

Midterm Review Report

UNDP-GEF Project: Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management

GEF Project ID: 10007

UNDP-GEF PIMS Project ID: 5881

Country: São Tome and Príncipe

Region: Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Focal Area: Biodiversity, Land Degradation (GEF-6)

GEF Implementing Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Executing Agencies: Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment / General Directorate for Environment
Birdlife International



Legend

Key Biodiversity Areas

- ▬ KBA 6881 / IBA ST001, São Tomé Low Forest
- ▬ KBA 6882 / IBA ST002, São Tomé Montane and Cloud-Forests
- ▬ KBA 6883 / IBA ST003, São Tomé Northern Savannahs
- ▬ KBA 6885 / IBA ST005, Tinhosas Islands
- ▬ KBA 6884 / IBA ST004, Príncipe Forests
- ▬ KBA 45720, São Tomé Obô Natural Park & Buffer Zone
- ▬ KBA 45721, Malanza River Mangrove Ecological Zone

MTR timeframe	Date	Version	Comments
December 2023 – May 2024	24 April 2024	01	First draft

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Opening Page

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Name:	Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management
Project ID:	UNDP PIMS ID: 5881 GEF Project ID: 10007
Country:	Sao Tome and Principe
Region:	Africa, Small Island Developing States
Focal Area:	Biodiversity, Land Degradation (GEF-6)
UNDP Strategic Plan:	Under SP OUTCOME 1. Advance poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions. SP Signature Solution #4 SUSTAINABLE PLANET – PROMOTE NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET. SP OUTPUT 1.4.1 Solutions scaled up for sustainable management of natural resources, including sustainable commodities and green and inclusive value chains SP Output Indicator 1.4.1.2: Natural resources that are managed under a sustainable use, conservation, access and benefit-sharing regime: b) Area of existing protected area under improved management, d) Area under sustainable forest management, e) Biodiversity.
Funding Source:	GEF Trust Fund
Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme
Implementation Modality:	Supported National Implementation Modality (NIM)
Executing Partner:	Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment (MOPIRNA) / General Directorate for Environment (DGA)
Technical Executing Partners:	Two additional govt agencies take lead role in execution under delegation by primary executing agency DGA: Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB), MAPDR. Secretariat for Environment & Sustainable Development, Regional Government of Príncipe (RESD). And through a Responsible Party agreement with UNDP: BirdLife International - São Tomé Office (in consortium with NGOs Fundação Príncipe and Oikos) through a Responsible Party Agreement with UNDP

FINANCIALS:

Project Preparation Grant:	USD 150,000
GEF Project Grant:	USD 4,262,559
UNDP Finance:	USD 20,000
Total Administered by UNDP:	USD 4,282,599
Co-financing Total:	USD 6,224,000
Project Financing Total:	USD 10,486,559

PROJECT TIMELINE:

PIF Approval Date:	Jun 26 2018
CEO Endorsement Date:	May 20 2020
Project Document Signature:	Feb 16 2021

Midterm Review Report, 2023-2024

Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

Inception Workshop Date:	May 28 2021
Project Duration:	66 months
Closing Date (Planned):	Aug 16 2026

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Executive Summary

The project is being implemented under the GEF-6 multi-focal areas of Biodiversity and Land Degradation strategic Programs through the Assisted National Implementation Modality (NIM) with the Ministry of the Environment/ Directorate for the Environment and Climate Action (DAAC) (Please note that there was a restructuring of the Ministry in December 2023, and the Prodoc refers to the Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment (MOPIRINA) / General Directorate for Environment (DGA), which was the original name that has been kept throughout, as the MTR began in Dec 2023 and refers extensively to the Prodoc) supported by the UNDP as the GEF agency. Basic project information and finances incurred through midterm are summarized below in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Project Information Table

Project Title:	Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5881	PIF Approval Date:	June 26 2018
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	10007	CEO Endorsement Date:	May 20 2020
Award ID:	00118062.2	Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):	Feb 16 2021
Country(ies):	Sao Tome and Principe	Date Project Coordinator hired:	2021
Region:	Africa, Small Island Developing States	Inception Workshop date:	May 28, 2021
Focal Area:	Biodiversity, Land Degradation	Midterm Review date:	November 16, 2023
GEF-6 Strategic Programs:	Program 1: Improving Financial Sustainability and Effective Management of the National Ecological Infrastructure Program 2: Nature’s Last Stand: Expanding the Reach of the Global Protected Area Estate Program 3: Preventing the Extinction of Known Threatened Species Program 9: Managing the Human-Biodiversity Interface	Planned closing date:	Aug 16 2026
Trust Fund:	GEF Trust Fund	If revised, proposed closing date:	
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment (MOPIRINA) / General Directorate of Environment and Climate Action (DGA) Birdlife International		
Other execution partners:	UNDP (GEF Agency, Assisted NIM modality)		
Project Financing:	at CEO endorsement (USD)	at Midterm Review (USD)*	
[1] GEF financing:	4,262,559	1,850,331.63	
[2] UNDP contribution:	20,000	25,006	
[3] Government (In-Kind): DGA/DFB/RESD	1,104,000	N/A	
[4] Other partners (In-Kind/Grant): Birdlife International Valudo	4,800,000 300,000	2,957,259.19 245,025	

[5] Total co-financing [2+3+4]:	6,224,000	3,227,290.19
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1+5]	10,486,559	5,077,621.82

Project Description

The UNDP/GEF project "Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management" (PIMS#5881) addresses the critical environmental challenges faced by São Tomé and Príncipe, aiming to safeguard globally significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem services. São Tomé and Príncipe's profoundly unique biodiversity and forest ecosystems are increasingly threatened by infrastructure development, agricultural expansion, the unsustainable exploitation of terrestrial and marine resources and by the looming exploitation of offshore oil reserves. Despite the existence of one protected area on each island, their management greatly suffers due to sparse financial resources, insufficient staffing, and lack of technical capacity in both biodiversity and enforcement. This situation is exacerbated by outdated and weak legal and institutional frameworks which do not yet capture the transversal nature of Biodiversity conservation, undefined buffer zones around those protected areas, leading to unsustainable land and resource use, lack of environmental law enforcement, and limited livelihood alternatives for local communities. In response, the ambitious project known by the moniker "Liqueza Tela Non" (LTN) seeks to fortify national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, integrated land-use planning, environmental law enforcement, and protected area management. Furthermore, it aims to enhance the sustainability of charcoal production, a significant source of environmental degradation, and a driver for forest loss.

To achieve its multiple, ambitious, and interrelated objectives, the project is structured around four key components, each with specific outcomes, outputs, and activities. The *first* component focuses on enhancing systems and enforcement for biodiversity conservation, integrated landscape and natural resource management, and environmental law enforcement. It includes streamlining biodiversity conservation frameworks, mainstreaming environmental sustainability in land-use planning, strengthening civil society organizations, and aims to develop a nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system. The *second* component aims to improve the management, monitoring, and financing of Protected Areas (PAs) and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas, enhancing management effectiveness, developing capacity in biodiversity conservation, introducing new technologies for PA management, as well as securing finance for PA and biodiversity conservation more broadly. The *third* component addresses a direct threat to PAs and biodiversity, tackling one of the drivers of forest degradation and ecosystem loss, by analyzing the charcoal value chain and promoting efforts to move away from unsustainable charcoal production (which depends on critical forest resources). It does so by promoting more sustainable production methods (improved kilns, and alternative coconut-waste based charcoal), and encouraging the adoption of sustainable livelihoods for those involved in traditional charcoal production. Lastly, as a cross-cutting *fourth* component, the project emphasizes the use of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) systems, Knowledge Management and Communications, and Gender mainstreaming, by implementing best-practice strategies to guide project implementation and enhance inclusive and transformative outcomes. Through these interrelated strategic interventions, the project endeavors to create a sustainable future for São Tomé and Príncipe's precious and unique natural heritage, balancing ecological integrity with the well-being of local communities, and helping to establish a foundation for adequately valuing the country's particularly rich Biodiversity.

Purpose and Methodology

The Midterm Review (MTR) serves as a crucial monitoring tool to evaluate the progress towards the objectives and outcomes outlined in the GEF Project Document (which guides the project implementation), aiming to identify early signs of success or failure. This assessment is instrumental in checking whether the project is on track to achieve its intended results by its completion, and if not analyzing why this is the case and making suggestions for improved performance. The MTR's core objective is to provide an independent analysis of the project's progress at its midpoint, focusing on the identification of potential design issues, assessment of progress towards objectives and outcomes, and the documentation of lessons learned related to project design, implementation, and management. By assessing progress, monitoring implementation, identifying sustainability as well as environmental and social risks, and emphasizing constructive recommendations for adaptive management, the review seeks to improve outcomes. The methodology closely adheres to the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP Supported, GEF-Financed Projects, involving an evidence-based assessment that incorporates extensive feedback from stakeholders involved in the project's design, implementation, and supervision, as well as project beneficiaries, and through visits to relevant field implementation sites, and other background research. The evaluation also includes a review of relevant

documents, findings from field missions, and analysis based on the project results framework and GEF tracking tools, with findings integrated as recommendations for enhanced implementation in the project's latter half.

Evaluation Ratings

Evaluation ratings are summarized below in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table		
Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	Not Rated	<p>The project is well-aligned with the strategic objectives of GEF-6 under both the Biodiversity and Land Degradation focal areas, specifically addressing the improvement of protected area sustainability and management, mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into sectoral policies, and promoting sustainable land and forest management practices. It directly supports the improvement of management effectiveness of protected areas (Objective BD-1), integrates biodiversity conservation into production landscapes (Objective BD-4), enhances forest ecosystem services (Objective LD-2), and reduces resource pressures through sustainable land management (Objective LD-3).</p> <p>Additionally, the project aligns with São Tomé and Príncipe’s National Voluntary Targets towards Land Degradation Neutrality (which includes reducing illegal logging and improving charcoal manufacturing) and its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020), which aim to combine socioeconomic development with biodiversity conservation through improved institutional and human capacities, reforestation of degraded areas, and enhanced management of protected areas.</p> <p>Finally, the project design is also in alignment with the UNDAF/Country Programme Document for São Tomé and Príncipe (2017-2021), particularly in enhancing employment and economic competitiveness through diversified economic activities that both enhance climate change resilience and are themselves more resilient to climate change. It supports improved natural resources management and biodiversity conservation, while contributing to inclusive growth and improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations. This strategic alignment in theory ensures that the project not only addresses critical environmental challenges but also contributes to the socioeconomic development of the community, ideally reinforcing the sustainability of project outcomes.</p> <p>The project strategy also considers baseline and concurrent / planned projects and efforts by other donors and actors, and thereby focuses on terrestrial biodiversity and includes a component which is largely focused on transforming the currently unsustainable charcoal value chain, which contributes to forest degradation. This strategy misses an opportunity to tackle biodiversity in an integrated manner in a country with equally significant marine biodiversity and almost no institutional, legal, or financial framework (nor the necessary technical capacity) in place for its conservation. The attempt to transform the charcoal value chain at the level of charcoal makers, while promising and necessary, also does not prioritize arguably more severe and immediate drivers of biodiversity loss and forest degradation such as infrastructure development (roads, ports, dams, buildings, oil and gas), agriculture expansion and illegal logging for timber mostly used in construction. Regardless, although the charcoal intervention is relevant and promising, there is low ownership of the initiative among government stakeholders and a legitimate concern that the lost livelihoods of charcoal makers will not be adequately replaced, as well as a hesitation around private sector involvement, which has led to long delays, endangering the overall likelihood of success. Adaptive management in this case is essential and has not yet been applied.</p> <p>The four project components are designed to be fit together to tackle various aspects of biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management with Component 1 focusing on legal, institutional and capacity concerns in the realm of biodiversity more broadly, Component 2 dealing more specifically with improved management, monitoring and finance related to protected areas, Component 3 targeting the charcoal value chain and impacted livelihoods and Component 4 transversally implementing results-based planning, knowledge management and gender responsive approaches across all project activities. Although this is a solid and commonly used structure for GEF projects, in this context the project is somewhat overambitious in its individual outputs taken together and underestimates the need for upstream activities that may be necessary for more successful outcomes, as well as the institutional risks. Accordingly, dependencies between intended outcomes (and certain outputs) leads to a cascading effect on unmet targets, whereas a</p>

