



MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT "CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY IN COASTAL AREAS THREATENED BY RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (00092146)", DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Pascal O. Girot

Consultant

Brief description: The Government of the Dominican Republic requires assistance from the Global Environment Facility and UNDP to remove barriers that will ensure the long-term conservation of the country's biological diversity. The project's goal is to protect the Dominican Republic's globally significant biodiversity. The objective of the project is to ensure the conservation of biodiversity in ecologically important coastal areas threatened by the burgeoning tourism industry and associated physical development. The two outcomes of the project are: 1) The policy, legal and planning framework addresses direct threats to biodiversity from coastal tourism development and activities; 2) Operational Framework to protect biodiversity and ecosystems in areas highly vulnerable to the indirect effects of tourism development.

Periodo Programa: 2012- 2016		Total recursos requeridos	18,873,591 USD
Atlas Award ID:	00083903	<i>Total recursos asignados:</i>	
ID Proyecto:	00092146	• GEF	2,838,792 USD
PIMS # 4955		<i>Contribuciones en especie:</i>	
Fecha inicio:	Mayo 2015	• PNUD	350,000 USD
Fecha de término:	Abril 2020	• Gobierno: MITUR	9,550,000 USD
Arreglos de Gestión	NIM	• M. Ambiente	6,134,799 USD
Fecha Reunión del PAC	23/05/2015		



I. BASIC REPORT INFORMATION

Project Title: Conserving Biodiversity in Coastal Areas Threatened by Rapid Development of Tourism and Physical Infrastructure

UNDAF and Country Programme Effect: By 2016, the State and Civil Society work together to contribute to a sustainable management of the environment.

UNDP Strategic Plan Environment and Sustainable Development Primary Outcome: Outcome 1: Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create jobs and livelihoods for the poor and excluded.

Expected product:

Ecosystem goods and services from the National Protected Areas System and other priority ecosystems available in the long term thanks to effective management.

Implementing partner: Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources

Responsible partners: Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources

Components of the MTR team

Regional Supervisor: Lyès Ferroukhi, Team Leader, Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP-GEF

National Supervisor: María Eugenia Morales, Programme Officer, UNDP Dominican Republic

Principal Consultant: Pascal O. Girot

National Counterparts: Ydalia Acevedo Monegro, Deputy Minister of Coastal and Marine Resources and Maribel Villalona, Planning Director, Ministry of Tourism

Project Team: Jonathan J. Delance Fernández, National Coordinator; Elia M. Martínez Moisés, Sustainable Tourism Specialist; Zoraida Zapata, Biodiversity Specialist

Acknowledgements

The MTR team has had the unconditional support of all the national and local entities related to the project. In particular, the Vice-Ministry of the Environment of Coastal and Marine Resources of the Ministry of Environment and the Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic are thanked for all the support given to the mid-term evaluation mission. Thanks are also due to the technical team of the Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism Project, both in Santo Domingo, as well as the local teams of the Project in Samaná and Las Terrenas, for organizing and accompanying the field visits. The support of the UNDP Country Office in the Dominican Republic is also gratefully acknowledged.



Thanks are also due to the people interviewed, both in Santo Domingo and Samaná, for their time and willingness.

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2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

Development context:

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports the strengthening of national capacities in the Dominican Republic and promotes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), human rights and gender equity, through technical assistance in order to achieve sustainable human development. Through the Environmental Sustainability and Resilience Unit, UNDP seeks to promote environmental sustainability and establish it as the basis on which to build strategies to combat poverty, reduce the vulnerability of the population and develop productive activities that drive the national economy.

UNDP forges alliances with all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crises; it promotes and sustains a kind of growth that improves the quality of life for all. Present on the ground in some 170 countries and territories, we offer a global perspective and local knowledge at the service of people and nations.



UNDP, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Tourism have signed the UNDP/GEF PIMS 4955 / No. 00092146 project "Conserving Biodiversity in Coastal Areas Threatened by Rapid Development of Tourism and Physical Infrastructure" with the objective of ensuring biodiversity conservation in ecologically important and vulnerable coastal areas, which represent an opportunity for the sustainable development of tourism and associated physical infrastructure. The Dominican Republic, and in particular its coastal areas, has experienced an important boom in the tourism sector in the last thirty years. The country's white sandy beaches are the main attraction. Coastal-marine ecosystems are critical to the economic success of the sector. However, tourism development has had a very significant negative impact on biodiversity and ecosystem functionality in coastal areas, directly affecting mangrove forests, coastal wetlands, seagrass beds, coral reefs and beaches - all of which are intimately related in their functionality, and all of which provide critical habitat for key wildlife species.

The President of the Dominican Republic has pledged to double the number of international visitors in the coming years, which in a business-as-usual scenario represents a multiplication of the scale of the threat to the coast - the functionality of the marine ecosystem and biodiversity. The risk for tourism investments has increased due to erosion of natural capital, reduced quality of attractions for visitors and increased vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. There is a need to reduce the footprint of existing infrastructure and tourism activities, to establish more effective controls over future tourism development in order to safeguard coastal marine ecosystems, and to take measures to restore ecosystem functionality and diversify the tourism product to include more sustainable, nature-based opportunities.

Problems the project sought to address: threats and barriers

At present, ecosystems and species in the Dominican Republic are subject to various forms of pressure and degradation, both within protected areas and in the surrounding landscapes. Degradation of coastal areas caused by tourism development has occurred in all tourist areas. It has affected the functionality of each of the coastal marine ecosystems: dunes, mangroves, sea grasses, wetlands and coral reefs. Tourism, both directly through the development of infrastructure and indirectly through the expansion of urban areas and the increasing pressure of coastal population, has caused the loss of vegetation cover. This has contributed to soil erosion and heavy sediment loads generated, which in turn have degraded coral reefs. The loss of mangroves has also diminished the productivity of fish stocks, affecting the food security of local communities. Over 9,000 fisherfolk depend directly on fisheries for their livelihood. Most commercial fish species depend on the health of mangroves and coral reefs (Wielgus et al, 2010). Wetlands have been drained and refilled, leading to loss of functionality. The loss of vegetation cover has reduced the ability of coastal ecosystems to retain carbon and has also exposed coastal settlements and infrastructure to the impacts of climate change and extreme weather, including more severe storm damage.

The following is a description of the direct and indirect threats of tourism growth and their impacts on biodiversity from the project document:



Direct Threats	Impacts on Biodiversity
<p>L The sandy beaches are partially occupied by tourist developments and / or sand is extracted as construction material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tourist agglomerations above their carrying capacity ● The construction of drainage channels to the sea by the beach ● Extraction of sand in underwater quarries near the beach ● The construction of quays and piers ● Discharge of solid waste ● Location of businesses on the beachfront ● Beach conditioning and cleaning ● Permanent occupation of beach accesses 	<p>The beach is lost or experiences degradation and loss of basic functions (coastal defence and habitats for biota) due to loss of coastal vegetation and physical changes in beach profile. Coastal erosion is promoted and the equilibrium of sedimentary dynamics is altered. There is a degradation of the coastal landscape, with the loss of sea turtle nesting habitat and increased vulnerability to climate change.</p>
<p>Physical development in the coastal zone: roads, marinas and large-scale hotels and urban and peri-urban settlements.</p>	<p>Mangroves and other coastal forest lands have been cleared for tourism infrastructure development. These forests play a key role in maintaining ecological processes in and around marine, estuarine and terrestrial ecosystems, including the maintenance of reef fish populations. The removal of mangroves has also led to sedimentation of coral reefs, causing mortality and degradation of coral reefs. In Bavaro, the main pole of tourism development in recent decades, at least 500 hectares of mangrove cover have been removed in direct proportion to the construction of hotels. The drastic fragmentation of the mangrove forest has seriously compromised the ecological integrity and functionality of the ecosystem and destroyed the area's hydrological system. The loss of mangroves has also increased vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. A study (ECLAC 2004) on the impact of Hurricane Jeanne showed that part of the damage to hotels is due to the location of hotels, without consideration for natural ecosystems, in particular the Laguna Bávaro-El Manglar system.</p> <p>The degradation of the reefs has led to the erosion of beaches at a speed of up to 50 cm per year and the exposure of the coasts to the action of the waves that are increasing with the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Habitat loss and fragmentation are threatening seabirds and marine wildlife including pelicans, frigates, herons, egrets, molluscs, crustaceans and reef fish species.</p> <p>Loss of beach habitat due to erosion and developmental impacts threaten endangered turtle species.</p> <p>Coastal lagoons and wetlands have been filled to leave room for the expansion of urban centres and the development of tourist infrastructure.</p>



