
* Analytical report synthesizing the three Rio conventions completed
* Comprehensive training program for this component developed
* Pilot project document prepared
* Pilot project implemented
* Lessons Learned study conducted
* Draft replication strategy
* 6 workshops for sub-national development strategy replicated

#### Component 3:

* Communication plan developed and 80% implemented
* New website launched and includes a digital library divided by each Rio Convention
* Facebook and Tweeter accounts established
* 60 spots in the Guaraní TV channel aired & 5298 radio spots aired in Asunción and the interior.
* 3 workshops/meetings launched with the participation of 53 persons of which 64% were women
* 86 gov. officials (involved in planning) trained in monitoring & enforcing environmental legislation
* 20 workshops on strengthening the technical capacity of social actors and on planning practice frameworks Rio Conventions completed (193 officials – 40% women)
* 15 articles on relevance of the Rio conventions for economic development of Paraguay published
* 14 awareness workshops for 1,307 participants (women, children and men) completed
* 2 panel discussions and public dialogue completed, albeit with scant participation
* 41 national dialogue sessions involving 804 people, of whom 46% were women
* 2 sub-national dialogue sessions with 118 participants of which 62.5% were women
* 1 Journalist Awareness Forum with the participation of 98 people, of whom 65% were women
* 4 project management meetings with the participation of 33 people of which 67% were women

**ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS NOT ORIGINALLY FORESEEN IN THE PRODOC**

* An online payment system linked to the SIAM environmental information platform
* A financial control system for MADES
* Training in Project Management for key MADES staff
* The creation of a Project Management Unit within the Planning General Directorate
* Project control and follow-up systems to automate the work of the Project Management Unit
* A web site for the Boqueron Governorate with a strong environmental awareness component

## Mission Findings

ON RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT: The Evaluation Mission believes the project to have been in its inception, is now and hopefully will continue to be in the future very relevant (see chapter on Sustainability below). It is directly related to the Government of Paraguay’s international obligations under the framework of the three Rio Conventions. It falls directly under three of the GEF’s Focal Areas (Climate Change, Biodiversity and Land Degradation). It is relevant to Outputs 3.1 and 3.2 of the UNDAF for Paraguay (2015-19) which point to increasing the capacity of the country to mitigate and adapt to environmental conditions and to improving conservation practices in order to reduce deforestation, land degradation and the sustainability of the country’s biodiversity. Similarly, the project contributes to the achievement of Outputs 2.5 that refers to food security and 1.3 that refers to empowering women. The project was also in line with a series of government policies as outlined in the National Strategy and Plan for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (ENPAB in spanish); the Second National Communication on Climate Change (CMNUCC in spanish); national plans and policy for dealing with soil degradation and many other environmental policies, plans and laws.

ON THE PROJETC’S DESIGN:The FE mission consultant is of the opinion that there were some flaws in the original design of the project. One could mention two as follows:

* while the overall objective of the project was a very ambitious one, designed to empower the SEAM (now MADES) to spearhead the inclusion of the environmental dimension into the national, regional and local planning processes, the resources allocated (U$ 880,000) and the time frame to do this were not realistic;
* attempting to achieve this objective at a high level (almost at the political level) based on a SEAM which was under-staffed, under-budgeted and that at that time did not possess the political clout to summon the necessary authority to carry out this role, was overly optimistic.

It is notable that in spite of these limitations MADES and the PIU have managed to produce some very significant results that are now poised to give MADES the tools to play such a role in the future. However, much will depend on the investment made to sustain this effort. To this end the FE mission will make some recommendations below.

On Effectiveness:The FE Mission was glad to note that for all practical effects, the 27 expected outputs have been produced and all the expected 9 outcomes have been achieved as planned. Most importantly, the Government of Paraguay is complying with its obligations under the 3 main Rio Conventions The FE Mission therefore considers this project highly successful as can be seen in “**Table 10:** **Evaluation of the project situation as per the log-frame up to April 2019**” and the ratings given in **Table 6: FE Rating for Project Performance.**

ON EFFICIENCY: The FE Mission had opportunity to discuss at length with the National Project Director, the Technical Advisor- Head of the PIU and the staff of the Project Implementing Unit. The FE Missions was also glad to note that over 98% of the cash budget has been spent. The in-kind contributions materialized at 100%. The FE Mission was not able to obtain a detailed accounting on the in-kind contribution of the Paraguay, however given that they have produced, for all practical effects, the expected Outputs and Outcomes, the Mission believes it is clear that they contributed all the required manpower and equipment that allowed this achievement. The FE mission evaluator took note that the cash contribution from UNDP planned in the PRODOC (U$200,000) did not materialize. For further details, please see Tables 4 and 5 below.