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		<p>simpler project structure may be better placed to build on past successes and achieve transformative impact. The Gender Strategy and Action Plan is similarly ambitious and complex, and although well-constructed and aspirational, its 52 targets may be reasonably reduced to better capture the efforts of the team to change long-held norms. Overall, the project should be streamlined and due emphasis placed on coordination, in response to the complex and ambitious project structure.</p> <p>It is also worth noting that the project evaluation matrix contains several indicators which are not SMART and are further weakened by baseline figures that are not validated or accurately estimated. The complexity of the project extends to its implementing partners/ responsible parties which are numerous. Although this ensures broad and comprehensive stakeholder engagement, drawing together relevant government departments, large and small NGOs, the private sector, and community level interventions, it leads to unique challenges in coordination which is rendered more difficult by the assisted NIM modality, and inadequate oversight by UNDP.</p> <p>Overall, the Project Strategy is theoretically solid, well-justified, relevant and backed by extensive consultation and expertise, but would benefit greatly from a simplified and streamlined approach that better accounts for the particularities of the context.</p>
Progress towards Results	Objective Achievement: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	<p>The project objective ties together the ambitious interrelated components of the project. It is certainly the case that the project has, at its midterm point, moved closer to the objective of safeguarding significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management. This is evidenced by positive results on the capacity building scorecard, renewal of UNESCO Biosphere Status in Príncipe, several activities around technical and administrative capacity building, the initiation of a consultancy to revise the environmental base law, start of activities around planting charcoal-making trees, and biodiversity and sustainable charcoal awareness-raising activities at institutional and community levels. Notably 21 High Conservation Value areas have been established by decree law, a management plan was prepared for the National Park of Príncipe (PNP). The GEF Protected Area Management Effective Tracking Tool (METT) scores also increased, meeting the midterm targets for the Obo Natural Park (PNOST) and PNP, and a web portal (Clearing House mechanism) was created which amalgamates a range of biodiversity related information and resources available nationally.</p> <p>The project objective, however, also includes biodiversity conservation and sustainable land and natural resource management through integrated land use planning, an essential component of the strategy, which has been blocked indefinitely at a high level of approval. Although this was out of the project’s direct control, the significant political risk should have been better considered in the project design. Similarly, efforts to improve environmental law enforcement and to further enhance protected area management through improved monitoring have also proceeded very slowly. Finally, the last element of the project objective includes enhancing the sustainability of charcoal production, and though there has been some progress at the community level, and many preparatory activities, the key agreement which establishes the Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement between the principle private sector partners in the project (Valudo and EcoBlasa) has yet to be formalized at the time of writing and lacks essential government buy-in. Accordingly, the project will certainly achieve part of its objective, but major shortcomings are expected with respect to the original design of the project, unless there is a significant shift in the second half of implementation.</p>
	Outcome 1 Achievement: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	<p>Outcome 1 is focused primarily towards laying the essential legal and institutional groundwork for the conservation of biodiversity at the national level and had as one of its primary outputs the finalization of a national territorial land-use plan (PNOT). Unfortunately, long delays in having this plan approved, as well as significant delays towards the creation of an institutional structure to protect both marine and terrestrial biodiversity have proceeded slowly. Although there is good political will and hope for the creation of the latter structure during the project lifetime, the approval of the PNOT remains doubtful, and underlines the essential tension between biodiversity conservation and other types of development which may seriously threaten said biodiversity including large-scale infrastructure (deep-water port, dams, roads), other public works and agricultural development, which may not favor sustainable use of resources unless carefully planned.</p>

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Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		<p>Capacity has been developed regarding environmental surveillance, but lack of agreement between the Directorate General of Environment and Climate Action (DGA) leading the project, and the Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity (DFB), a key government partner and responsible party, has also stalled efforts to train environmental / forest guards. Notably, the successful efforts were made by the Secretariat for Environment and Sustainable Development at the Regional Government of Príncipe (RSESD) to hire guards but was again blocked due mostly to financial and operational issues, causing discouragement among the team and underscoring the importance of much better coordination and financial approval processes.</p> <p>Some progress has been made, however, on revising the Environmental base law, with a consultancy on board at the time of writing, which will provide a good basis for unlocking and guiding other institutional reforms, as well as a much-needed overhaul of weak environmental and social impact assessment laws. This output will also hopefully better define institutional mandates, as well as the legal process around environmental infractions, for which there is currently no established modus operandi. Support has also been provided to environmental CSOs and CBOs, though some attention to the constraints and needs of these organizations is required to optimize collaboration.</p>
	<p>Outcome 2 Achievement: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)</p>	<p>Outcome 2 is focused on improved management of PAs and key biodiversity areas, as well as securing sustainable finance for their improved operation, as well as to more broadly support and sustain biodiversity conservation into the future. Baseline METT scores were assessed for both targeted PAs on Sao Tome (PNOST) and Príncipe (PNP) and mid-term and end-of-project targets were set, which were achieved at the time of review.</p> <p>Progress was also made towards the establishment of a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF), which was not yet legally established at the time of review (and with no funding yet mobilized) which was designed by an international consultancy under the supervision of Birdlife International (the leading NGO acting as Responsible Party). Under the auspices of the project, awareness around the CTF was built, key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Blue Economy were engaged, and an induction workshop was held representing key institutional stakeholders, where the operational plan for the fund was validated.</p>
	<p>Outcome 3 Achievement: Unsatisfactory (U)</p>	<p>Outcome 3 is focused on the transformation of the charcoal supply chain, away from the unsustainable use of valuable tropical forest timber leading to forest degradation, towards the innovative use of coconut waste for the creation of charcoal briquettes. This outcome was designed to be attained through activities which include the introduction of improved kilns, capacity-building and awareness around biodiversity and forest conservation as well as training at the community level, the establishment of a Public-Private Partnership agreement with two private sector entities (Valudo and EcoBlasa) to upscale the production of coconut charcoal briquettes, as well as livelihood activities at the community level to replace lost income from charcoal-making and target a driver of unsustainable charcoal use.</p> <p>Unfortunately progress on these goals has been very slow, with various community level activities proceeding (although livelihood activities had not yet started in Príncipe at the time of the MTR) and the PPP between the govt and the private sector not yet established at the time of writing. Government buy-in of the PPP appears low, and significant challenges remains regarding a robust analysis of charcoal value chain, including pricing, uptake of the new briquettes within communities, and reliably quantifying the impact on charcoal-makers, as well as the long-term success of livelihood initiatives, many of which have been known to fail.</p> <p>This outcome also did not adequately consider the significant difference in context between Sao Tome and Príncipe in regard to the feasibility and impacts of the planned activities under this component, and a discrepancy in regard to the purchase of one vs two semi-industrial kilns remains in the project document (two are indicated in the evaluation matrix and only one in the budget). Finally, although the component was designed with significant stakeholder consultation, there were changes in leadership over the project lifetime, and it was evident that key stakeholders in government were not convinced that this was the best option for the use of funds due to various concerns (noting that the change of government and subsequent buy-in is outside the direct control of the project). This sheds significant doubt on whether</p>

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Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		<p>this component will be successfully implemented as planned and requires significant adaptive management to achieve either the planned, or a related outcome.</p>
	<p>Outcome 4 Achievement: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)</p>	<p>Outcome 4 is focused towards cross-cutting activities in Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and Communications.</p> <p>A dedicated team as part of the Project Management Unit (PMU), located in both Sao Tome and Principe respectively, were recruited with significant delays, with duties related to overseeing implementation of project activities, and for follow up on the M&E framework, extensive gender targets (according to the Gender Action Plan) and a range of community level activities. Delays in recruitment of the relevant staff, the complexity of the project structure, physical distance between project staff and partners (and with key government counterparts such as the project director) as well as overall challenges in coordination, and significant financial and operational challenges stemming from the assisted NIM modality somewhat hampered work in this area.</p> <p>Project implementation reports (PIRs), and follow-up of M&E processes were impacted by the lack of coordination between partners, and the departure of the CTA. Another notable weakness was the lack of revision of the project’s evaluation matrix, despite several indicators that were not appropriate vis-a-vis the baseline conditions. Regardless, significant efforts on the part of PMU staff meant that decent progress was made on community-level activities, knowledge management and communications. It is evident however that the project requires dedicated follow-up on the project evaluation framework, vastly improved internal coordination and communication, knowledge sharing, as well as better external communication as most external stakeholders are unaware of project goals or accomplishments. There was also little attempt of integration of the project’s M&E framework monitoring with existing national monitoring efforts, and little monitoring of project risks, given that there was no safeguards specialist hired as indicated in the Prodoc, and no systematic monitoring of the project’s social and environmental risk log. At the time of writing of the MTR, the project had lost its CTA to an early departure as well as the M&E specialist, and the gender specialist but gained a focal point within UNDP, presenting peril and promise respectively for the project going forward. That is, the project would benefit greatly from the immediate hiring of a CTA and M&E specialist to fill the gap left by the departures but will likely be bolstered by great oversight by UNDP.</p>
<p>Project Implementation and Adaptive Management</p>	<p>Unsatisfactory (U)</p>	<p>Project implementation and adaptive management have both been significantly below expectation. The project was notably slow in getting started with GEF CEO endorsement obtained in May 2020, but the government did not approve the project document until Feb 2021, with project inception taking place a full year after endorsement. Long delays in the recruitment of key project staff including first the CTA, followed by the project coordinator who came onboard mid 2021, followed by the M&E and gender specialist in Sao Tome, finishing with the coordinator in Principe and the gender specialist in Principe who were not hired until 2022. Accordingly, delivery was able to increase pace in 2023.</p> <p>Although the Assisted National Implementation Modality (NIM) is designed/ intended to foster strong country ownership, the context of project-to-project management of government budgets through development assistance (which makes up over 95% of STP’s government budget) itself presents severe challenges for country ownership, decision-making and long-term planning. Furthermore, given the results of HACT assessments, and an assisted NIM modality applied, UNDP has taken a mostly hands-off approach while largely controlling project funds and related disbursements, leading to a situation where procedural and administrative delays in UNDP, particularly in regards to payments, but also in regards to procurement and recruitment processes (including for numerous specialized technical consultancies required by the project) have caused significant delays, and more profoundly a lack of morale and significant frustration among project staff and stakeholders. Long delays in payments, up to several months, mean stakeholders are less willing to participate and project staff is demoralized.</p>

Figure 2: MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table		
Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		<p>Although the project was designed to include many important stakeholders in biodiversity conservation in STP at the national level, including the lead environmental agency (DGA), the department with the most significant expertise in forest management and PAs (DFB), the regional environmental department of the government in Príncipe (RSESD), and both international and local NGOs that have the required technical expertise in areas such as biodiversity monitoring, the numerous responsible parties, and hence complicated management structure have led to significant challenges. Without a strong lead within the PMU or oversight from UNDP, and changes in leadership which have therefore meant changes in the official Project Director, compounded by delayed hiring, means that cycles of bringing key project stakeholders up to speed has been one major cause of delays in all components of the project.</p> <p>Furthermore, key project stakeholders and decision makers are physically distant from each other, with PMU staff isolated in a building owned by UNDP (Casa Ambiente), the Project Director and other key government staff in their respective ministries, Birdlife (the lead NGOs responsible party) in its own building, further separated from the other NGO's with which it is in a consortium one of which is located in Príncipe (Fundação Príncipe), and finally the Príncipe government partners and staff on a separate island. One of the NGOs in the consortium responsible for carrying out livelihood activities on Príncipe, Oikos, has no office there and similarly, the private sector actors key to the success of Component 3 focused on the charcoal value chain have no presence in Príncipe, presenting significant logistical difficulties. There have also been significant weaknesses in coordination, communication and knowledge sharing between various implementation partners/ responsible parties, with not all actors aware of the activities of others, lack of follow-up on agreements and inconsistent reporting (reflected in the PIRs). The heavy reporting and administrative requirements of UNDP exacerbate the issue, with the overall feeling that individual Responsible Parties (both government and NGOs, as well as the private sector actors) feeling they do not derive enough financial benefit from the project to dedicate the adequate financial or human resources to its successful implementation.</p> <p>The range of activities and complexity of the project, some oversights in project design, constraints of the context, low technical capacity in biodiversity, and heavy bureaucratic processes that are frequently blocked at several levels as well as broader political and financial constraints have all contributed to major shortcomings in project implementation. Another significant challenge of the complex project management structure has meant that reporting lines and responsibilities are not clear, underlining the need for a more hands-on approach. Although the project had budget allocated for a Chief Technical Advisor who left at the project mid-point, no new CTA has been hired and the project has since lost the M&E specialist and the gender specialist in Sao tome, all of whom had significant responsibilities in regard to project delivery. The sparseness of project steering committee (PSC) meetings has also been an impediment to project decision-making and are particularly important in the context of so many responsible parties / implementation partners. The lack of PCS meetings has had a direct impact on the ability of project staff to apply adaptive management and make required updates to the project results framework. The need for better coordination and adaptive management is clear.</p> <p>Financial delivery has also been slow, with approximately 30% of the GEF implementation grant expended through midterm, as of 30 June 2023. Co-financing is not being adequately tracked and financial reports are opaque, and there are significant limitations to the cost and financial planning of both the PMU and Implementing Partners given that finances are currently largely controlled by UNDP. The HACT assessment results identified the DGA as having significant risk, leading to this management arrangement. The possibility to implement advances of funds (instead of paying upon receipt) therefore depended on the opening of a bank account for the project and creation of supplier in Quantum. The necessary elements to create the supplier were available in June 2024.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has also been in challenge, with little revision of the project's M&E framework despite notable weaknesses, no integration of monitoring risks identified in the project Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) and in general over-ambitious targets in the project Gender Action Plan, which do not capture the</p>