Direct Threats	Impacts on Biodiversity
Road improvements and new road construction have reduced travel time and facilitated access to sensitive coastal areas for more visitors.	Higher visitor volumes leading to trampling and cleaning of beach habitats and behind beach areas.
Discharge of wastewater into waterways and mangroves and into reefs. Nationally only 7% of wastewater is treated.	Eutrophication of sensitive coastal wetlands. Critical stress on corals contributing to mortality and biodiversity loss.
Overconsumption of freshwater from aquifers in tourist areas leading to salinization.	Loss of habitat for coastal region species.
Motorized water transport to marine and coastal destinations.	Collision damage to reefs, mortality of dolphins, manatees and alterations in the behavior of humpback whales.
Inadequate disposal of solid waste in waterways, mangroves, beaches.	Disposal of solid waste (plastic) in rivers, wetlands and coastal areas leads to mortality of fauna such as birds, fish, turtles and other species, which become entangled in nylon nets or ingest plastic bags and other plastic waste.
Purchase of wildlife curiosities by tourists.	Endangering endangered fauna (including several species of mollusks). Overcollection of wildlife for sale of animal parts to tourists (including turtle shells, corals and shells) depletes wildlife populations and alters ecological balance. More than 50 species of invertebrates and fish are used in this trade.
Unsustainable fishing to meet tourism demand	Increased fishing effort, including illegal fishing and through the use of non-selective fishing gear and techniques. These include the use of less open nets and the practice of dynamite fishing, practices that have extensive ecological consequences. Similarly, the selective removal of some species from reef communities (such as lambí, lobster, grouper, snapper, parrot fish, queen crossbow fish, a predator of sea urchins) has negative impacts on the reef ecosystem. The white shrimp (<i>Litopenaeus schmitti</i>) in Samaná Bay is overexploited due to tourism demand.
The demand for building materials (given the scarcity of sand, gravel and boulders for construction, developers often resort to sand mining and dredging).	Loss of nesting habitat for endangered sea turtle species, sedimentation of coral reefs.
Removal of sea grasses by hotels to create "clean" bathing areas.	This has resulted in the release of large amounts of sediment deposited on coral reefs adding considerable stress to their well-being. Marine species such as the West Indian manatee and populations of several species of reef fish that depend on the connections of seagrass beds to mangroves and reefs have also been adversely affected by this practice.
Removal of vegetation from dunes to increase the size of the beach for recreation.	This has led to the disintegration of dunes and the loss of important dune habitats for turtle nesting
Increased demand for water sports activities (boat use, diving and snorkeling).	Diving and snorkeling, both land-based and cruise tourism, are leading to the degradation of marine habitats. This is aggravated in some areas by the practice of mooring and diving anchor boats, yachts, and less frequently cruises on or near coral reefs. Other recreational activities, such as unregulated use of speedboats, and underwater hunting are also destructive to wildlife.



Direct Threats	Impacts on Biodiversity
Indirect Threats	Impacts on Biological Diversity
Logging of forests for agriculture, timber extraction, firewood collection and charcoal production, sometimes caused by the displacement of local coastal communities by tourism development or the arrival of new settlers.	Drago forest lost by cleaning for rice production. Excessive sedimentation flowing from rivers on reefs. Increased fires.
Fishing communities are established within protected areas to meet the demand of the tourism industry.	Loss of snapper, grouper, parrot fish, lobster, shrimp, snail and other marine species from protected areas. Loss of mangroves and other protected area habitats due to clearance for illegal fishing settlements.
Urban development following the immigration of tourism employees into coastal areas has led to pressure on natural resources and increased pollution.	Overfishing, removal of mangroves and other coastal habitats, increased poaching of turtle eggs. Also the flow of untreated sewerage to the sea affecting coastal and marine ecosystems.
The development of large residential housing complexes (temporary or permanent) across the coastal landscape and along sensitive watersheds.	The loss and fragmentation of habitat in upper watersheds, as well as the loss of beach habitat. Increased flow of wastewater to the sea affecting coastal and marine ecosystems. Seawater intrusion leading to increased salinity of coastal aquifers

Various assessments, in particular the biodiversity monitoring tools (TT), were therefore carried out during the PPG phase to identify the most cost-effective method to improve the conservation of coastal ecosystems in the tourism sector. These analyses indicate that before these threats and gaps can be addressed, the Dominican Republic must first remove instrumental and capacity barriers at local and national levels. The most critical barriers are described in more detail below. These are:

- i. The legal, policy, planning and institutional instruments for integrating environmental sustainability into the tourism industry are insufficient and ineffective in terms of avoiding direct threats to coastal marine biodiversity;
- ii. The weak capacity of government institutions, the private sector and local actors to manage indirect threats and the effects of current and future tourism development on coastal areas.

In the Project Document, more specifically, the barriers identified were as follows:

BARRIER 1 - The legal, policy, planning and institutional instruments for integrating environmental sustainability into the tourism industry are insufficient and ineffective in terms of avoiding direct threats to coastal marine biodiversity.



BARRIER 2 - The weak capacity of government institutions, the private sector and local actors to manage indirect threats and the effects of current and future tourism development on coastal areas.

Description and strategy of the project: objective, products and desired results, description of the pilot sites where it is developed

The goal of the project is to safeguard the globally important biodiversity of the Dominican Republic. The objective of the project is to ensure the conservation of biodiversity in ecologically important coastal areas threatened by the growing tourism industry and associated physical development. The results and outputs of the project are described below:

OUTPUT 1: Policies, legal framework and planning in the tourism sector address direct threats to biodiversity due to coastal tourism development and activities. (Total cost: US\$9,297,839: GEF US\$1,064,780; co-financing: US\$8,233,059)

The project seeks to strengthen the regulatory framework at the national level in the Ministries of Tourism and Environment, which includes elements of biodiversity and ecosystem functionality in the National Tourism Development Plan (PNDT), consistent with the government's commitment to aspire to a sustainable tourism model. The Plan defines the orientation and regulations for tourism development to respect the fragility and specific vulnerability of sensitive coastal and marine areas with respect to tourism planning and management. This will be achieved by generating clear rules on land use and access to beach areas, strengthening environmental impact assessment mechanisms, licensing tools for coastal tourism development, and prohibiting land use in sensitive areas. This is complemented by a protocol with technical and economic guidelines to advance in the processes of recovery and restoration of areas degraded by tourism. Finally, these rules of coastal land management require a system of monitoring and enforcement that can apply sanctions for misconduct in the tourism sector. This monitoring system also should help identify and classify biodiversity-friendly activities and should propose a clear definition of the mandates and responsibilities of the various agencies responsible for implementing a model of sustainable tourism development. In order to monitor progress over time and provide long-term continuity, a Compliance and Monitoring System in biodiversity-rich areas will assess the limits of acceptable change and support adaptation measures to reduce direct impacts. Marine and coastal areas contain some of the nation's most important tourist attractions, so it is essential to implement tourism management capabilities by establishing sustainability thresholds for tourism in selected coastal areas, including interpretation and monitoring of capabilities of local tourism agencies.

The project supports the development and adoption by the sector of a nationally approved biodiversity-friendly voluntary certification system for hotels and tourism activities that will be integrated into the MITUR classification system. The Project Document also foresees the establishment of a multisectoral funding framework for economic support to the implementation of the National Tourism Development Plan in marine-coastal zones. In order to effectively engage the tourism industry in this transformation process, this financial framework will include economic incentives to promote private sector adherence



to the reformed policies and regulations, adjustments to existing fiscal mechanisms to ensure the flow of adequate levels of investment, particularly from the tourism sector and coastal development in coastal and marine DB conservation, and increased institutional capacity in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to determine, collect and reinvest tourism revenues at the local level.

The result will be achieved through the following products:

Output 1.1 Regulatory framework to strengthen the control and prevention of the ecological impact of tourism in vulnerable coastal areas, including the establishment of a Compliance and Monitoring system to assess the conservation status of biological diversity.

Output 1.2 Multisectoral funding framework for cost-effective support for the sustainable implementation of the National Tourism Development Plan and appropriate biodiversity conservation incentives in coastal areas.

Product 1.3 A nationally approved biodiversity friendly certification system for the tourism sector

OUTPUT 2: Operational Framework to Protect Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Areas Highly Vulnerable to Indirect Effects of Tourism Development (Total cost: US\$8,638,832; GEF US\$1,638,832; co-financing: US\$7,000,000)

The set of planning and regulatory instruments developed in Outcome 1 will provide fundamental information for the procedures for granting plans and permits for use in tourism, in particular, to the Territorial Tourism Management Plans (POTTS) that are currently proposed for some areas and are likely to be developed in other coastal areas during the life of the project. Through this result, the project will also use the resources to support the Government, both at national and local levels, as well as key sectors to acquire and harmonize the skills for correct decision making and coordination on land use in territories dedicated to tourism development. Based on reliable tools and updated Geographic Information Systems (GIS), sensitive watersheds, biological corridors and public use areas within coastal protected areas that may also be affected by the booming tourism industry will be included. The development of landscape-level planning tools and land-use plans for application by key stakeholders seeks to reduce pressure on sensitive ecosystems and reduce multi-sectoral conflicts by harmonizing planning, monitoring and mitigating the impact of measures in all sectors to improve management of coastal ecosystems, protection of coasts and key marine species, water conservation, conservation of carbon resources and management of forests.

An institutionalized training program targeting M. Ambiente, MITUR, MEPYD, the private sector and local authorities should be in place by the end of the project, training no less than 300 people in conservation-compatible tourism and the implementation of efficient land use plans.