ON THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT**:** The FE Mission had an opportunity to talk with an array of stakeholders and there was unanimity amongst them that this project had been crucial in providing:

* the training and communication strategy to generate awareness of environmental problems faced by Paraguay; the international obligations that the country has acquired under the three Rio Treaties as well as other environmental agreements; and the links that exist between long term sustainable development and protection of the environment.
* the systems (SIAM, On-line payments, Project Control and Web pages) required to allow MADES to discharge its responsibilities, as well as to establish links with other central and decentralized governmental institutions that have a role to play in environmental matters.
* with the strong support of the Minister, assisted in raising the credibility of the MADES vis a vis other ministries and the public image.

ON SUSTAINABILITY: Regrettably, the FE mission heard from all sources interviewed, including the Minister, the fear that the important achievements and momentum generated may not be consolidated. The main reason for this was expressed by all as the weakness of a Ministry that is very short on budget and staff (although the technical level and commitment of that staff is judged by the FE mission as outstanding). There was also a fear that, as the project came to an end, the PIU and IT consulting staff, which was viewed by all interviewees as key to the changes that have taken place within MADES, would leave a great void that the Ministry. It was universally felt that at this time, on its own the Ministry was not yet prepared to absorb the crucial functions the PIU plays. The FE mission consultant fully shares this concern. To that effect this report contains a recommendation designed to address this point.

## Conclusions:

1. The concept behind the project was highly relevant and continues to be so.
2. Practically all of the Outputs planned in the PRODOC were achieved in full. In fact, the project produced a series of additional very crucial outputs that were not foreseen in the PRODOC but that were complementary to those envisioned.
3. The project design, in terms of the logic behind the expected outcomes, outputs and the required activities to achieve those outputs, was coherent and achievable. The baseline and success indicators and the means of their verification were in line with the expected outcomes and outputs.
4. The Macro-Objective of the project, i.e. to empower the SEAM (now MADES) to spearhead the inclusion of the environmental dimension into the national, regional and local planning processes, was somewhat overambitious. The real capacity and clout of the SEAM at the time of design, as well as in the resources allocated by the UNDP/GEF and the timeframe to achieve this objective were, in the opinion of the FE mission consultant, overestimated.
5. The project was very well managed by an excellent team of professionals that conformed the PIU and received very good support from the UNDP field office and the MADES.
6. The project’s financial/administrative execution was transparent and excellent, as attested by both the government and external auditors.
7. The profile and understanding of environmental issues and of the three Rio Conventions amongst: 1) government staff of different ministries and entities; 2) decentralized government staff; 3) Users of the services of MADES; and 4) the general public was greatly enhanced by the activities of this project.
8. The project has assisted MADES in establishing a solid base for the Macro-Objective to be reached in the not too distant future, subject to ensuring the sustainability of the effort for another year or two (SEE RECOMMENDATIONS BELOW).
9. All in all, it is the opinion of the FE evaluation mission consultant that the investment by the UNDP/GEF has produced tangible and important changes (outcomes) and therefore has been very worthwhile

## Recommendations:

**To the Minister and the UNDP Office:**

Recommendation 1: A dialogue should start as soon as possible in order to identify funding sources that can provide the Ministry of the Environment with the means to ensure the necessary technical support to the SIAM over the next two years. (details provided in point A under Financial Sustainability above)

Recommendation 2: A dialogue should start as soon as possible in order to identify funding sources that can provide the Ministry of the Environment with the means to establish a solid Project Implementation Unit that reports directly to the highest level in MADES. (details provided in point B under Financial Sustainability above)