Figure 2: MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table		
Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		groundwork required to start norm change and sensitize stakeholders to address gender as a topic within a biodiversity project. This is understandable given the particular and often cumbersome nature of donor requirements but underlines the importance of national capacity building not only on technical elements, but in regard to administrative and financial management to increase ownership in and competence around these processes.
Sustainability	Moderately Likely (ML)	<p>The project design explicitly accounts for the need for a view towards long-term sustainability and the current progress towards outcomes, though mixed across components and slower than planned, shows promise for certain fundamental changes to occur regarding the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable resource use. The risk assessment for the project was thorough and identified the most important risks, including operational, social and environmental and political, but adaptive management once these risks have manifested has not yet occurred and the MTR presents an opportunity to re-align the project according to its most promising outcomes, and re-assign budget with a view towards sustainability of those outcomes.</p> <p>For instance, the revision of the base environmental law, provides a solid foundation for integrating biodiversity conservation and related enforcement in a cross-cutting manner, and will improve key issues such as mandates, surveillance, and integration into planning processes such as Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). The current project director is active in this area and well-placed to make transformative change. Creation of an institutional structure for biodiversity will also be key, and a major achievement if prioritized in the second half of the project. Similarly, given that financial sustainability is a key issue, the establishment of a Conservation Trust Fund, its robust funding and good governance, are pivotal to ensure the proper management of protected areas, the bolstering of local knowledge and capacity in biodiversity, as well as innovative initiatives in conservation, and may alleviate to some extent the significant constraints that come from operating principally through project budgets. Sustainability of monitoring and enforcement budgets is also a big challenge (including stable funding to implement park management plans and to pay environmental guards) and should also be prioritized to uphold the improved METT scores achieved. It is also essential that safeguards instruments are updated (including but not limited to the SESP, and creation of a Grievance Mechanism), and implementation of the identified safeguard actions and their monitoring is necessary to moving forward with activities that have been identified as potential safeguard risks, all of which have already been identified in the safeguard instruments developed.</p> <p>There are several factors, however, that diminish the prospects that project results will be sustained. Firstly, the fate of the National Land Use and Management Plan (PNOT) is uncertain and a fundamental instrument to ensure planning considers biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource use priorities, particularly in the face of myriad competing development priorities and land use. Limited progress has also been made on Component 3, which aims to transform the charcoal value chain, and through much groundwork has been laid in this direction, including a refinement of the processes of production, significant sensitization and training at the community level and various studies on the economic and social aspects, it is essential to prioritize the livelihoods of charcoal makers in the long-term and to understand the implications of the charcoal shift in the context of STP to secure buy-in from relevant decision makers. A decision should be taken this Component and the establishment of a PPP and the purchase of a charcoal kiln at the next PSC meeting and in conjunction with GEF. If the decision is made to not go forward then the same meeting should decide how to reallocate funding with priority given to the sustainability of other outcomes, including robust park management and monitoring, sustainable livelihoods with the requisite follow-up for communities and mobilizing long-term conservation funding.</p>

Project Progress Summary

The project, aimed at safeguarding terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem services, has made notable strides at its midterm evaluation. Achievements include the renewal of the Príncipe’s Biosphere Reserve status, distribution of monitoring and surveillance equipment, validation of PA management plans, sensitization of communities and pilot activities around improved charcoal, approval of a decree law establishing 21 new areas of High Conservation Value (HCV), the initiation of a consultancy to revise environmental laws, raising awareness about biodiversity and sustainable charcoal practices and the creation of online portal for Biodiversity related information and research at the national level. These efforts have been reflected in improved scores on the GEF Protected Area Management Effective Tracking

Tool (METT) for both the Obo Natural Park (PNOST) and the Príncipe National Park (PNP), underscoring progress towards the project's objectives.

Despite these advances, the project faces considerable challenges, that could impede the realization of its full objectives. Key challenges include delays in the approval of a crucial national land use plan affected by prolonged bureaucratic delays and political hurdles that risk undermining the project's long-term goals, that will likely not be resolved in the lifetime of the project. The project's capacity building efforts have led to some development in environmental surveillance, although disagreements between key government partners have stalled training initiatives and the deployment of guards for enforcement. Similarly, the institutional framework for protecting biodiversity is lagging, also partly due to political jostling between departments perceived as more well-placed to deal with biodiversity, though some progress has been made in regard to revising the base Environmental Law, which will be an essential accomplishment in its own right. The transformation of the charcoal supply chain—the focus of component 3, aimed at mitigating an important driver of forest degradation—has not progressed as planned due to the lack of formalization in a pivotal public-private partnership and government buy-in, both around using project budget to partner with the private sector (rather than bolster scarce public budgets) and also in regards to its efficacy in actually having an impact on deforestation, coupled with concern around the livelihoods of traditional charcoal makers. Efforts to establish a Conservation Trust Fund are advancing, despite not being legally finalized yet, and its operationalization and good governance will be essential to ensure sustainability of project results. These blocks underscore the necessity for adaptive management to address emerging challenges and ensure the project's goals are met by its conclusion.

Overall, while the project aligns well with strategic objectives and has achieved certain milestones, significant challenges remain that necessitate a re-evaluation of strategies and enhancement of governmental collaboration, as well as better coordination between all partners to ensure the successful continuation and completion of its objectives. The project's ambitious scope, involving multiple key stakeholders from government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, will benefit greatly from improved coordination and communication, exacerbated by geographical dispersion and a complex management structure, as well as from a streamlined design. Finally, financial and project delivery have been compromised by slow financial disbursement and related heavy bureaucratic processes, with only about 30% of the GEF grant spent by mid-2023.

Summary of Conclusions

Project Relevance and Strategic Alignment: The project is well aligned with national priorities, focusing on biodiversity and conservation that address significant environmental challenges. Its initiation was strategically planned to enhance the implementation of the Aichi targets and adhere to the broader frameworks set by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reflecting the objectives highlighted in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). This alignment ensures that the project not only tackles immediate environmental concerns but also contributes to long-term sustainability goals.

Challenges in Project Kickoff: Although the project holds immense potential for impactful outcomes, it faced considerable delays in its early stages, primarily due to prolonged negotiations with multiple partners and slow recruitment processes. These delays highlight the need for refined strategies to streamline operations, ensuring that future activities are executed without further setbacks, thereby maintaining the project's momentum.

Decentralized Implementation and Engagement: The project adopts a decentralized implementation strategy that effectively promotes local involvement, enhancing stakeholder engagement and community participation. While this approach brings several benefits, including increased local support and direct engagement, it requires robust and well-coordinated mechanisms to ensure that activities across various locations are harmonized and lead to uniform achievement of the project's objectives.

Workforce and Capacity Challenges: Staffing inadequacies and varying capacities across partner organizations pose significant hurdles to the project's effectiveness. Addressing these challenges through targeted capacity-building initiatives and strengthening the recruitment processes is crucial for enhancing the operational efficiency and impact of the project.

Legal and Regulatory Enhancements: The project underscores the necessity of updating legal frameworks to effectively address contemporary conservation challenges. Strengthening legal structures is fundamental to enhancing enforcement capabilities and ensuring that conservation efforts are both effective and compliant with current environmental standards.

Financial Sustainability and Viability: Establishing sustainable financial mechanisms is essential for the project's longevity. The project endeavors to create reliable financial structures that can support conservation activities in the long term, emphasizing the importance of financial stability for ongoing environmental efforts. Sustainability of project

results after GEF funding ceases has been addressed in the project design, particularly regarding integrating the professional appointments / focal points into the organizations of the implementation partners.

Community Involvement and Acceptance: Effective community engagement has been pivotal to the project's acceptance and success. By involving local communities in the decision-making process and ensuring they benefit from conservation activities, the project has managed to secure essential local support, which is critical for the sustainability of its outcomes.

Expansion of Protected Areas: The project has successfully expanded the scope and area of protected zones, significantly contributing to national and regional conservation goals. This expansion not only enhances biodiversity preservation but also increases the ecological resilience of these areas, providing long-term environmental benefits. Emphasis however should be placed on operationalizing management plans and improving monitoring.

Continuous Stakeholder Engagement: The project recognizes the importance of maintaining continuous dialogue with all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone involved is aligned with the project's goals and actively participates in its activities, however, has a weakness in implementation in this regards. Ongoing engagement and better coordination both internally and externally is crucial for adapting project strategies to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Need for Enhanced Training and Capacity Building: Continuous capacity enhancement and training for all project participants are fundamental to sustaining the achievements of the project. By investing in human capital, the project aims to build a knowledgeable workforce that can carry forward the conservation efforts effectively and efficiently.

Socioeconomic Considerations: Integrating socioeconomic benefits into the project's framework is essential for justifying the conservation efforts to the broader public and garnering widespread support. By demonstrating the economic and social advantages of biodiversity conservation (and the potential of a new charcoal value chain), the project can enhance its relevance and sustainability.

Resource Management Efficiency: There is a pressing need to manage financial and human resources more efficiently to meet the project's ambitious goals. Streamlining resource allocation and utilization will be crucial in ensuring that the project delivers its intended outcomes without unnecessary expenditures.

Public-Private Partnership Challenges: While public-private partnerships (PPPs) are integral to the project's strategy, aligning these partnerships with overarching project goals is necessary to prevent conflicts and ensure that all parties are working towards common objectives. The project has not yet developed an adaptive management strategy for implementation of Component 3.

Risk Management Deficiencies: The project currently lacks comprehensive risk management practices, which are essential for navigating uncertainties in project execution. Establishing robust risk management frameworks can help in pre-empting potential issues and devising effective mitigation strategies.

Impact on Biodiversity Conservation: The project has made commendable strides in conserving biodiversity, though sustaining these efforts remains a challenge. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of conservation strategies will be key to maintaining the gains achieved and expanding their scope.

Institutional Support and Leadership: Strong leadership and institutional backing are imperative for navigating the operational and bureaucratic challenges that the project faces. Enhanced leadership can drive the project towards achieving its objectives more effectively, ensuring that administrative hurdles do not impede progress.

Adaptability to Local Conditions: The project must remain flexible and responsive to the local environmental, social, and political conditions. This adaptability is crucial for ensuring that the project remains effective and relevant in varying contexts, thereby maximizing its impact.

Through project midterm, the actual date considered having been 30 December 2023, a total of USD 1,850,332 or 24.43% of the USD 4,282,559 GEF implementation grant have been utilized. The project will need to sustain a high level of efficiency in the second half to ensure available funds are disbursed judiciously towards achievement of the intended outcomes.

Recommendations

The MTR recommendations, outlined below in **Figure 3**, have been formulated with the aim of improving project effectiveness and enhancing the likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases.