The result will be achieved through the following products:

Output 2.1 Landscape-level planning tools established and implemented by key stakeholders



Output 2.2 Improved community-based resource management in 7000 hectares of key biodiversity areas addresses natural resource management at the rural user level and at hotel locations:

The two sites that have been selected for specific interventions are Samaná and Montecristi:

a) Samaná - Los Haitises Complex: The area covers approximately 4,292.81 km² of land surface and 912 km² of the marine platform that surrounds Samaná Bay (See maps below and in Section IV of Part I). The Samana Peninsula and the northern coast are considered a complete geomorphological unit with the Nagua river basin. The complex includes 8 coastal marine protected areas: Bancos de la Plata y la Navidad, Mamíferos Marinos Sanctuary, Cabo Cabrón National Park, National Monument Cabo Samaná, Los Haitises National Park, Manglares del Bajo Yuna National Park, Gran Estero Wildlife Refuge, Manglar de la Jina and the Lagunas Redonda and Limón Wildlife Refuges, in addition to the coastal landscapes and marine corridors between them.

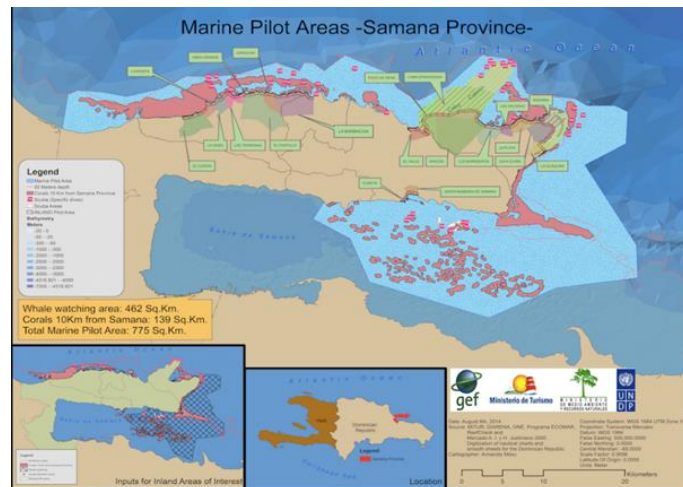
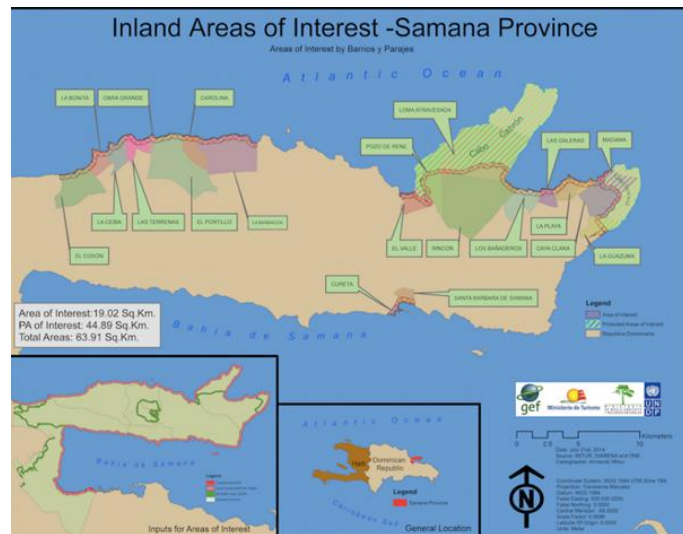
Samana Bay is one of the largest estuaries in the Caribbean and is an important sanctuary for the largest migratory population of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the North Atlantic. About 1,000 whales support a growing temporary whale watching industry between January and March (27,944 whale watchers in 2011). The bay is fed by the country's largest river, the Yuna. The bay and surrounding waters of the Samana Peninsula contain 9,210 ha of mangrove forest, small islands, sandbanks, patches of coral formation, and extensive seagrass meadows. This area is also home to green, hawksbill and leatherback turtles (*Cheloniidae spp*), as well as West Indian manatee (*Trichechus spp*) and 153 species of birds. Due to the nutrient-rich waters supplied by the Yuna and Barracote rivers, the bay has ideal nursery conditions that can sustain large populations of commercially valuable shrimp, oysters and fish. Deforestation and intensive agriculture practices have led to excess soil and sediment in Samana Bay. The flow of the Yuna River is also diverted to the Hatillo Dam for human consumption, irrigation and electricity production. The basin is affected by agricultural and mineral residues, high temperatures and other forms of pollution. Fishing pressure on white shrimp and reef fish species has depleted stocks. Finally, uncontrolled tourism development is affecting ecosystems throughout the region, both directly and indirectly.

The largest PA in the bay is Los Haitises National Park. Bordering the bay on two sides, it is characterized by high biodiversity indices, karstic formations, and 700 plant species, including 92 endemic species. It has a third of the country's amphibian species (10) a quarter of reptiles (23) and 35% of mammal species, as well as more than half of the birds recorded for the Dominican Republic. Among the species of global importance that are threatened are the Jutía (*Plagiodontia aedium*) and Solenodon (*Solenodon paradoxus*), both endemic. The NGO funded by the tourism industry, FunKarst, has recently signed a joint management agreement with the Ministry of Environment for the park. In 2011, the park received 22,155 visitors. Other coastal protected areas of the Samaná complex - The Haitises lack the capacity to control the number of visitors. It should be noted that within the boundaries of Los Haitises NP is one of the most important groundwater reservoirs at national and regional level.

Samaná Bay is a multipurpose basin that, in addition to its role as a commercial port, is compatible with various types of fishing (estuaries, shallow, deep and pelagic reefs), as well as multiple marine tourism activities (nature excursions, parasailing, recreational navigation, diving, cruising and whale watching). In



addition to its role as a commercial port, Samaná is also compatible with several types of fishing (estuaries, shallow, deep and pelagic reefs), as well as multiple marine tourism activities (nature excursions, parasailing, recreational navigation, diving, cruising and whale-watching). In fact, Samaná has experienced an expansion and diversification of the tourism industry in the last 20 years. Tourism-based maritime traffic has outpaced commercial maritime traffic in the port of Samaná, resulting in repeated and frequent levels of contact of whales with human activity.



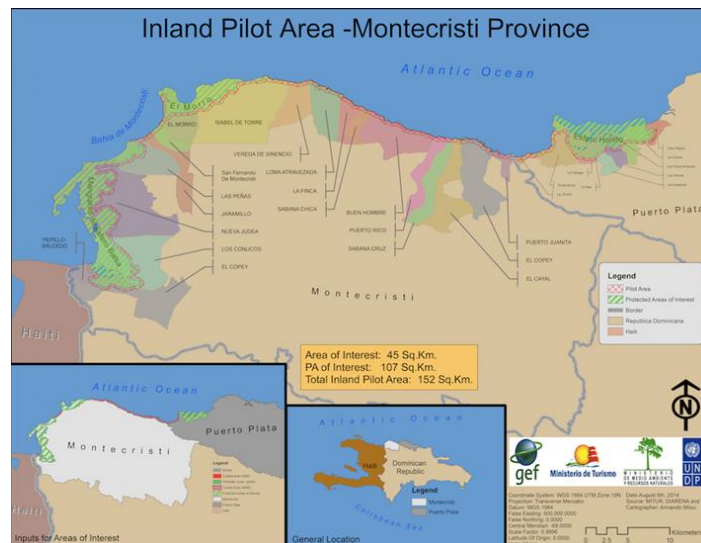
In response to the impacts on biodiversity, the project proposes the following actions to mitigate and further limit damage to key species:

- (i) Humpback whales will be assessed, monitored and photo-identified in Samana Bay, and measures will be taken to ensure sustainable whale sightings.



- (ii) Sea turtles in Samaná will be the focus of research into nesting sites, as well as the design and placement of effective signage.
- (iii) Assessment of tourist carrying capacity in selected coastal/marine tourist areas, to further guide tourism development with a biodiversity-friendly approach.
- (iv) The development of measures for the rehabilitation of degraded dunes, beaches and wetlands.

b) Montecristi Complex: This is a marine-coastal complex located in the northwest on the border with Haiti that consists of coastal landscapes and marine areas covering five protected areas - El Morro National Park, Montecristi Marine National Park (8.29 km² terrestrial, 183.44 km² marine), Wildlife Refuge Cayos Siete Hermanos, Estero Balsa Mangroves National Park and the Estero Hondo Marine Mammal Sanctuary (22 km² terrestrial, 7.89 km² marine). The complex has 6,193 ha of mangrove forest, extensive coastal wetlands, dry forest and the largest expanse of coral reefs in the Dominican Republic, with 24 species of coral and 45 species of fish, as well as four reproductive aggregations. These high biodiversity value habitats are threatened by overfishing, partly driven by tourism demand, sedimentation due to land degradation from dry forest logging and mangrove cover, inadequate solid waste management and wastewater management, and poverty-induced pressures. At the heart of this complex is the Estero Hondo Marine Mammal Sanctuary that spans an area of 22 km², including the Caño Estero Hondo coastal lagoon, mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and a 0.5 km wide strip of marine habitat throughout the reserve. It has the largest population of manatees in the Dominican Republic, and is home to four species of turtles, bottlenose dolphins, 42 species of birds, including five endemic species, two species of commercially important crabs, and the endemic green snake. There were 15,750 visitors in 2010, but more than 70,000 in 2016. The potential for growth in sustainable, nature-centered tourism is significant.