No.	Recommendations	Responsible Entities
1.	Enhance Operational Efficiency: Address procedural delays in payment and procurement by streamlining processes and improving internal coordination within UNDP and among project	UNDP, PMU, PSC members

No.	Recommendations	Responsible Entities
	<p>partners. Expedite procurement and payment processes (with follow up from UNDP focal point) to maintain partner and staff morale and efficiency. Implement more efficient fund management practices by empowering the Project Management Unit (PMU) with direct control over financial resources, thereby improving response times and operational efficiency. Ensure that DGA opens project account and fund are transferred according to Annual Work Plan. Ensure that all implementing partners report activities according to costs. Allow for greater autonomy in decision making on the use of funds by RSESD in Príncipe to expedite activities.</p>	
2.	<p>Improve Coordination and Communication: Lean more heavily on the project steering committee for adopting decisions and following up on the LTN, including deciding on the fate of Component 3 in the next meeting, as well as streamlining project activities, revising the Logframe targets and indicators and reallocating budget. Establish robust mechanisms for better coordination and communication among stakeholders, including for the Project Implementation reports and establishing a SharePoint with all project documents. Establish clearer lines of reporting, communication and coordination mechanisms among all stakeholders, including government bodies, UNDP, partners, and the community, to ensure cohesive project execution.</p>	<p>PMU, with inputs from implementation partners</p>
3.	<p>Enhance Capacity in both Project Management and Biodiversity Conservation: Increase training and support for national institutions and NGOs in project management and administration, reporting to GEF, and risk assessment, to improve efficiency. Assign focal points within the DGA and DFB to help address specific project-related technical and administrative issues more efficiently, ensuring progress and facilitating better coordination. Emphasize technical capacity building within government bodies on biodiversity conservation, as well as among enforcement staff, eco-guides, and community members.</p>	<p>UNDP, PMU, implementation partners</p>
4.	<p>Apply Adaptive Management, Review and Adjust Project Indicators and Targets: Review and revise the project indicators (targets and baselines) to ensure they are realistic, measurable, and achievable within the project's timeline according to the suggestions in the MTR. Ensure that a new M&E expert is hired, and that future implementation of the project is guided by the log frame and the monitoring matrix is used. Ensure that UNDP provides guidance and training on results-based management and reporting and fills the M&E gap, and updates monitoring framework and project information for all partners and eventually for the terminal evaluation team. For activities that are removed or revised (for example those related to the PNOT) reallocated budget towards the areas suggested in the MTR accordingly.</p>	<p>PMU, PSC members, UNDP-GEF regional technical specialist</p>
5.	<p>Prioritize Improvement of Legal and Institutional Frameworks: Collaborate with legal experts to update environmental laws and ensure that consultants have access to all project documents including the MTR. Ensure these frameworks include clarified institutional mandates, collaboration between Ministries involved in Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity and PAs, as well as eco-tourism, and penalties for non-compliance, and mechanisms for transparent and accountable enforcement.</p>	<p>PMU, PSC members, UNDP-GEF regional technical specialist</p>
6.	<p>Evaluate and Adapt PPP Frameworks: Review and adjust public-private partnership frameworks to ensure alignment with strategic goals and make a final decision regarding this at the next PSC. Enhance the framework and operational guidelines for PPPs, ensuring alignment with national development goals and the sustainability of environmental conservation efforts and livelihoods if taken forward.</p> <p>Supplement information in the value chain analysis to thoroughly characterize market aspects of sustainable charcoal. If the decision is made to not go forward, consult with GEF on the revision of project objective and the re-allocation of funds from this component towards other urgent activities, such as operationalizing the PA management plans, long-term budgets for enforcement, and systematic Biodiversity monitoring.</p>	<p>PMU, UNDP, implementation partners</p>
7.	<p>Approach Biodiversity Conservation in an Integrated Manner: Develop a unified conservation strategy that incorporates marine biodiversity, leveraging synergies with terrestrial strategies to enhance overall ecological integrity. In absence of and pending land use planning instrument, ensure through coordination that biodiversity and PA management takes into account infrastructure and agriculture, and that robust revised Environmental and Social Impact Laws are applied and enforced.</p>	<p>PMU, implementation partners</p>
8.	<p>Speed up implementation of funding for Conservation Trust Fund, Analyze potential for eco-tourism income and additional flexibility for Príncipe activities and funds: Prioritize the funding and governance structure of the Conservation Trust fund for future sustainability of all project</p>	<p>PMU, UNDP, implementation partners</p>

No.	Recommendations	Responsible Entities
	related initiatives. Strengthen the institutional framework and support in Príncipe, possibly through the establishment of dedicated institutes for biodiversity conservation in the CTF, to facilitate / incentivize pro-biodiversity development pathways and more effective fund management. Consider raising funds from eco-tourism initiatives and/or a tourism tax by carrying out an appropriate analysis.	
9.	Optimize Coordination Among Government Agencies, NGOs and Donors: Improve inter-agency collaboration between DGA, DFB, and regional authorities and integration of project monitoring frameworks with established or new monitoring frameworks within agencies and NGOs (for example Red List monitoring). Establish regular communications and structured decision-making processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in regard to how donor funding is used (for example to avoid duplication of activities).	PMU, implementation partners
10.	Mitigate Livelihood Risks, Expand Community Engagement & Awareness Programs and Integrate Economic Incentives into Project Design: Incorporate the thorough evaluation of the socio-economic impacts of project interventions on traditional livelihoods, emphasizing and designing further sustainable alternative livelihood strategies in close consultation with affected communities, as well as strategies for long-term monitoring and support. Ensure that economic benefits are clearly linked with conservation efforts to foster community support. Increase efforts to engage communities and raise awareness about sustainable practices. Consider giving a larger budget to Oikos for livelihoods on Sao Tome island that includes more integrated and long-term support, and then shifting the livelihood component on Principe to Fundação Principe with a greater budget allocation.	PMU, implementation partners
11.	Gender Inclusion and Empowerment: Hire a new Gender specialist in Sao Tome to continue to integrate gender considerations into project activities by developing targeted training and capacity-building initiatives for women and ensuring gender-balanced participation as per the GAP. Revise the GAP where necessary for more feasible targets.	PMU
12.	Develop a Comprehensive Risk Management Framework: Use the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure recommended mitigation measures and track monitoring plan. Train PMU staff and other key personnel to monitor risks both environmental and social but also operational and incorporate the monitoring plan into the annual work plan. Identify critical risks and develop strategies to mitigate them effectively, particularly in regard to the livelihoods of charcoal makers. Refer to and update the safeguards instruments already completed including the Human Rights Risk Assessment and Human Rights Action Plan. Establish a project level grievance mechanism.	UNDP/ PMU
13.	Enhance Advocacy for Environmental Prioritization and Foster High-Level Governmental Support: Engage with senior government officials to secure backing and facilitate smooth project implementation. Strengthen efforts to advocate for environmental sustainability within the national agenda, leveraging the energy of the Project Director and new Ministerial position to foster greater governmental engagement and support. Continue to build and maintain strong engagement and political will among new directors and ministers for sustained project momentum and success.	Government Partners/ UNDP
14.	Prioritize Protected Area Management, Enforcement and Monitoring: In the second half of the project apply a view in terms of technical tasks, reallocation of funds and PMU expertise on protected area management. Consider hiring a CTA with expertise on this aspect of the project and realign the log frame to reflect greater emphasis on legal and institutional frameworks, as well as technical capacity in monitoring and enforcement.	UNDP/PMU

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BD	Biodiversity
BLI	Birdlife International
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DFB	Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity of São Tomé & Príncipe / MAPDR
DGA	General Directorate for the Environment of São Tomé & Príncipe / MOPIRNA
ESIA	Environmental & Social Impact Assessment
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
HCV	High Conservation Value
HRIA	Human Rights Impact Assessment
IP	National Implementing Partner / Executing Agency (DGA in the present project)
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
KM	Knowledge Management
LDC	Least Developed Country
LTN	Liqueza Tela Non
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
METT	GEF PA Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MAPDR	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development
MOPIRNA	Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSP	Medium Sized Project
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
PA	Protected Area
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
PNOST	Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé
PNP	Parque Natural do Príncipe
PNOT	National Land Use and Management Plan (PNOT – Plano Nacional de Ordenamento do Território)
POPP	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures

Midterm Review Report, 2023-2024

Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

PPG	GEF Project Preparation Grant
RSESD	Regional Secretariat for Environment & Sustainable Development, Regional Government of Príncipe
RP	Responsible Party
RTA	UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound
STAP	Scientific Technical Advisory Panel (GEF)
STP	São Tomé & Príncipe
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-GEF	UNDP Global Environmental Finance Unit

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Review

The objective of the Midterm Review (MTR) is to gain an independent analysis of the progress mid-way through the project, to assess what is working and note the successes, but also a key milestone in the project to identify what may not be working, identify blocks and challenges and develop solutions going forward to increase the chances of intended outcomes and the sustainability of project results. The Midterm Review is also an opportunity for all key stakeholders to reflect on the project strategy, look at changes to context and relevance, examine the progress towards intended results, and record the reality of project implementation. By assessing the project at the halfway mark, MTRs provide an opportunity to make sure a project is on track, and if not, to look at why that may be the case. By understanding the 'why' the project can be adjusted to better ensure the envisaged global environmental benefits, which are the goal of all projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

1.2 Scope and Methodology

The MTR is an evidence-based assessment, relying on extensive feedback and reflection from individuals who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, and a review of available documents and findings made during field visits. The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation follows the guidelines outlined in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting midterm reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects¹.

To prepare the current assessment an International Expert on Biodiversity and Sustainable Natural Resources Management was hired, as well as a National Consultant, both of whom undertook extensive document review and analysis, conducted interviews with a wide range of relevant stakeholders (both remotely and in-person), and visited relevant field sites where project activities are currently being implemented or where implementation is planned. A mission to Sao Tome and Principe took place from Jan 6th, 2024, to January 31st, 2024, which included time with the Project Management Unit (PMU), all implementing partners, primary stakeholders (beneficiary communities) as well as field sites in both Sao Tome and Principe. The mission itinerary is compiled in **Annex 1**, and key project stakeholders interviewed for their feedback are listed in **Annex 2**.

The MTR consultant completed a desk review of relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project implementation reports, financial reports, project monitoring tools, extensive background documentation and key project deliverables (including knowledge products and outputs prepared by project staff and external consultants). A complete list of information reviewed is compiled in **Annex 3**.

As a data collection and analysis tool, an evaluation matrix (see **Annex 4**) was used to guide the review process. Evidence gathered during the fact-finding phase of the MTR was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings. Unfortunately the MTR team did not received a significant part of the project information package in the inception phase and it took several months to follow-up on key documents, but key project information has since been compiled by the MTR in the project's sharepoint.

The project management unit (PMU) will provide inputs on appointments made and seconded staff during the MTR review; this information is to be compiled in **Annex 5**. The PMU also provided a self-assessment of progress towards results, using the project results framework template provided by the MTR consultant in the MTR inception report, although this was provided several months after requested. The project results framework was used as an evaluation tool, in assessing attainment of project objective and outcomes (see **Annex 6**). Suggested modifications to the results framework, based on recommendations of the MTR, are compiled in **Annex 7**.

Co-financing details were not yet provided UNDP or by the implementation partners at the time of writing but will be summarized by UNDP in the co-financing table compiled as **Annex 9** to the MTR report, during the MTR review period. The MTR consultant also reviewed the midterm GEF Tracking Tool files provided by the PMU; the filled-in tracking tools are annexed in a separate file to this report. The MTR consultant summarized the preliminary findings of the MTR at the end of the mission into a set of debriefing slides, which were sent to the UNDP CO January 2024.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The MTR report starts out with a description of the project, indicating the duration, principal stakeholders, and the immediate and development objectives. The findings of the review are then broken down into the following aspects:

¹ Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects, 2014, UNDP-GEF Directorate.

- Project Strategy
- Progress towards results
- Project implementation and adaptive management
- Sustainability

The report culminates with a summary of the conclusions reached and recommendations, formulated to enhance implementation during the final period of the project implementation timeframe.

1.4 Rating Scales

Progress towards results and project implementation and adaptive management are rated according to a 6-point scale, ranging from highly unsatisfactory to highly satisfactory. Sustainability is evaluated across four risk dimensions, including financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks. According to UNDP-GEF evaluation guidelines, all risk dimensions of sustainability are critical: i.e., the overall rating for sustainability is not higher than the lowest-rated dimension. Sustainability was rated according to a 4-point scale, including likely, moderately likely, moderately unlikely, and unlikely.

Ratings for progress towards results:

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (U)	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

Ratings for project implementation and adaptive management:

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for sustainability (one overall rating):

Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key Outcomes on track to be achieved by the project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
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Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some Outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on Outcomes at the Midterm Review
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key Outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project Outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Rating scale definitions are also presented in **Annex 10**.

1.5 Ethics

The review was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the MTR team has signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (**Annex 11**). The MTR consultant ensures the anonymity and confidentiality of individuals who were interviewed and surveyed. In respect to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, results are presented in a manner that clearly respects stakeholders’ dignity and self-worth.

1.6 Audit Trail

To document an “audit trail” of the evaluation process, review comments to the draft report will be compiled along with responses from the evaluator and documented in an annex separate from the main report. Relevant modifications to the report will be incorporated into the final version of the MTR report.

1.7 Limitations

The review process for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the project spanned from November 2023 to May 2024, encompassing a range of activities detailed in the Terms of Reference (Annex 12). These activities included preparatory tasks such as document review and remote interviews, a field mission conducted in January, ongoing follow-ups on documents and data, a desk review, and the finalization of the report. Despite the comprehensive planning, the MTR encountered several challenges and limitations that impacted its thoroughness and accuracy.

One significant challenge was the timing of the MTR's initiation, which coincided with the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) of the project attending the Conference of the Parties (COP), rendering him unavailable for the preliminary orientation of the MTR. Compounding this issue, the CTA resigned early in the project lifecycle and was subsequently unavailable to help prepare the necessary project information package (though this is primarily the responsibility of UNDP) or to participate in an interview until after the holiday period. The limited project information package that was provided prior to the field mission contained only a fraction of the relevant project documents and data (catalogued in the inception report). Consequently, much of the MTR team's time during the inception phase, the field mission, and subsequent follow-up was devoted to acquiring the missing data. Furthermore, the MTR team faced difficulties obtaining many key documents, including crucial financial information, information from Responsible Parties, and studies and analysis carried out before the formation of the PMU, which remained incomplete at the time of the review. The MTR team leader when hired was given an indicative mission date of late November, but the delays in the hiring of the MTR national consultant and the return of the Project Director from the COP, and then the holiday period led to the mission date being pushed into January.

Language barriers also presented challenges, as interviews were conducted in Portuguese and hence notes following interviews were translated and cross-checked, and the project documentation was prepared in a mix of Portuguese and English, also leading to extra time in the translation of documents for the purpose of presenting results in English in the MTR report. Additionally, critical cost information was not provided until late March and was delivered in a format that required significant time to decipher and process. Other essential documents, including Project Implementation Reports, were incomplete not appropriately collating information from Implementing partners, which also led to delays.

Field visits, although extensive, could not cover all designated biodiversity hotspots due to logistical constraints, limiting the assessment to two of the three identified areas. The overall project delays in implementation and a complex project management structure also reflected poorly on the MTR process. The level of engagement from most of the Project Management Unit (PMU) was notably low, except for the project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) coordinator. While other PMU members were responsive during the mission, the follow-up on requested information was exceedingly slow. Delays were further exacerbated by UNDP's slow response to information requests and logistical and administrative support related to the mission.

2 Project Description

2.1 Development Context

The UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for São Tomé and Príncipe (2023-2027) emphasizes support for enhancing biodiversity conservation, sustainable land and natural resource management, which are central to addressing the socioeconomic and environmental challenges faced by the country. The programme is designed to contribute to the achievement of sustainable, resilient, and transformative change in São Tomé and Príncipe, in line with the national 2030 Agenda for Transformation and the African Union Agenda 2063. This includes efforts to strengthen capacities for resilience and recovery, promote sustainable management of biodiversity, and support economic diversification while enhancing the skills and employability of women and youth. The programme's focus areas, such as inclusive social systems, climate action, green and blue growth, and transparent and accountable institutions, are geared towards improving governance, promoting sustainable development, and enhancing environmental conservation.

The document outlining the goals of the DGA and other relevant ministries and national objectives in the realm of biodiversity science, protected areas, buffer zones, and high conservation value (HCV) forests reveals a national commitment to conserving biodiversity, managing natural parks, and mitigating impacts on forest ecosystems. This includes efforts to reduce illegal logging, control the introduction and spread of invasive species, and protect areas critical for endemic and threatened species. The establishment of the Obô Natural Parks underlines the country's dedication to conserving its most valuable natural habitats.

The project strategy also aligns well with the strategic and operational objectives of the STPs National Forest development Plan (2018-2030). The strategic objectives of this plan include increasing coherence and coordination when it comes to the National Forestry policy, sustainable management of forest resources (including strengthening organization and technical capacities of CSO and the participation of vulnerable populations), significantly improving forest monitoring and combating illegal logging, and promoting the creation of alternative activities that generate employment and income in rural areas.

The UNDP's strategic focus on leveraging global networks, scaling up best practices, and accelerating support for legal and policy reforms is aligned with the national objectives to enhance biodiversity conservation, strengthen the management of protected areas, and promote sustainable land and natural resource management. Additionally, the UNDP's emphasis on digital solutions to improve service delivery and decision-making complements the national efforts to enhance the management and conservation of protected areas and to address socioeconomic challenges.

In summary, the objectives of the GEF project, "Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management," align well with the development context of São Tomé and Príncipe, as well as with the priorities and goals of the DGA, other government ministries, and the UNDP. This alignment underscores a coherent approach towards achieving sustainable development, enhancing biodiversity conservation, and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources in São Tomé and Príncipe.

2.2 Problems the Project Sought to Address

São Tomé and Príncipe face significant challenges in preserving its unique biodiversity amidst rapid development pressures. Despite its small size, the islands boast an exceptionally rich diversity of species, many of which are globally significant. With a land surface area that is only between 964-1001km², it is classified amongst the countries with the highest levels of endemic species in the world and is part of the Guinean Forests of West Africa hotspot, identified as the 3rd most important ecoregion for the conservation of forest dependent birds worldwide, and contains seven Key Biodiversity Areas. Furthermore, the island of Príncipe was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2012, with its status renewed for another 10 years in 2023.

The primary drivers of biodiversity loss include habitat destruction due to infrastructure development, agricultural expansion, sand mining, unsustainable charcoal production, and illegal logging fueled by charcoal production and construction wood demand. These activities not only threaten the islands' ecological balance but also their potential for sustainable development. As part of the project design process, and in the PPG phase of the project development, the critical barriers to tackle these divers were comprehensively addressed. More specifically these were identified as follows:

Barrier #1: Gaps in legal and regulatory framework and weaknesses in the poorly resourced institutional framework, regarding biodiversity conservation, PA management, land-use planning, and charcoal

Barrier #2: Weak compliance with and enforcement of environmental laws including on PAs and natural resource extraction.

Barrier #3: Weak national civil society in field of biodiversity and forest conservation and sustainable natural resource management

Barrier #4: Limited staffing and resources impede effective on-the-ground management of biodiversity and natural resources in protected areas and their buffer zones.

Barrier #5: Lack of incentives for technology transfer and alternative sourcing to make charcoal more sustainable.

Barrier #6: Rural poverty and limited (sustainable) livelihood opportunities

Barrier #7: Limited individual technical capacity and results-orientation

Barrier #8: Weak knowledge management (use and sharing of information, best practices and lessons learnt)

Barrier #9: Limited gender mainstreaming

As outlined above, a major barrier to cohesive and sustainable management of biodiversity (and more broadly regarding natural resource management and other critical and interrelated issues such as climate change) is the outdated legal and regulatory frameworks. These frameworks lack operational clarity, particularly concerning biodiversity conservation and land-use management, and the supporting institutional structures have yet to be developed or adequately defined and resourced. Importantly, Institutional frameworks suffer from under-resourcing (both financially and in terms of human resources) and there are significant conflicts over mandates, as well as some conflicting priorities and focus within Ministries which hamper effective governance.

Additionally, the enforcement of environmental laws is particularly weak, due again to under resourcing, as well as limited awareness and capacity, further complicated by inadequate civil society engagement and insufficient technical skills among stakeholders. Financial constraints severely limit the on-the-ground management of protected areas as well as long-term planning, and in a country with exceptionally rich and globally significant marine biodiversity (in addition to terrestrial biodiversity, which was chosen as the focus of this project), marine protected areas are only now being created at the time of writing, with support from the Blue Action Fund. There is a notable lack of incentives for sustainable charcoal production, and it remains tied to additional income streams in peri-urban and rural areas, as well as traditional cooking methods, and hence the unsustainable practice persists. Rural poverty limits the adoption of sustainable livelihoods, and those that are promoted in a top-down manner through donor-funded projects, often lack the follow-up or longer-term technical backstopping to become successful or reach a meaningful scale.

The issue of limited technical capacities, results-orientation as well as weak knowledge management are all tied together and apply across projects implemented within the same government agency, sometimes within the same project among various actors, as well as between various donors and among ministries working in silos and is severe. This is partly due to the fact, that STPs already very small government annual budget, which is around USD 110 million, is 90-95% from development assistance, making it hard to plan long term, harder to plan cohesively and with sustainability in mind, and makes the country significantly more vulnerable to the lure of the revenue opportunities which exist in the exploitation of oil and gas resources, which would certainly be devastating for both terrestrial and marine biodiversity, as well as for STP's climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. It should be noted here as well that a barrier that was not identified in regard to prioritizing biodiversity loss at the national level is the fact that STP, like many other African nations and countries across the global south, faces an intractable debt crisis created and maintained by international financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF); STPs national debt is over 77% in relation to GDP. Furthermore, plantation agriculture and fisheries are the main sectors of the economy, and efforts to raise production and revenue in these areas without adequate planning and good environmental enforcement also pose a significant threat to biodiversity. Tourism also plays a significant role, and although a clear vision regarding eco-tourism exists in Príncipe, this is not necessarily the case for Sao Tome.

Overall, there is a need for improved long-term planning, cohesive goals, and governance regarding environmental management, better knowledge management and capacity building (both among national and international stakeholders) and finally on gender mainstreaming and inclusion of marginalized populations to ensure inclusive and effective environmental governance. In response to these challenges, a comprehensive strategy prioritizing the protection of terrestrial biodiversity and high conservation value forest ecosystems was developed, which attempted to directly address many of the barriers identified. This approach includes enhancing the management and financing of protected areas, implementing effective land-use planning and management, and promoting compliance with environmental laws. A novel aspect of the strategy is the establishment of a sustainable coconut-based charcoal value chain, aimed at reducing the impact of traditional charcoal-making practices, which is complemented by efforts to develop alternative sustainable livelihoods.

In summary, addressing the intertwined barriers of legal inadequacies, institutional weaknesses, financial limitations, and socio-economic challenges is critical for the successful conservation of São Tomé and Príncipe's precious biodiversity and the sustainable management of its natural resources. Although the project did not and could not address the myriad factors impacting long-term biodiversity loss and sustainable resource management, it developed a project strategy which focused on legal and institutional reforms, as well as direct interventions to tackle improved PA management and decrease illegal logging.

2.3 Project Description and Strategy

The project's objective is to effectively safeguard globally significant biodiversity and ecosystem services in Sao Tome and Principe through four interrelated project components which would strengthen national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resources management, improve integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement as well as enhance protected area management and the sustainability of charcoal production. This objective was envisaged to be achieved through the following six outcomes distributed among three substantive components, dealing with 1) Institutional and legal frameworks and enforcement related to biodiversity, and improved land use planning 2) Improved management and monitoring of PAs 3) Finance for biodiversity conservation and PAs and one cross-cutting component related to 4) M&E, Knowledge management and Gender. The four components were designed to overcome the barriers outlined above, in Section 2.2 and are summarized in further detail below, with reference to the expected outputs under each outcome:

Component 1: Enhancing systems and enforcement for biodiversity conservation and integrated landscape and natural resource management, integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement.

Outcome 1.1: Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management.

Output 1.1 Frameworks on biodiversity conservation, land-use planning, and charcoal strengthened and streamlined.

Output 1.2 Environmental sustainability and biodiversity considerations mainstreamed in land-use planning and investments.

To achieve outcome 1.1 the project aims to enhance systemic frameworks and individual capacities for integrated land and biodiversity management by improving legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks. This involves revising protected areas' laws, establishing more effective management models for conservation, and ensuring environmental sustainability in land-use planning. The outcome also lays the foundation for tackling unsustainable charcoal production (the focus of Component 3) by revising exploitation frameworks and promoting sustainable practices. Institutional reforms are expected to clarify mandates and improve coordination, focusing on environmental law enforcement and biodiversity mainstreaming in planning processes.

Outcome 1.2: Individual Nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system agreed and emplaced.

Output 1.5 Key environmental CSOs and CBOs strengthened.

Output 1.3 Framework and delivery system for integrated environmental surveillance and enforcement emplaced.

Output 1.4 Capacity developed on environmental law surveillance and enforcement.