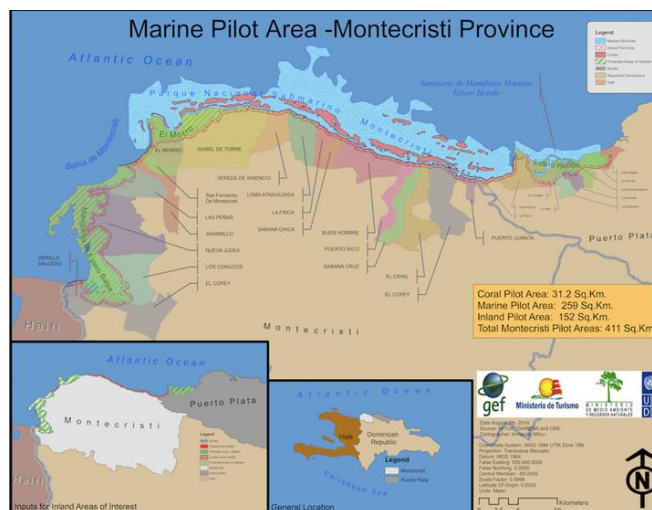


The coastal marine area of the province of Montecristi has been selected as a pilot area due to the high potential for tourism, based on the abundance and availability of its coastal resources, particularly in the



western and northern areas. To date, with the exception of the city of Montecristi, tourism development in the region has been incipient, with a very low influx of tourists; tourism development in the region is scarce, with small tourism initiatives such as small hotels or boutique, which have little promotion and do not generate ecotourism products or experiences that can create differential value for the territory. This provides a good opportunity for the project to influence and shape the parameters for sustainable tourism planning and development. The pilot area covers the coastal lands of the buffer zone of the Estero Balsa National Park, the buffer zone of the Estero Hondo Marine Mammal Sanctuary in the province of Puerto Plata. The terrestrial area of influence of the project includes protected areas, as well as territory with other uses beyond the limits of the protected areas.

Tourism and coastal biodiversity conservation can be developed jointly and collaboratively in the Montecristi area. The complex has a coral reef system associated with extensive mangrove forests. The strip coral reef system in Montecristi has been considered one of the most important reef systems in Hispaniola due to its large size, diversity and the general condition of its benthos.



In order to strengthen biodiversity conservation at key species level and take action against threats in Montecristi, the project will support the following:

- (i) Sea turtles in Montecristi will be the focus of research into nesting sites, as well as the design and placement of effective signage.
- (ii) An assessment of coral reefs at tourism sites to determine effective measures to ensure physical protection of reefs and placement of demarcation and mooring buoys in navigation and diving areas.
- (iii) Appropriate identification and marking of tourism areas in coastal/marine zones in order to avoid damage to the conservation status of biodiversity-rich areas.



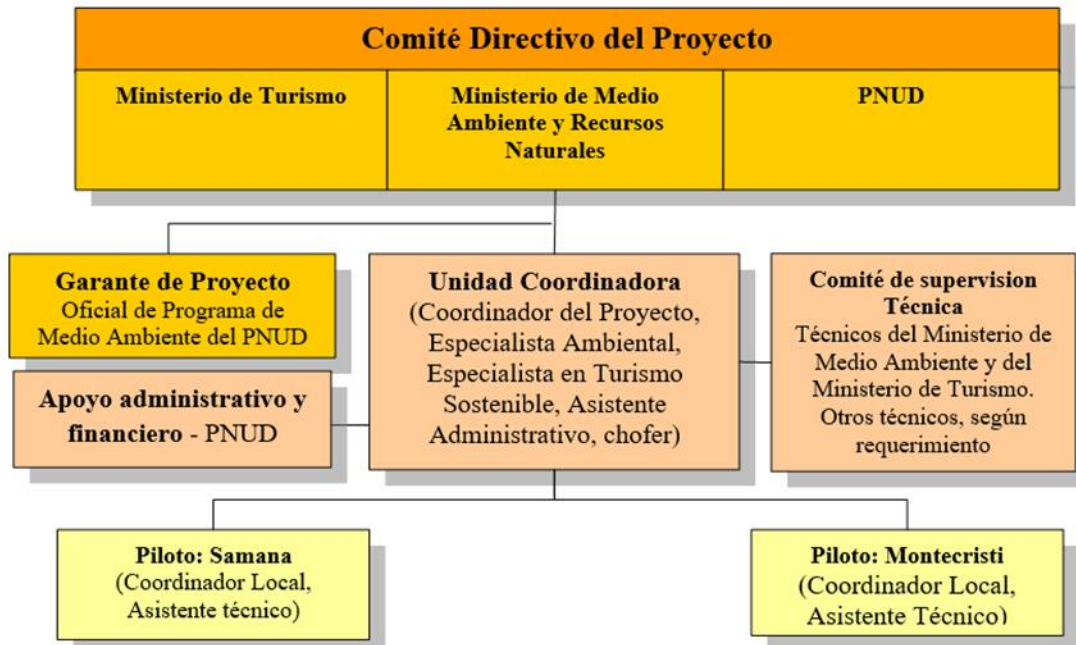
In this mid-term evaluation, it was found that the choice of pilot sites was the right one since both sites have a booming tourist activity and important attractions based on biodiversity resources. Although Montecristi has an incipient tourist activity, compared to Samaná which is already a consolidated tourist destination, in both sites there are important opportunities to diversify the tourism offer in the Dominican Republic, from the perspective of sustainable tourism development.

Project implementation mechanisms

The Project is executed under the UNDP National Implementation Modality (NIM), in accordance with the UNDP cooperation standards and regulations in the Dominican Republic. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is the implementing partner and is, together with the Ministry of Tourism, responsible for the project. Both institutions signed an implementation agreement with UNDP which establishes the responsibility of both parties to be accountable for an efficient and effective use of project resources to achieve the project goals, in accordance with the approved work plan.

Implementation has taken place under the general guidance of a Project Steering Committee, which has powers to make strategic, not executive, decisions. The Steering Committee is composed of high-level representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Tourism and UNDP. According to the records reviewed in the framework of this evaluation, this committee has met once a year since the beginning of the project, with the exception of 2018 when it met twice. In addition, bilateral meetings were held between members of the CRC (UNDP Deputy Representative with Vice-Ministers of Coastal and Marine Resources, Vice-Minister of International Cooperation and GEF OFP, and Director of Planning and Projects MITUR) in order to discuss progress and seek alternatives to streamline implementation and improve governance of the project.

The Project also has a Technical Oversight Committee in charge of the operational monitoring of the project, in which it discusses all the key technical decisions of the project, which may include the revision of the Terms of Reference proposed by the Coordinating Unit, the hiring of specialists, the award of contracts and the revision of the Annual Operating Plans and Annual Budgets. This Committee is a critical link between the Coordinating Unit and the rest of the staff of the Ministries of Environment and Tourism, both at the central level and in the pilot areas.



The day-to-day management and coordination of activities is under the responsibility of a Project Coordinating Unit. Although it is located in the offices of the Ministry of the Environment, the Implementation Unit coordinates actions with both Ministries. At the start of operations, the Steering Committee appointed the Vice Minister of Coastal-Marine Resources of the Ministry of Environment and the Director of Planning and Development of the Ministry of Tourism as co-Directors of the Project, as co-responsible for overall supervision and accountability, ensuring appropriate follow-up to the Coordinating Unit. A National Coordinator was recruited through a competitive process organized by UNDP, in which the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism were actively involved. The National Coordinator has been the person responsible for the daily implementation of the project activities, leading and managing the technical team of the Coordinating Unit. This technical team, as indicated in PRODOC, consists of several members: an Environmental Specialist, a Sustainable Tourism Specialist, an Administrative Assistant and a driver. In the pilot areas, the project Field Units have been composed of a Local Coordinator and a Technical Assistant. These teams are located in the offices of the Ministries of Environment and Tourism in Samaná and Montecristi.

As Project guarantor, UNDP will support the Project Executive Committee by providing objective and independent follow-up and monitoring. The UNDP Environment and Energy Programme Officer has assumed this function, under the supervision of the Deputy Resident Representative of the UNDP Country Office.



The Implementation Unit, in agreement with the Project Monitoring Committee, has convened an annual strategic planning team to prepare the annual project work plans, based on the approved project document. In 2016, a 6-month Start-up Phase was designed to plan the project implementation process, culminating in an Inception Workshop.

Project execution deadlines and milestones to be met during its development

In the design phase of the Project, it was foreseen that the project would have a total duration of 5 years, non extendable. The project has now completed 3 years of implementation. It is two years away from achieving its objectives and close technically and administratively.