To achieve outcome 1.2, enhancing individual capacities and systemic frameworks for biodiversity and integrated land management, the project is setting up a comprehensive environmental law enforcement system. This includes initial human rights risk assessments, the formation of a national platform for environmental law enforcement, and a thorough, participatory process to establish an effective legal framework. Intensive capacity building efforts will target government officials, legal professionals, and environmental guards, supplemented by community outreach to foster compliance and participation in environmental surveillance. Additionally, the project aims to fortify environmental CSOs and CBOs, improving their strategic management and operational capabilities, crucial for sustaining biodiversity conservation efforts and engaging communities in sustainable practices.

Component 2: Management, monitoring and financing of PAs and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas.

Outcome 2.1: Protection of the two existing PAs and adjacent HCV forest areas enhanced.

Output 2.1 Management effectiveness of protected areas and adjacent High Conservation Value areas enhanced.

Output 2.2 Capacity developed on biodiversity, zoology/botany, ecosystem services, conservation, and PA management.

Output 2.3 New technologies, systems and tools for information-based biodiversity and PA management employed.

To enhance the protection of existing Protected Areas (PAs) and adjacent High Conservation Value (HCV) forest areas, this outcome focuses on operationalizing governance structures, developing and updating management plans, and bolstering infrastructure for improved surveillance, management, and tourism. This effort includes engaging multiple stakeholders for participatory decision-making and planning, alongside significant investments in rehabilitation and construction to facilitate management interventions and visitor experiences. Key to this strategy is the integration of data on HCV forests into new zoning systems, promoting innovative management models, and expanding technical capacity and awareness across stakeholder groups.

Outcome 2.2: Finance for biodiversity conservation and PA management increased.

Output 2.4 Proven structures and tools to capture and distribute new finance for the national system of protected areas and biodiversity created.

This outcome aims to boost biodiversity conservation and protected area (PA) management financing in São Tomé and Príncipe by developing a comprehensive Finance Plan, which includes assessing financial needs and gaps. It will establish an international Conservation Trust Fund to diversify funding sources, acknowledging the limited domestic resources and the need for external funding. This effort will involve creating a database on biodiversity and PA financing, legal registration of the Fund, and an international campaign to capitalize the endowment, with assistance from national and international.

Component 3: Reducing Forest degradation and ecosystem loss from unsustainable charcoal-making reduced and compensated.

Outcome 3.1: Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated.

Output 3.1 Charcoal supply and value chain analysis prepared to identify further options for reducing wood-based charcoal extraction drivers.

Output 3.2 More sustainable charcoal kilns and charcoal sources mobilised.

Output 3.3 Awareness raised, and capacity developed on more sustainable charcoal production and alternatives.

Output 3.4 Fast-growing native charcoal tree species planted in degraded forests and shade plantations.

This outcome was designed to achieve reduced PA expansion costs per hectare through a paradigm shift from direct purchase of land to lower cost reserve expansion and management mechanisms in partnership with communities and private landowners, as well as utilization of innovative expansion funding mechanisms such as offsets. It is aimed at reducing the costs for PA expansion per hectare with 60% over a baseline of USD 500/ha. Interventions are envisaged to focus on, but are not limited to, Component 1 sites.

Outcome 3.2: Prevalence of traditional high-impact charcoal-making livelihoods reduced in favour of more sustainable options.

Output 3.5 Community stakeholders consulted, and sustainable livelihoods introduced and adopted.

This outcome is focused on combatting forest degradation from charcoal production, the project will undertake a comprehensive charcoal value chain analysis to identify solutions, introduce efficient kiln technologies and establish a coconut-based charcoal value chain. Awareness and capacity building on sustainable charcoal production were planned, along with reforestation efforts using fast-growing native species. These activities are designed to mitigate the environmental impact of traditional charcoal-making practices, contributing to the overall goal of reducing forest degradation.

Component 3: M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender.

Outcome 4.1: M&E, knowledge management and gender work fully and successfully implemented.

Output 4.2 Gender strategy and action plan operationalised to guide project implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

Output 4.1: M&E and knowledge management plans implemented.

This outcome aims to fully implement monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management, and gender inclusion strategies, employing a dedicated M&E officer for oversight, as well as gender officers in the PMU in both Sao Tome and Principe. Emphasizing participatory approaches and adaptive management, it seeks to enhance project visibility, fulfill international commitments like establishing a national biodiversity clearing house, and operationalize an ambitious gender strategy. This component ensures inclusivity in monitoring, decision-making, and stakeholder engagement, promoting women's participation across project activities and stakeholder platforms, and aligning with

international best practice, as well as UNDP and GEF standards for environmental and gender-sensitive project management.

2.4 Implementation Arrangements

The project is implemented by the Directorate of Environment and Climate Action (DGA), referred to as the Implementing Partner (IP) at the Ministry of Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and the Environment, with operational and technical support by UNDP through the Assisted National Implementation Modality (NIM). The initiative also has one Responsible Party, Birdlife, which leads an NGO consortium made up of three NGOs: Birdlife, Oikos and Fundação Príncipe. The Responsible Party executes approximately 30% of the budget directly. In May 2022, the IP also selected the Secretariat for Environment & Sustainable Development at the Regional Government of Príncipe (RSESD) as Responsible Party yet until now the latter has not directly executed any financial resources. The Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB) at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development has also a key role in the project for co-delivering several Output packages related to the charcoal/forest management interface (2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5), and ensure that the project’s activities are well coordinated with its own activities including especially those of the GEF-6 DFB/FAO/TRI Forest Landscape Restoration Project that it leads on.

2.5 Project Timing and Milestones

Project Milestones:

- Project duration: 66 months
- PIF Approval Date: Jan 26 2018
- Preparation Grant Approved: May 25 2018
- CEO Endorsement Date: May 20 2020
- Project Document Signature Date : Feb 16 2021
- Project Inception Workshop: May 28 2021
- Midterm Review: Nov 16 2023
- Closing Date (Planned): Aug 16 2026

The project identification form (PIF) was approved on June 26, 2018, and following the project preparation phase, the project obtained approval for implementation by the GEF CEO on May 20,2020. The project inception workshop was not held until May 28, 2021, after the STP government signed the project document on Feb 6, 2021, almost a year after endorsement. The DFB and Gov of Secretariat of Príncipe signed onto the project respectively on 11/06/2021 and 20/11/2022 and the MOU with Birdlife International (Responsible Party and lead of the NGO consortium) was signed on 11/06/2021 X .

The 66-month duration project, in this case, has a closing date of Aug 16, 2026. Recruitment of the full team of the PMU took some time, starting with the position of the Project Coordinator (August 2021), followed by the Chief Technical Advisor on September 2021, and the M&E specialist (April 2022) as well as the gender and finance experts in Sao Tome in August 2022, followed by the project coordinator and gender expert in Príncipe significantly later in October 2022. Shortly before and during the MTR period saw the resignation of the CTA, as well as the M&E officer and then gender officer in Sao Tome. The main stakeholders for the project and their expected roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the stakeholder involvement plan in the project document, are listed below in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Stakeholders and roles	
<u>DGAAC</u>	<p>Implementing Partner in charge of overall project implementation.</p> <p>From the project inception to MTR Review, DGAAC did not exercise adequately project coordination which is one of its main tasks. The project needs a substantially better coordination among executing partners and responsible parts. The exchange of information and best practices was insufficient. Apart from a few activities (Inception Workshop, participatory appraisals of community needs) DGAAC had a very weak performance in all other assignments which is attached to it in the PRODOC.</p>

<u>DFB</u>	Very important LTN’s executing partner, at the same level and same responsibilities as DGAAC, BLI and Regional Secretariat, but it performed very low, due to permanent confrontation between it and DGAAC, and Regional Secretariat as well. Among DFB’s task are reforestation and livelihood activities, but up to now, it did not perform any of these activities, though they sent proposal to PMU.
<u>SRBAAD</u>	(Regional Secretariat for Biosphere, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development) is now a responsible party and an executing partner as well. It has been very active in its assignments and responsibilities, looking forward to doing more than Sao Tome island institutions, only halted by lack of financial resources and dependency on decision come from DGAAC. SRBAAD need more financial and decision autonomy.
<u>DSGC</u>	(Directorate of Geographical and Cadastral Services) that should collaborate on specific action of Component 1 related to land use at PNOT. DSGC has not been a LTN partner so far.
<u>UNDP</u>	has been a decisive and an unavoidable partner for the project. Nonetheless UNDP needs to shad more attention, particularly on providing in-time cash transfer, and undergo quicker procurement, and assign a staff in its office exclusively dedicated to the project.
<u>BLI</u>	(Birdlife International) is a Responsible Party and an Executing Partner and has been performing its assignment and getting project results. It leads a consortium of NGOs composed by Oikos – Cooperação e Desenvolvimento and Fundação Príncipe.
<u>Valudo,</u>	it is ready to accomplish with its responsibilities of creating a coconut charcoal value chain, and at the project inception it undergone some activities, but is now stuck by government indecision
Other stakeholders referred to in the PRODOC	have had so far minor or nil contribution to the project: Regional Department for Public Works, Urbanism and Spatial Planning, Regional Directorate of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Culture, Regional Directorate for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Department of Land Affairs – MAPDR, National Platform for Forest and Landscape Restoration of São Tomé and Príncipe – DFB, Implementation Cell of the National Land Use and Management Plan, National Committee on Climate Change, General-Directorate for Natural Resources and Energy, Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development – MAPDR, Directorate of Study and Planning – MAPDR, Rural Development Support Centre & Regional Delegations, Agricultural Technical Improvement Centre – MAPDR, Agricultural and Technological Research Centre (CIAT) – MAPDR, Directorate for Fisheries – MAPDR, General Directorate for Tourism and Hospitality (DGTH), Ministry of Defence and Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and Public Administration and Human Rights. IFAD, FAO, AfDB, WBG, EU, IUCN, FONG-STP, Platform for Responsible and Sustainable Tourism, We Are Changing Together (WACT), Mar Ambiente Pesca Artesanal (MARAPA), and Associação Programa Tatô (APT)

3 Findings

3.1 Project Strategy

3.1.1 Project Design

The full-sized project was approved under the GEF-6 replenishment cycle and aligned to the GEF-6 Biodiversity and Land Degradation focal areas. Specifically, regarding Biodiversity, the project responds to Objective BD-1: *Improve sustainability of protected area system*, Programme 1-1: *Improving financial sustainability and effective management of the national ecological infrastructure*, Outcome 1.2: *Improved management effectiveness of protected areas*. It also responds to Objective BD-4: *Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes and seascapes and sectors*, Programme 4-9: *Managing the human-biodiversity interface*, Outcome 9.2: *Sector policies and regulatory frameworks incorporate biodiversity considerations*. In regards to Land Degradation, the project addresses Objective LD-2: *Forest landscapes: generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services, including sustaining livelihoods of forest dependent people*, Programme 2-3: *Landscape management and restoration*, Outcome 2.2: *Improved forest management and/or restoration*, as well as addressing Objective LD-3: *Integrated landscapes: reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape*, Programme 3-4: *Scaling up SLM through the Landscape Approach*, Outcome 3.1: *Support mechanisms for SLM in wider landscapes established*.

The project also contributes directly to the STP's National Voluntary Targets towards Land Degradation Neutrality (2018), committing the country to reducing the conversion of forests and savannas to other land uses by to less than 5% by 2023, reducing illegal logging from 85% to 15% by 2030, restoring about 32,000 ha of degraded forests and landscapes by 2025, and improving the charcoal manufacturing process by 50%, thereby improving productivity (efficiency) and reducing waste.

Furthermore, the project strategy aligns very closely with STPs National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), 2015-2020, whose global vision is to strengthen the institutional and human capacities to promote diversified economic development, which will contribute directly and indirectly to the conservation of biodiversity, thus combining socioeconomic development of communities with the preservation and conservation of biodiversity, in a sustainable way. It is most closely aligned with the Strategic Axis, *"The Conservation of Forest Ecosystems and their Biological Diversity*, sub-objective 1, Strengthening of in situ conservation, which recommends the following actions: 1. Awareness of the population residing in the vicinity of protected areas; 2. Monitoring protection and conservation measures of protected areas; 3. Perpetuation of coherent policies and funding for protected areas; 4. Reforestation of degraded areas.

The project is also contributes to the UNDAF/ Country Programme Document for Sao Tome and Principe 2017-2021 particularly in regards to the Outcome *"Employment and competitiveness are assured by diversifying the economy and resilience to climate change, improving the quality of life of poor and vulnerable populations and access to financial aid and markets by youth and women"* Output 3.3, *"Public and private institutions and rural communities are able to apply sustainability principles for better use of natural resources, biodiversity conservation and protection for inclusive growth."*

The first three project components have been designed to be mutually supportive to address biodiversity loss and ecosystem integrity, with Component 1 focusing on enhancing systems and enforcement for biodiversity conservation as well as integrated land use planning, Component 2 dealing with more directly with the financing of PAs and key biodiversity zones and Component 3 aiming at reduced forest degradation by providing an alternative to the currently unsustainable charcoal value chain. The fourth cross-cutting component deals with knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation processes and requirements, and gender mainstreaming across all components of the project.

The project has a national scope, with outcomes, outputs and activities that touch national level institutions and legal frameworks, but also act at the local level with targeted interventions in charcoal producing communities. The project focuses on both Obo Natural Park of Sao Tome (PNOT) as well as Obo Natural Park of Principe (PNP) and the areas of High Conservation Value (HCV) in Sao Tome and within the Biosphere Reserve of Principe more broadly, as well as implementing activities at the community level in Sao Tome and Principe.

The project strategy firmly considers baseline and concurrent / planned projects and efforts by other donors and actors, and thereby focuses on terrestrial biodiversity and includes a component which is largely focused on transforming the currently unsustainable charcoal value chain, which contributes to forest degradation. This strategy misses an opportunity to tackle biodiversity in an integrated manner in a country with equally significant marine biodiversity and almost no institutional, legal, or financial framework (nor the necessary technical capacity) in place for its conservation.

The attempt to transform the charcoal value chain at the level of charcoal makers, while promising and necessary, also does not prioritize arguably more severe and immediate drivers of biodiversity loss and forest degradation such as infrastructure development (roads, ports, dams, buildings, oil and gas), agriculture expansion and illegal logging for timber mostly used in construction. Regardless, although the intervention is relevant and promising, there is low ownership of the initiative among government stakeholders and a legitimate concern that the lost livelihoods of charcoal makers will not be adequately replaced, which has led to long delays, endangering the overall likelihood of success.

Although the four project components are designed to be fit together to tackle various aspects of biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource, examine project progress to date and discussions with a range of internal and external stakeholders has let the MTR team to the conclusion that a simplified project scope, aimed at putting more resources towards fewer aspects of biodiversity conservation, and building on both important baseline initiatives, and supporting some of the initiatives and structures in place may yield more successful outcomes and transformative results. Although a solid and commonly used structure for both GEF projects and UNDP-supported biodiversity projects, is to have complementary and mutually supporting interventions at the 'on-the ground' in this context the project is somewhat overambitious in its individual outputs taken together and underestimates the need for upstream activities that may be necessary for more successful outcomes, as well as the political risks.

Accordingly, dependencies between intended outcomes (and certain outputs) lead to a cascading effect on unmet targets, whereas a simpler project structure may be better placed to build on past successes and achieve transformative impact. The Gender Strategy and Action Plan is similarly ambitious and complex, and although well-constructed and aspirational, its 52 targets may be reasonably reduced to better capture the efforts of the team to change long-held norms.

It is also worth noting that the project evaluation matrix contains several indicators which are not SMART and is further weakened by baseline figures that are not validated or accurately estimated. The complexity of the project extends to its implementing partners/ responsible parties which are numerous. Although this ensures broad and comprehensive stakeholder engagement, drawing together relevant government departments, large and small NGOs, the private sector, and community level interventions, it leads to unique challenges in coordination which is rendered more difficult by the assisted NIM modality.

Overall, the Project Strategy is theoretically solid, well-justified, relevant, and backed by extensive consultation and expertise, but would benefit greatly from a simplified and streamlined approach that better accounts for the particularities of the context. The project strategy does, however, exhibit several weaknesses and limitations that somewhat undermine its overall effectiveness and impact. A notable omission is its lack of focus on marine biodiversity, which is critical given the ecological significance of marine ecosystems in the region and the benefits of an integrated approach. This oversight means that an entire dimension of biodiversity conservation, essential for holistic ecological integrity, is not addressed within the project's scope. Although this is justified briefly in the project document as being an overreach, and the project as designed is already ambitious, perhaps a focus on the institutional financial and operational aspects of protected areas, both marine and terrestrial would have made the project focus more straightforward and cohesive, rather than also trying to intervene on the charcoal value chain. It is the opinion of the MTR consultant that a separate project could be designed solely around the issue of charcoal, with the requisite institutional, legal and on-the-ground activities. Additionally, the strategy does not prioritize actions that are crucial for maintaining ecosystem integrity, such as those related to infrastructure development and agricultural practices, which are significant drivers of environmental change and biodiversity loss, not does it address the biggest driver of illegal logging which is demand for construction wood. The project also appears to be overextended, attempting to address a wide array of objectives without striking an optimal balance between transformative ambitions and realistic goals. This broad scope risks diluting the project's impact by spreading resources too thin across various initiatives, and between various partners. Furthermore, the strategy does not adequately account for political and institutional risks, which are pivotal for ensuring the successful implementation of conservation projects. The absence of a robust mechanism to navigate and mitigate these risks hinders the project's capacity to achieve its objectives, particularly in a dynamic political environment where institutional support is crucial for sustained conservation efforts.

3.1.2 Results Framework / Logical Framework (LogFrame)

A key part of the midterm review process is to look both at whether the project is doing things in the right way for the context and expected outcomes, but also to look at whether we are doing the right things in the first place. To help with this analysis, it is very useful to look at the framework for the project, from the overarching project objective to the outcomes expected under each component, and to assess them against "SMART" criteria. This analysis allows us to evaluate whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently "SMART" that is: Specific, Measurable, Achievable,

Relevant, and Time-bound. With respect to the time-bound criterion, all targets assigned are assumed compliant, as they are set as end-of-project performance metrics.

Project Objective:

There are five indicators at the project objective level, with the first indicator focused on the number of direct beneficiaries (disaggregated by gender), the second being the number of indirect beneficiaries (also disaggregated by gender), the third relating to GEF core Indicator 4.1 addressing area of landscapes under improved management for biodiversity benefits, the fourth addressing GEF core indicator 4.4 addressing the avoided loss of High Conservation Value Forest (HCFV), and finally the fifth indicator addresses the Red list index of endangered species. The SMART analysis of the objective level section of the project results framework is presented below in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5: SMART analysis of project results framework (project objective)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Objective: Safeguard globally significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement as well as enhancing protected area management and the sustainability of charcoal production							
<u>Indicator 1:</u> # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	MID 1,000 (500 men, 500 women) END 2,000 (1,000 men, 1,000 women) Environmental Guard 20; community watch 20; capacity building and direct involvement: 100 government technicians; 40 politicians, 60 technicians, 500 community members + charcoal producers; 17 academics/interns; 30+ eco-guides; 10 employment in Valudo; 20 tree planting; c. 1200 including co-beneficiaries through c. 30 household livelihoods and value chain micro-subsidies @ average household size of 4. Total estimate c. 2000.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<u>Indicator 2:</u> # indirect project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	MID 1,000 (500 men, 500 women) [20% of project end target because charcoal value chain emerging only] END 2,000 (1,000 men, 1,000 women) [half of population of Príncipe of 10,000 + quarter of population on ST of 200,000 benefitting from more sustainable and healthier coconut-based charcoal]	N	N	N	Y	Y
<u>Indicator 3:</u> GEF Core Indicator 4.1: Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity	0ha	6,207 ha [estimated to 50% of 10,913 ha of HCV in São Tomé (the half not under avoided loss below) + 50% of the HCV areas to be identified on Príncipe (1,500 ha estimated before studies, so 50%=750 ha; the half not under avoided loss below)]	Y	Y	N	N	Y
<u>Indicator 4:</u> GEF Core Indicator 4.4: – Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided	0ha	MID: 2,000 ha END: 6,207 ha [Estimated to 50% of 10,913 ha of HCV in São Tomé (the half not under better management above) + 50% of the HCV areas to be identified on Príncipe (1,500 ha estimated before studies, so 50%=750 ha - the half not under better management above). The objective is not to avoid wholesale conversion but to avoid HCV trigger	Y	N	N	Y	Y

Figure 5: SMART analysis of project results framework (project objective)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
		status loss from forest degradation by unsustainable selective logging and natural resource exploitation	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green
Indicator 5: Red List Index of endangered species of birds, mammals and terrestrial amphibians (STP Official SDG Indicator)	Total species: 150, Critically endangered species (CR): 4 / 2.7%, Endangered species (EN): 9 / 6%, Vulnerable endemic species (VU): 5 / 3.3%, Near threatened species (NT): 12 / 8%, Species of little concern (LC): 117 / 78%, Species with insufficient data (DA): 3 / 2%.	MID: Index maintained or improved END: Index maintained or improved	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green

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Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionably compliant with SMART criteria; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria

With regards to **Indicator 1**, the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries is sufficiently specific, however some of the beneficiaries’ categories selected are more measurable than others, that is in regard to receiving the direct beneficiaries are straightforward, however the number of co-beneficiaries is ambiguous. It is hard to say whether all members of the household receiving value chain training and micro-subsidies over the life of the project can be considered beneficiaries unless the support provided leads to a sustainable source of income. Tracking the success of livelihood activities overtime is hard to do past the lifetime of the project but should be accounted for in order to understand the impacts of charcoal value chain interventions. Regardless, a strong baseline, and [monitoring socio economic impacts of the micro-grants and training even over the course of the project interventions is absent and should be incorporated into the monitoring framework and linked to the reporting on the implementation of livelihood activities by Oikos](#), the NGO responsible for this aspect on both Sao Tome and Principe.

With respect to **Indicator 2**, unlike the direct beneficiaries for both the midterm and end of project target, indirect beneficiaries are not specific nor measurable, that is, it is unclear what should be considered a benefit in this case and what should be measured. The benefit is implied in terms of health, and if the cost of improved coconut-based charcoal is lower, it can also be defined as an economic benefit. If the livelihood interventions at the community level lead to improved incomes then this can also be considered a benefit, but a baseline should be established and defined. Although the project is already at the midpoint of implementation, given that livelihood activities in communities are just starting, and have yet to start in Principe, one possibility of budget reallocation is [to establish this baseline and the necessary monitoring protocol and link this to a longer-term initiative within the government tracking the success of livelihood interventions by various projects](#). Finally, although the midterm target may have been realistic in terms of specifying 20% of the result (despite the ambiguity), the final target of a quarter of population of Sao Tome, and half of Principe is not realistic. This is particularly true for Principe where it is still undefined what the activities related to Component 3 will look like, given the private sector partners do not have presence on the island. [This indicator should therefore be revised, and attention given to how the outputs under this Outcome should be revised to provide a benefit for Principe as well](#). Finally, regardless of the factors related to project delays and the design and ownership of Component 3 discussed below, the final target was perhaps overambitious also considering the time required to integrate a new product into the market, and to change customs and preferences around the use of a traditional energy source for cooking.

In regard to **Indicator 3** and **Indicator 4**, with respect to High Conservation Value (HCV) forest under improved management and avoiding loss, the HCV areas were only created by legal decree during the lifetime of the project. This in itself is an accomplishment and should be captured with a more modest target (that is creation of HCVs). Now that the HCVs have been created, the Indicator 3 terminal target can benefit from an updated baselines, based on the actual area of HCVs created and revise the target on what extent of this area will be under improved management. Similarly for Indicator 4 which is also related to the actual loss of HCV, once the area is under improved management, this indicator was not sufficient measurable, as loss avoided depends on counterfactuals related to an accurate assessment of business-as-usual forest loss rates, as well as more sophisticated monitoring, which is not yet in place. Considering that changes in species categories can occur for reasons external to the project, such as bird migration, a possibility for monitoring is to focus primarily on species endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe to better reflect the direct impact of the project and ensure more accurate monitoring in line with its objectives. [Again, a possible budget revision could help](#)

put in place a system for more accurate tracking of forest loss, which would also help measure the impact of initiatives under Component 3, i.e. the impact on forest loss of transforming the charcoal value chain.