Main stakeholders: Summary list.

Stakeholder involvement is vital for successful project implementation. The following are among the most important project partners:

- Project team.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Deputy Minister for Coastal-Marine Resources, Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources.
- Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.
- Deputy Minister for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Tourism.
- Directorate of Planning and Projects (Ministry of Tourism).
- Operational Focal Point of the GEF.
- Punta Cana Ecological Foundation.
- FUNDEMAR.
- Montecristi Ecological Group (Gremont): Bird Monitoring.
- Galleon Divers: Reef monitoring.
- National Authority for Marine Affairs.
- Samaná Tourist Cluster.
- Project consultants.
- Japan International Cooperation Agency.
- Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ.

3. PROVEN FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Project strategy

- *Project design*



The design of the Project "Conserving Biodiversity in Coastal Areas Threatened by Rapid Development of Tourism and Physical Infrastructure (00092146)", Dominican Republic, is part of a project group formulated in 2014 when the GEF had its 2020 Strategy. Under this global program, the GEF sought to address the causes of environmental degradation, using new instruments to work with the private sector, with the aim to generate impacts at scale and create synergies with partners in productive sectors. Although the project has an operational link and institutional supervision with the Ministry of Tourism, the physical headquarters of the Project is the Ministry of Environment, and although both Ministries share the same building there are issues in the original design of the project that require working with other State institutions, such as the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development to see how agreements are reached to ensure financial sustainability to the efforts of planning and control of tourism development. Nor is there a person in charge of working on these public and private finance issues in the technical team of the project. The development of a multi-sector financing framework for economic support to the execution of the National Tourism Development Plan is not only the task of the Ministry of the Environment, nor of MITUR exclusively, but of a range of State institutions, which until this stage in the execution of the project have not had a greater hold.

There is also a great challenge in the institutional projection of the project. Clearly, there is inertia in the model of massive tourism, and many decisions concerning large-scale tourism investments take place in superior levels of the National State in Dominican Republic. The Presidential Goals are essentially the objectives of the Government Program, and one of these goals is to double tourist visitation in order to reach 10 million tourists per year. What are the alternatives or trade-off between quantity and quality tourism?

Hence the importance of having a National Tourism Development Plan in the Dominican Republic, which allows for a wider visitation, but diversifying and making the tourism industry in the country more sustainable. This plan does not yet exist, but there is already a national sustainable tourism strategy, a national ecotourism strategy and a guideline for land-use planning in a terrestrial maritime zone. However, the National Tourism Development Plan, which is one of the pillars of Outcome 1 of the Project, is not yet in place.

Nevertheless, this Project is the first in Latin America with this cross-cutting approach for the tourism sector, and it is hoped that the lessons learned and lessons learned from this experience will be replicated in other countries of the region. In this sense, the project is leaving important lessons learned, which we hope to capture in the context of this Mid-Term Evaluation.

- Results framework/logical framework

The project has made uneven progress, but with achievements in all its outcomes.

Outcome 1, which focuses on systemic aspects and public policies, is lagging farther behind in its execution, as it requires complex political agreements.



Outcome 2, which targets pilot activities in the two regions prioritized by the national authorities, consists of major advances and significant achievements.

The Steering Committee has met biannually, and yet there are deficiencies in the degree of ownership of the project by the Ministry of Tourism, despite a commitment at the technical middle management level. Likewise, as indicated above, there has been no work with other key institutions for systemic, normative and advocacy aspects in public policies. There are differences between the two ministries (Environment and Tourism) in terms of language, institutional culture, political power, relationship with the private sector, and pace of work. There is still a lack of appropriation of the project on the part of higher authorities of the State.

At the same time, intersectorality continues to be the originality of the Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism project. It proposes to work with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism as partners, and the pilots seem to achieve joint work between both ministries, rather than at the national level. Coastal biodiversity in priority areas (Montecristi, Samaná) continues to generate global environmental benefits. It is a valuable tourist attraction, but requires careful management.

There is private sector leadership on sustainability, and there are ample opportunities to generate positive linkages in coastal communities. From a competitive approach (CNC) the project can generate significant opportunities. However, this project has demonstrated in the field that both ministries can coordinate actions and generate results, and the project has significant potential to generate lessons and offer clues to help build a sustainable tourism model in the Dominican Republic.

The private sector is involved at the level of the pilots, as well as the local governments and welcomes the actions developed by the project, and demands a greater contribution from the project in terms of promotion, education, sensitization.

3.2 Progress in achieving results

The achievements of the Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism Project have been uneven.

There are important achievements at the local level under the Outcome 2.

Both Montecristi and Samaná have achieved greater coordination between national and local institutional actors, particularly between the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment. By talking to local partners in the pilot sites in both Montecristi and Samaná, it is clear that the project has facilitated greater private sector participation in decisions about access to and use of protected areas.

The project is contributing significantly to a generation of knowledge and information on the status of coastal biodiversity in tourist hotspots, using new data collection technologies (drones).



There has also been thanks to the project the generation of guidelines, codes of conduct, rules of tourism operation to limit and minimize its impact on charismatic species (whales, turtles, manatees) at the local level.

In some cases they have contributed to the creation of new tourist attractions in the pilot areas (Morro de Montecristi for example) and conditions are being generated for the restoration of ecosystems in areas critical for coastal biodiversity in the pilot areas (recovery/population of corals in Samaná).

However, under Outcome 1 there are still many achievements to be completed. This outcome has more to do with advocacy on rules, regulations and public policy at the national level. While much of the technical work at the national level has been completed, reports and guidelines provide concrete guidance and inputs for decision making. In particular, there is already a report providing a critical analysis of the regulatory framework in coastal zones in the area of Environment and Tourism, and the analysis of gaps between regulated and unregulated tourism activities relevant to the conservation of coastal marine biodiversity. The project has generated concrete proposals for rules and regulations, such as the proposal for rules and regulations on Tourism Services and Activities in the Dominican Republic, or the proposal for a regulatory framework to strengthen biodiversity conservation in marine-coastal zones and sustainable tourism.

Despite these technical inputs, the political conduction of the project still needs to be strengthened in order to have an impact at the ministerial level. Decision-making has remained at the level of the members of the project's Steering Committee, and does not go beyond the level of the vice-ministers to become part of the MITUR normative current, or in a proposal for a new normative or ministerial resolution. This trend is not new and was detected in the 2018 Implementation Report (PIR). In this report, it was expected that for the August 2018 meeting of the Steering Committee, the new legal framework had to be resolved, which already has inputs and modifications proposed by both ministries (MITUR, Min. Environment). In the evaluator's opinion, as of February 2019, there is still no major progress in the political incidence of the project, and this requires a change of strategy and management by UNDP and project management if the goals and results proposed in the original project document are to be achieved. Specific proposals and recommendations on this subject will be made in section 5 on this report.

3.3 Analysis of progress on results

The following is an analysis matrix of the progress made in achieving the project results (See Annex 3)

3.4 Remaining barriers to the achievement of project objectives

The remaining barriers to achieving the goals set by the project are threefold: political, technical and organizational.



Political Barriers

Without a doubt, the Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism Project affects a neuralgic point of the economic and territorial development model of the Dominican Republic. Among the presidential goals of the current administration is the doubling of the country's tourist visitation. Clearly, tourism development has the highest political priority. And since the formulation of this project it has been diagnosed that the mass tourism model has measurable and forceful impacts on the country's coastal biodiversity. Although at the level of the Planning Directorate of MITUR, and the Vice Ministry of Coastal and Marine Resources of the Ministry of Environment, both members of the Project Steering Committee, there is recognition of the need to diversify the tourism offer and incorporate guidelines to harmonize tourism development with the sustainable use of biodiversity. This recognition has not yet reached a higher level in the offices of both ministries. The main barrier in this case has to do with the limited interaction of the project leader beyond the members of the Steering Committee, and a project management that has not been able to take advantage of the members of the Steering Committee to influence at the level of Minister. There are ample opportunities for this to happen and for the project, with strong support from the UNDP country office, to be able to expand the number of interlocutors at the level of the Office of the Minister of Tourism, the Office of the Minister of the Environment.

Technical Barriers

The project has been organized in order to generate good practices and lessons learned in the two pilot sites (Montecristi and Samaná) and scale-up, replicate and influence the regulations and practices of sustainable tourism at the national level. The composition of the technical teams at the national and local levels reflects this emphasis on the generation of knowledge and practical actions in the field in order to promote sustainable tourism in pilot sites with an important supply of coastal and marine biodiversity. However, the profile of the technical team, which has important strengths at the technical level, has concentrated on the conduct of activities for the achievement of Outcome 2, there is a lesser weight of adequate skills for the achievement of Outcome 1. The project management should strengthen the technical team, for a profile more oriented to political communication and advocacy. Although the reports produced by the consulting firm Lourdes Russa are technically very solid, and reflect a deep knowledge of the legal framework and institutional environment in the Dominican Republic, these products have not been adequately communicated, promoted and translated into decision-making instruments. There is a technical barrier in terms of political advocacy capacity based on complex technical inputs. The difficulty in the application of norms in the Dominican Republic is notorious, particularly in environmental matters, and therefore this will not happen spontaneously, but requires specialized technical leadership. Specific recommendations for this purpose are proposed in section 5 of this report.

Organizational Barriers

This Mid-Term Evaluation has found that the experience and profile of the national coordinator of the project has been ideal for the conduction and organization of pilot actions in the field. In fact, this leader, together with his technical team, have achieved important achievements precisely because the national coordinator has been directly involved in the implementation of the project in the pilot zones. However,



it is important that the role of the national coordinator be reoriented towards that of political project manager. This currently constitutes an important organizational barrier to the achievement of the project's proposed results. A reorganisation of the technical team is required, including the recruitment of a high-level communication team and an advocacy and strategy specialist. The national project coordinator will be able to oversee the hiring of a strategic communications team, based on service contracts, to promote sustainable tourism in the Dominican Republic, communicate to the general public and decision-makers the competitive advantages of a sustainable tourism model for the country, and organize an international conference on sustainable tourism with participation at the highest level of the state.

3.5. Project implementation and adaptive management

- Management mechanisms

This evaluation mission found that the necessary management mechanisms are in place both in the project's technical and administrative team and in the UNDP Dominican Republic country office. The annual expenditure reports certified by UNDP (CDR), as well as the list of consultant contracts and the progress reports generated by the project have been reviewed and everything seems to indicate that the technical and administrative management of the project has been adequate. The results proposed in the original project proposal (PRODOC) are being achieved, although at different rates.

The management structures in the original project design included a Technical Oversight Committee and a Steering Committee. While the day-to-day management and coordination of activities was under the responsibility of a Project Implementation Unit, the proximity monitoring of the project is ensured by the Technical Supervision Committee, which is composed of the Programme Officer of UNDP Dominican Republic and the technical representatives of the Vice-Ministry of Coastal and Marine Resources of the Ministry of Environment and the Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Tourism. The Steering Committee, composed of Ministers or Vice-Ministers and the UNDP Dominican Republic Resident Coordinator has met on average twice a year. However, the decisions taken within the Steering Committee have not been followed up and clearly, as indicated above, have not permeated the higher levels of the political decision-makers of both ministries (Min. Environment and MITUR).

- Work planning

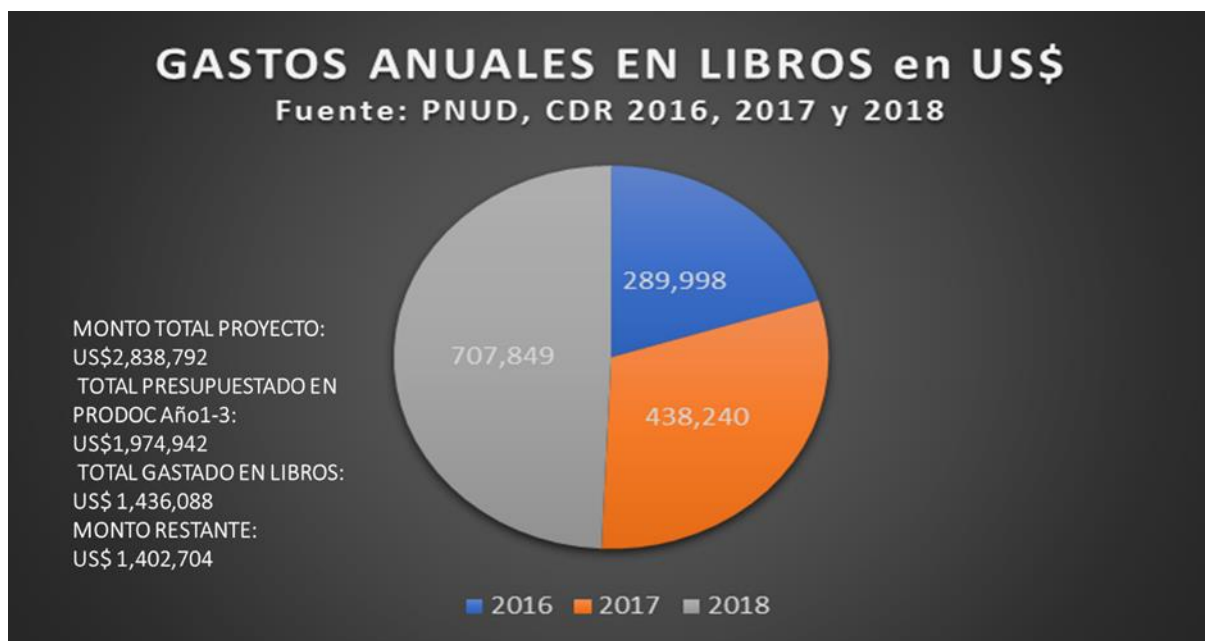
The Project has planned on the basis of Annual Work Plans (AWPs) that have been aligned with the project's logical results framework. However, it is clear that expenditure planning has not led to full implementation of resources or achievement of expected results. It is clear to this evaluation that work planning yielded more results under Outcome 2, as it involves field activities over which the project could exercise more control. On the activities to achieve Outcome 1, these are contingents on the project team's ability to influence decision making and policy formulation and modification of laws and decrees. This requires different capacities and skills and therefore a different planning effort. In the recommendations,



there is a need to seek alliances and strategic partnerships with other projects and programs at the national level (BioFIN, MAPS, among others) and to plan joint actions.

- Financing and co-financing

The execution of the project is in its fourth year of implementation, with 50.5% of the executed budget. It can be seen that the execution of resources has been accelerating in 2018, since almost half of the US\$1,436,088 spent since 2016 was executed in 2018 (See Fig. 3).



As for the resources received from co-financing, the actual amounts recorded are significantly lower than those foreseen in the initial design of the project. Government counterparts have materialized through staff time, facilities and other services provided by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment. MITUR has contributed 47% of the programmed co-financing and the Ministry of Environment 17% by the end of 2018. Japanese bilateral cooperation has contributed a total of \$ 435,000.00 by means of the JICA Sustainable Community Tourism Project.



Monitoring and evaluation systems at project level

TABLA No. MONTOS DE COFINANCIACIÓN PREVISTOS Y REGISTRADOS Fuente: Unidad Administrativa, Proyecto BC y T Sources of Co-financing	Nombre de entidad cofinanciante	Tipo de cofinanciación	Cantidad cofinanciada a fecha de autorización CEO (US\$)	Cantidad realmente contribuida a fecha del Examen de Mitad de Periodo (US\$)	Porcentaje (%) real de la cantidad prevista
Multilateral	PNUD	En especie	350,000	131,860.00	38%
Gobierno	Mitur	En especie	9,550,000	4,517,500.00	47%
Gobierno	Medio Ambiente	En especie	6,134,799	1,013,500.00	17%
Cooperación	UNEP	En especie	0	136,600	NA
Cooperación	JICA	En especie	0	435,000.00	NA
		Total	16,034,799	6,234,460.00	39%

From the review of the project documentation, the normal steps of a large GEF project have been followed in terms of monitoring and evaluation. In 2017 and 2018 the Project Implementation

Reports (PIR) as well as a financial audit were carried out in 2017. The recommendations, in particular those contained in the 2018 PIR, do not appear to have been taken into account, or at least, the measures taken by project management have not allowed progress to be made on the expected achievements of the project under Outcome 1.

- Stakeholder Involvement



In the meetings held at the pilot sites, the level of stakeholder participation in the project activities is checked. In Montecristi, we were able to meet with several representatives of the tourism sector, tourist guides, the nautical club, as well as with local authorities (Vice-Mayor). All corroborated having participated in the project activities, and agreed on the importance of the project in creating new tourist attractions in the Montecristi area, and having contributed to improving coordination between public and private entities around tourism in protected areas. In Samaná, we were able to take advantage of a meeting of the Samaná tourism cluster to talk to some local participants. Again, all agreed on the importance of collaboration with the project, and the need to deepen the work of institutional coordination between national and local authorities and the private sector linked to tourism. At the national level, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with some people from the private sector (ASONAHORES) and with public-private initiatives such as FUNDEMAR, who also pointed out the importance of involving private actors in joint initiatives, under the guise of public-private alliances.

In November 2017, an external consultation was held for consultancy on the "Guidelines for the inclusion of aspects related to coastal biodiversity in the elaboration of the national tourism plan", in which an important number of interested parties participated. In Montecristi, in September 2018, the workshop "Integration of coastal and marine communities in best practices of integrated management through the methodology of shared local environmental management" was organized. In June 2018, Project BC y T organized the 1st International Symposium on Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism in Santo Domingo with the participation of both the private sector and civil society organizations.

- Information

The BC&T Project has invested significant resources in technical studies and training workshops at the national and local levels. These resources generally appear to have been well invested, and add up to a critical mass of relevant information on biodiversity and tourism in the Dominican Republic. It is necessary to differentiate the local studies applied in the two pilot sites of Montecristi and Samaná from what is relevant information at the national level. Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that these studies and the information generated at the local level makes sense if it can also be channeled into advocacy efforts and the scaling up of good sustainable tourism practices. The guidelines for the incorporation of biodiversity conservation criteria in tourism activities is a good example of valuable information that can be translated directly into policy instruments. There are also a large number of other products generated by the project that could be further disseminated, through the creation of a website or Facebook page, or through a more effective communication strategy.

- Communication

This is probably the component that most requires investment and effort, as the project clearly lacks an adequate communication strategy. Although a communication consultancy was foreseen in the planning of activities for 2019, it needs to be rethought and expanded in view of the findings of this mid-term evaluation. The lack of achievements under Project Outcome 1 can be partially attributed to the lack of an ambitious communication strategy, aimed at mobilizing public opinion and supported by scientifically supported arguments about the need to promote a sustainable tourism policy in the Dominican Republic.



Likewise, the project has generated a large amount of material, information and technical knowledge, documentaries that must be used and translated into inputs and messages for public campaigns and mobilization and political advocacy work. In the recommendations, it is suggested to strengthen this component and expand the activities of the project in this area.

4.2 Sustainability

- Financial risks to sustainability

The financial sustainability of the actions initiated by the project will also depend on the project's capacity to mobilize resources beyond government counterparts or bilateral cooperation agencies. Being a project aimed at a service sector such as tourism, in which there are important capital contributions, there are many opportunities to explore figures of co-management, co-investment and shared public-private management. It is necessary to address these opportunities from now on as part of the final closing strategy of the project. The worst financial risk for this project would be that when the GEF's resources run out, all the efforts regarding the sustainability of the tourism sector in the Dominican Republic will be lost or not be a follow-up objective. Increased efforts are needed to identify opportunities for public-private financial management to ensure the sustainability of the project's sustainable tourism efforts.

- Socio-economic risks to sustainability

In terms of socio-economic risks to sustainability, the greatest risk identified has to do with how to consolidate the co-management arrangements in Montecristi and Samaná, between the private sector, community organizations and public institutions in charge of protected areas and tourism, during the remaining 15 months of project execution. The risk that these institutional arrangements remain unconsolidated is real. It is also critical to avoid creating false expectations in community organizations (as in the case of Salto de Limón in Samaná). There are clear opportunities to move forward to reduce these socio-economic risks in time before the project closes.

- Sustainability risks related to the institutional framework and governance

Without a doubt, the greatest risk presented by the Project is at the political level. While the Project has provided significant technical support to both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism, the Project still requires increased political advocacy, particularly at the level of ministerial offices and in the Legislative Assembly. If a higher level of political dialogue is not achieved at the highest level, it will be difficult to achieve the results of the project, particularly under Outcome 1 of influencing a new National Tourism Development Plan.

- Environmental risks to sustainability

Much of the tourism depends directly on climatic conditions and access to the country's beach areas. With the gradual impact of climate change, local environmental conditions will be impacted. There is a need to



manage short- and long-term climate risks at pilot sites, and to avoid creating investments in areas prone to impacts from extreme weather events or rising mean sea levels.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1 Overall Conclusions

The Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism project presents significant advances in terms of establishing an operational framework to protect biodiversity and ecosystems in areas highly vulnerable to the indirect effects of tourism development, which is Result 2 of the project. On the other hand, the implementation of Outcome 1, which seeks to establish or modify the legal and regulatory framework for tourism development to incorporate biodiversity conservation criteria, are still pending concrete results. And this was already pointed out by the two previous PIRs (2017, 2018).

Although the project as of March 2019 had already generated the technical studies to sustain the changes in policy instruments and the legal framework for sustainable tourism in the Dominican Republic, the necessary political agreements for its promulgation and implementation have not yet been finalized.

There is a "variable geometry" between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism. The project has failed to build a common vision and ambition between the two authorities. At the highest political level, the presidential goals continue to drive an accelerated growth of tourism, focused on a model of sun and beach, when the country's potential is diverse. There is inertia in the system.

Biodiversity in coastal zones has the particularity of occurring in open ecosystems, in which a wide range of factors and actors interact, both local, national and global. Sustainable tourism in coastal areas must be aware of its intrinsic complexity and fragility, from the perspective of strategic environmental assessment. The pilots in Montecristi and Samaná have important achievements, but the mechanisms for replicating and scaling them are not clearly seen. Among its actions, the project proposed a Monitoring System for the conservation of coastal and marine biodiversity, with the objective of evaluating its conservation status and as a feedback mechanism that allows taking the correct and timely management measures.

With the development of environmental guidelines for the tourism industry, the national coordination of the project proposed a new activity that effectively replaces the incorporation of biodiversity conservation criteria in the new National Tourism Plan. The 2018 PIR stated that this could not mean that the new activity of incorporating environmental guidelines in the tourism sector, under voluntary compliance schemes, could not replace a legal framework or a public policy. As the latter is not happening, the project felt the need to replace work on the legal framework with the development of environmental guidelines that will include criteria for biological diversity conservation that were developed in 2018. This could be seen in this mid-term evaluation. The project requires a higher political profile and a high-level advocacy strategy in the final year of the project to permeate senior authorities on the merits of a sustainable tourism model in the Dominican Republic.



The more systemic proposed outcomes of the project, which seek to influence the model of tourism development through modifications in the legal framework and in the formulation of new public policies, are an essential part of it. One of the key assumptions in the design of this project was precisely that the Government was committed to updating the national tourism plan with technical assistance from the project. In fact, this was a central part of the project and three years after the CEO's endorsement, the current situation partially threatens the *raison d'être* of this initiative. Among the important systemic challenges in the Dominican Republic in the tourism sector, there are several that deserve to be highlighted:

A high degree of informality persists in the sector, limiting the ability of operators to benefit from operating licences and certifications, and for whom the legal framework has limited impact.

There is a backlog in issues related to land use planning in coastal areas, solid waste management and critical infrastructure such as wastewater treatment, which have a direct impact on sustainability. Of course, this is not the direct responsibility of the Ministries of Environment and Tourism, and its solution exceeds the prerogatives of the project.

Although the Project has generated useful knowledge for the sustainable management of tourism, the regulatory and enforcement capacities of the authorities to monitor, avoid, reduce, mitigate and compare the negative impacts of tourism on biological diversity in the Dominican Republic have not improved. Once generated this knowledge should be used to ensure the provision of Global Environmental Benefits and the sustainability of tourism supply in the Dominican Republic. For this, other relevant institutional actors, such as the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development or the Parliament, need to be involved at this stage of project execution. There are opportunities for alliances with other programs such as BioFIN that offer significant clues as to how to influence development policies of productive sectors to incorporate criteria of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. UNDP, through its country office, also has an important role to play in generating the conditions for this advocacy effort.

The project also requires a shift in emphasis from the project's technical team. As stated in the 2018 PIR: Does the project team have the necessary political muscle and strategic understanding to revert this situation? This requires a complete rethinking of the composition of the project's technical team, and redirecting resources to give another emphasis to the work plan (2019) to invest more in a strategic campaign of communication and political advocacy by the project, as will be seen in the recommendations.

Although the Project has spent 50.5% of the budget allocated by the GEF, three years of implementation have passed (2016, 2017 and 2018) and there is still half of the budget to be spent in the upcoming 15 months. This is too little time to implement, and project management will have to opt for adaptive management to ensure project goals and avoid under-spending. In order to ensure more time to finalize pending outputs and product, and in the face of upcoming national elections, this Mid-Term Evaluation recommends requesting to the GEF SEC a No-Cost Extension of six months (until December 31st 2020) in order to complete the outstanding products.



4.2 Final Recommendations

- For the UNDP Country Office

There are levels of political advocacy that the project technical team will not be able to achieve without the assistance of the UNDP Country Office, UNDP has the convening power to invite decision-makers to the table and generate a national discussion on Sustainable Tourism, either by publishing a state-of-the-art policy brief (a White Paper) on the subject. This paper can then be disseminated at international events, and can also form a base input for proposing new policy instruments and standards in coordination with Parliamentary Committees and party factions.

Strengthen the political dialogue with the Minister of Tourism and his team to facilitate project closure and the sustainability of the actions initiated by the project. Also, internal coordination between Vice-Ministries in the Ministry of Environment will be critical to the success of the project, especially between Protected Areas and Coastal Marine tourism areas in Montecristi and Samaná. Also, the decisions taken in the coordination between MITUR and M.Ambiente should be elevated to the respective ministerial offices. This can be achieved in different ways:

Organize an International Forum on Sustainable Tourism, focused on ODS14, green and blue economy, take advantage of the Dominican Republic's entry into the Biofin Program to explore opportunities to strengthen sustainable tourism financing, and biodiversity monitoring in terms of its contribution to the tourism economy. Explore partnerships with private sector actors and in particular the mass tourism sector (Grupo Punta Cana, Tropicalia, Grupo Piñera) to position the issue of sustainable tourism and generate examples of good practice.

Seek more synergies with UNDP strategic programmes in order to leverage resources and maintain a strategic horizon. Explore links and synergies with the rest of the GEF portfolio in the country and incoming projects such as the MAPS process in the framework of Agenda 2030 in the Dominican Republic.

Explore opportunities to strengthen funding sources for sustainable tourism replicable practices.

Request a Six-Month No-Cost Extension for the Project through December 31st 2020 to offset delays attributable to national elections, in order to complete outstanding outputs and activities.

- For the Ministry of Tourism

Create the necessary spaces at the level of the Minister's office to formalize the public policy instruments proposed by the project.



Strengthen coordination between Vice-Ministries and the Department of Planning Director within MITUR to ensure ownership and implementation of the instruments developed by the project.

Organize the International Forum on Sustainable Tourism in 2020, with the support of UNDP, and use this event to promote the final results of the project.

Explore opportunities through diversified approaches to eco-competitiveness, through the National Competitiveness Council to outline the potential of sustainable tourism in the Dominican Republic, and with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, with the Dirección MyPymes, to create local micro-enterprises linked to the interface between biological monitoring and tourism services.

Seek institutional partners (NGOs) to expand advocacy capacities on issues of land use planning in coastal areas, for the implementation of regulatory frameworks, standards and codes of conduct for sustainable tourism.

- For the Ministry of Environment

Improve coordination between Vice-Ministries, especially between Environmental Management, Protected Areas and Coastal Marine.

Officialize and operationalize the products generated by the Project.

Harmonize criteria to promote Strategic Environmental Assessment in areas of high biodiversity impacted by tourism development, under the Environmental Impact Assessment System.

Promote the co-management of protected areas in biodiversity and tourism hotspots.

Take advantage of the knowledge generated by the coastal biodiversity project to disseminate it widely and use it for decision making.

Contribute to incorporating biodiversity conservation criteria in municipal level land use and territorial plans through recommendations to the National Federation of Municipalities.

- For the technical team of the Project

Project management should reorganize the work priorities of the technical team. In particular, it is recommended to reorder the technical team so that the two specialists (tourism, environment) of the Project can dedicate themselves to Outcome 1, and sub-contract the operational tasks in the field of Outcome 2. The project has to accelerate the level of financial execution. The project should also establish an execution strategy based on sub-contracts to ensure that all resources are executed in the remaining 15 months of the project's timeframe.

In addition, the composition of the technical team should be complemented by the inclusion of a senior tourism policy advisor, preferably Dominican, with previous experience in a decision-making position (former Minister of Tourism), who can permanently advise the National Project Coordinator on a project advocacy strategy.



The project's technical team should also have a specialist in strategic communication or political communication who can summarize, translate and disseminate the lessons generated by the project.

This contract should make it possible to improve the strategic communication (public campaign, publicity, political incidence) of the Project, generating "public opinion" on the subject of sustainable tourism.

This exit strategy should ensure the long-term governance of the actions initiated by the Project in the pilot sites (Montecristi, Samaná), through a territorial management of sustainable tourism. This sustainability should also be based on financing mechanisms, by visitation to the areas or by charging for tourist services, covered by co-management agreements between the state and local organizations. This can be achieved with the following measures:

- Integrate local actors to the Biodiversity Monitoring Program in coastal areas of the Vice-Ministry of Environment, such as local organizations to provide services (local alert, information for ecotourism) for tourism operators.
- The Biodiversity Monitoring program should operate both in the Ministry of Environment for control and in local organizations to provide services (local alert, information for ecotourism) for tour operators. Funded by co-management arrangements.
- Take advantage of the introduction of data collection technologies by drones, in coordination with tour operators and local offices of the Ministry of the Environment to monitor the state of biodiversity, the presence of fauna in visiting areas and the education and training of young people. Simple applications can allow local agents to monitor changes in mangroves, reef condition and coastal erosion with the use of drones. This initial investment of the project should include resources for the transfer of these teams to the local level and the training of technical personnel in charge of operating these teams. It should generate useful information for the protection and conservation of the resource, as well as to improve the experience by tourists while respecting the carrying capacities of the ecosystems.
- Take advantage of opportunities for synergies and joint actions with the JICA Project for Sustainable Community Tourism in Montecristi and Samaná, and create a co-management figure in Montecristi to administer and maintain the area. In Montecristi in particular, options can be explored in Morro National Park and on the mangrove platform with the participation of tour operators, park rangers, and other local actors. In Samaná, agreements between the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Tourism Cluster have yet to be finalized for the co-management of Salto de Limón, Bajo Yuna mangroves, and Los Haitises National Park, using a Ridge to Reef approach.
- Seek institutional partners (NGOs) to expand advocacy capacities on issues of land use planning in coastal areas, biodiversity monitoring, control of carrying capacity of places of visitation in real time, training and promotion of standards and codes of conduct for sustainable tourism.

The project management and technical team must evolve in the coming months in order to accelerate the level of financial execution. It must improve the strategic communication of the project and its level of



political advocacy to ensure that Outcome 1 can be achieved within the project's remaining timeframe. The team should be strengthened and supported at the highest level by the UNDP Country Office.

The project team should invest in the formulation of new relief projects beyond 2020 to deepen and consolidate issues that the project will not be able to concretize; it has to look for more synergies with UNDP strategic programs in order to leverage resources and maintain a strategic horizon, for example through links and synergies with the MAPS process in the framework of Agenda 2030 in the DR and with the start of the BioFIN program in the country that also offers opportunities to raise the level of discussion on the tourism development model in the Dominican Republic; and it should seek more synergies with UNDP strategic programs in order to leverage resources and maintain a strategic horizon, for example through links and synergies with the MAPS process in the framework of Agenda 2030 in the DR and with the start of the BioFIN program in the country that also offers opportunities to raise the level of discussion on the tourism development model in the Dominican Republic.

Explore alliances with the mass tourism sector (Grupo Punta Cana, Tropicalia, Grupo Piñera, for example) to position the issue of sustainable tourism and generate examples of replicable good practices.

5. ANNEXES

1. TOR of the MTR (excluding annexes to the TOR)
2. MTR evaluation matrix (evaluation criteria with questions, indicators, data sources and key methodology)
3. Sample Questionnaire or Interview Guide for Use in Data Collection
4. Valuation scales
5. Itinerary of the MTR mission

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

- Luciana Mermet, Deputy Resident Coordinator, UNDP Dominican Republic
- Inka Mattila, Resident Representative, UNDP Dominican Republic
- María Eugenia Morales, Programme Officer in Sustainable Development, UNDP Dominican Republic
- Jonathan J. Delance Fernández, National Coordinator, Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism Project
- Elia M. Martínez Moisés, Specialist in Sustainable Tourism, Coastal Biodiversity Project and Tourism
- Zoraida Zapata, Biodiversity Specialist, Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism Project
- Idalia Acevedo, Vice Minister of Coastal Marine Resources, Ministry of Environment



- Maribel Villalona, Director of Planning, Ministry of Tourism
- Patricia Abreu, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, Ministry of the Environment (GEF Focal Point)
- José Mateo, Director of Biodiversity, Ministry of Environment
- Zacarías Navarro, Director of Standards, Ministry of the Environment
- Francisco Ortiz, Director of Coastal Resources, Ministry of Environment
- Lenin Domínguez, Head of Planning, Ministry of Tourism
- Elaine De Lima, Legal Director, Ministry of Tourism
- Yarín Casquero, Director of Companies and Services, Ministry of Tourism
- Alba Russa, National Association of Hotels and Restaurants, ASONAHORES
- Iván Díaz, Sustainable Community Tourism Project JICA
- Lisette Gil, Sustainable Community Tourism Project JICA
- Takashi Aoki, Sustainable Community Tourism Project JICA
- Lourdes Russa, Consultant Lourdes Russa, Russa García y Asociados
- Sixto Incháustegui, Independent Consultant
- Melibea Gallo, Consultant, Chrysina S.A.

In Montecristi:

- Pedro Pablo Díaz (Provincial Director of Tourism).
- Osmarlin Minaya (Provincial Manager of M. Ambiente).
- Neris Rosario (President of Montecristi Tourist Cluster).
- Massiel Lemcke (Deputy Mayor of Montecristi)
- Elvio Bejarán (President of Club Nautico)
- Anatheydi Castillo (Project BC and T)

In Samaná

- Jesús Durán, President of the Samaná Tourism Cluster
- Fanny Jones, Executive Director Samana Tourism Cluster
- Amado Sella, Regional Director of Tourism
- Yocasta Green, Regional Director Ministry of Environment
- Israel Santana, Administrator Marine Mammal Sanctuary, Ministry of Environment
- Jimmi Núñez, Local Project Coordinator BC and T
- Rita Sellares, FUNDEMAR, Sub-Marine Museum Project in Las Terrenas

- List of documents examined
- Co-financing table (if not previously included in the body of the report)
- Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Form



- Signed MTR Final Report Approval Form
- Annex in a separate file: Audit trail obtained from comments received on the draft MTR report
- Annex in a separate file: Monitoring tools relevant to mid-term (METT, FSC, Capability Scorecard, etc.)