For **Indicator 5**, although the indicator is very specific, and is in theory measurable, the survey capacity of the government departments is severely limited due to lack of capacity in biodiversity surveys, and low financial and human resources. This survey of red list species therefore depends largely on the activities of NGOs such as Bird Life and Fundação Príncipe, who are involved in the project as responsible parties, but who do not monitor or carry out systematic surveys of all the birds, mammals, and terrestrial amphibians on the red list. According to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), there is no unified database documenting species distribution, and the evaluation of species extinction risk according to International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is unknown or outdated. According to interviews, specific data on the status of species is piecemeal and often carried out by foreign academic institutions, and so it is of critical importance to update species surveys and build the national capacity to monitor species on the list. Another possible budget revision would therefore be to put funds towards building the database in STP. This budget revision may also serve to gather the relevant data from relevant institutions to input into the database, which may help to ensure a more robust / complete baseline and accordingly, the data could help inform decision making over time as a reference. Regardless, this indicator also underlines the importance of good reporting from all involves implementation stakeholders, as bird species on the list are surveyed and monitored by Birdlife international, as well as some relevant flora and fauna species by Fundação Príncipe, however this was not being reported in the PIR. This indicator is therefore not measurable at the current time, and an accurate baseline would be required to assess if it is attainable and realistic. *A perhaps more achievable and relevant indicator would be to build the government’s own internal capacity to carry out biodiversity surveys, and/ or to improve the depth and frequency of such surveys by other national actors and international actors and for this information to be shared and reported systematically. It is suggested that this indicator should be revised to reflect the species that are currently systematically surveyed. It is also important to note that when updating the IUCN red list index value, one should be very clear about the filters (country, terrestrial environment, etc.) to be used when searching for information on the IUCN red list, so that this methodology is always carried out systematically. Furthermore, it is important to include not only a summary of the number of species in each taxonomic group, but also the date on which the IUCN red list was searched, and the complete list of species used to calculate the index. This is because the red list is constantly being updated and often the index can change even without the species changing status, for example if there are changes to the taxonomy or information on the distribution of the species. All this needs to be clearly noted in a document that serves as a guide for calculating this index. Only with this information can you interpret the value of the true value of the index, for example, to find out if the index has increased because species are more threatened, or simply because there have been changes to the list of species. Recently, the prince’s owl was discovered and is now “Critically Endangered”, which implies that the level of threat has increased, but it’s not a real increase in the level of threat of the species, it’s simply a reflection of having more accurate information about the country’s biodiversity. It is important to be able to distinguish these variations from those that actually reflect real variations in the species’ threat status (information that is also on the IUCN Red List).*

Component 1:

Component 1 includes two outcome indicators, each of which are associated with two performance indicators: Indicator Nos 6-8, as listed below (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 6: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 1)

Indicator	Baseline	Targets	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 1.1: Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management							
<u>Indicator 6:</u> Scores obtained from the UNDP Capacity Developing Scorecard	CR1 – SCORE 0.42 CR2 – SCORE 0.48 CR3 – SCORE 0.31 CR4 – SCORE 0.45 CR5 – SCORE 0.12	MID: +10%each END:+30% each	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Figure 6: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 1)

Indicator	Baseline	Targets	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
<u>Indicator 7</u> : Emplacement of new streamlined and effective institutes for i) nature conservation and protected area management, and ii) environment and integrated land use planning and management	i) There are structures/teams for biodiversity management at DFB and for environment under DGA, yet there are problems with the legal frameworks and mandates and effectiveness; ii) there is no permanent dedicated structure or team for land use planning and management	MID: Existing structures/teams under review with alternatives for strengthening under discussion, for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii) environment and land use planning and management END: New streamlined and effective institutes agreed and legally created for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii) environment and land use planning and management	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Outcome 1.2: Nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system agreed and emplaced							
<u>Indicator 8</u> : Environmental patrolling effort: # patrol days/yr & total patrol km/yr	0 in 2019	MID: 400 patrol /yr avge (3 teams*3x/wk) END: 400 patrol /yr avge (3 teams*3x/wk)	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
<u>Indicator 9</u> : % of reported cases of environmental infractions leading to due legal prosecutions	0	MID: 20% END: 40%	N	Y	N	N	Y

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Indicator 6 is related to the score obtained from UNDP’s capacity development scorecard which is used to assess and monitor the capacity development of institutions and organizations involved in various projects. This indicator fits SMART criteria, with a specific, achievable, realistic and timebound target. In regard to measurement, in order to complete the scorecard the assessor must measure capacity across several dimension and it looks at various aspects of capacity such as effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and provides a method to pinpoint specific areas where capacity building intervention may be required. *Given the relevance of this metric, and the crucial issue of building capacity at the local level as well as within the PMU itself, it would be important to assess this indicator jointly rather than with the relatively subjective input of one individual.*

Indicator 7, related to the placement of new institutes, although relatively specific, measurable, and achievable in theory, was not realistic. This was identified in the project’s risk assessment and manifested in the first half of the project with both elements of this indicator, that is the creation of a new institutional structures as well as the completing of a National Land Use and Territorial Plan (PNOT) blocked at a high level. The reasons for the lack of progress towards this indicator are described below in progress towards outcomes, however given the political context and the inherently political nature of land use planning with many competing drivers and incentives, it also would have been advisable to split the indicator and targets, as both elements would have been significant if achieved. Regarding the creation of a new institutional structures related to biodiversity conservation, this is perhaps one of the most relevant targets of the project, and although progress has been slow, achievement is promising. It would have perhaps also been more realistic in the timeframe of the project if there was not a change of government, as well as existing overlaps between the DGA and DFB regarding biodiversity, which must be decided in a collaborative manner. These types of overlapping mandates and tensions are common and will ideally be clarified with reference to international best practice when revision the base environmental law, however greater specificity in the target, such as “Creation of a National Institute for Biodiversity” backed by the extensive stakeholders’ consultations in the project design phase, may have facilitated this goal. *Regardless, it is suggested that as part of the revision of the projects evaluation framework to remove the reference to the PNOT from this target, as the consensus among stakeholders is that it is very difficult to determine when this will be approved. The target should focus on the creation of an institute for biodiversity and how this can be operationalized to the specific regional contexts and Sao Tome and Principe respectively.*

Indicator 8 and **Indicator 9** both of which are related to environmental law enforcement, also require modification. For Indicator 8, although it is possible to track the number of patrol days, the total km/ yr is not tracked by the current guards carrying out patrols, and though this is measurable in theory it is not the most relevant metric. Unfortunately, the MTR team was unable to meet with forest guards in Sao Tome during the field visit, but forests guards in Principe confirmed that forest patrols are carried out every day, rendering a metric of # of patrol days also somewhat meaningless. What appears more relevant is the quality of the patrol, the ability to enforce infractions (though this should under no circumstances be enabled by arming guards or other similar measures), and sharing of information and the development of a system that is used to track what is found during terrestrial and marine surveillance, so that the government has the necessary information to make management decision and guards can see an impact from their work, as well as operate in safety. These surveys can include relevant biodiversity data collection. *Currently registration of incidents is done manually with incidents marked on a paper map, and an excel sheet is used in cases where illegal tree felling is detected. Also of relevance is the fact that data from patrols carried out by NGOs are not systematically shared with the government, undermining the ability to act systematically on the results of patrols. It is therefore suggested that these indicators are changed towards those that better reflect the current reality of patrolling and move to systematize the data gathered. That is the Indicator should be changed.*

Regarding **Indicator 9**, this indicator is also not achievable or realistic given that currently there is no real system in place to enforce legal consequences of environmental infractions as discussed below in the section on Progress towards outcomes. That is consultations revealed that when infractions are caught, the culprit is rarely able to pay a fine, and even if equipment is confiscated (say in the case of illegal logging) then the policy is to return the equipment after a certain period. *There is also a significant difference in dynamic between Sao Tome in Principe in this regard, where in general illegal logging in Sao Tome when detected or caught is not enforced because there is more risk of conflict and there is a higher chance of the involvement of institutional actors (as is the case with sand mining) and in Principe infractions tend to stem more from those that are not completely familiar with the laws around illegal logging (or other possible infractions) and who tend to comply once informed (hence presenting a learning opportunity for the community and a teaching / awareness opportunity by the guards). This reality should be considered in the revised indicator for this outcome and should be aided by the revision of the environmental base law.*

Component 2:

Component 2 includes two outcomes, the first having one performance indicator (see **Figure 7**) and the second having two. Under Outcome 2.1, focused on the management effectiveness of the two existing PAs and enhanced protection of adjacent HCV forest areas, improvement in management effectiveness is measured using the GEF version of the METT. Baseline METT assessments were made for the two protected areas and targets set for the midterm and end of the project (Indicator 10). Output 2.3 assigned under this outcome, however, has significant overlap with the Output 1.3 assigned to Outcome 1.3 under Component 1 listed above, both of which are concerned with environmental surveillance, likely causing some confusion.

The performance indicators for Outcome 2.2 are focused on finance for biodiversity conservation and PA management (and other biodiversity related activities and initiatives), based on the establishment of the Conservation Trust Fund for STP (**Indicator 11**) and the subsequently mobilized financing being made available for biodiversity conservation and protected area management (**Indicator 12**).

Figure 7: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 2)

Indicator	Baseline	Targets	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 2.1: Protection of the two existing PAs and adjacent HCV forest areas enhanced							
<u>Indicator 10</u> : GEF Core Indicator 2: METT Scores for Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé and Parque Natural do Príncipe	PNOST Score 35 PNP Score 46	MID: PNOST Score 42 PNP Score 53 END: PNOST Score 57 (range 57-72) PNP Score 68 (68-72)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Outcome 2.2: Finance for biodiversity conservation and PA management increased							
<u>Indicator 11</u> : Status of Conservation Trust Fund for STP	CTF does not exist	MID&END: CTF legally established in a European	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Figure 7: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 2)

Indicator	Baseline	Targets	MTR SMART analysis					
			S	M	A	R	T	
		Country following CFA best practices						
<u>Indicator 12</u> : Financing made available for biodiversity and protected areas from sources beyond traditional external grants to governments or NGOs, and capitalisation of STP CTF endowment fund	USD 5000/yr non-grant income from tourism, 0 other sources, 0 CTF endowment capital	MID: USD 10,000/yr. non-grant income from tourism, 0 other sources, 0 CTF endowment capital END: USD 50,000/yr. non-grant income from tourism and related concessions, and USD 2 million launch capital attracted into the CTF endowment capital or sinking fund with resulting income distributed to biodiversity conservation interventions in STP	Y	Y	N	N	Y	

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Regarding **Indicator 10**, the METT scores were evaluated using the GEF tracking tool with a multidisciplinary team and are discussed in some detail below. Regarding the financing of the CTF, the targets specify USD 5000/year and USD 10,000/ year in non-grant income from tourism. Although the Indicator 11 is fine, the targets identified for Indicator should be further investigated and adjusted as discussed below in progress towards outcomes.

Component 3:

Component 3 is divided into two outcomes, each having two associated indicators (see **Figure 8**). Under Outcome 3.1, that aims to reduce and compensate forest degradation from traditional charcoal making, Indicator 13 is focused on planting fast-growing charcoal making trees, and Indicator 14 on improved kilns, which have been developed to produce sustainable charcoal from coconut waste. Smaller pilot kilns have been designed to use within charcoal producing communities, as well as larger semi-industrial kilns, to be used by the private sector to scale up the production of sustainable charcoal at a national scale and to eventually reduce and replace the traditional charcoal used at the household level. Indicator 14 refers to the purchase and use of both types of kilns.

Figure 8: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 3)

Indicator	Baseline	Targets	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 3.1: Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated							
<u>Indicator 13</u> : Native fast-growing charcoal-making trees planted and surviving across the forest landscape.	Approx. 25 ha restored so far by DFB under different pilot actions = between 2,500-25,000 trees for low (100/ha) and high (1000/ha) planting density estimates; Príncipe plans to reforest 5,000 trees/year but is far from achieving this goal	MID: 10 per day/pax * 8 pax * 2 teams * 100 days/yr. =16,000/yr. in the mid-term year, with at least 60% surviving END: Effort maintained throughout final years for a total of 4*16,000/yr. = 64,000 planted by project end, with at least 60% surviving	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
<u>Indicator 14</u> : Number of improved charcoal kilns effectively in use	0 improved charcoal kilns	MID: 1 semi-industrial improved kiln (ST) producing coconut-based charcoal and 10 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation END: 2 semi-industrial kilns (1 ST, 1 Príncipe) producing coconut-based charcoal and 40 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Outcome 3.2: Prevalence of traditional high-impact charcoal-making livelihoods reduced in favour of more sustainable options							
<u>Indicator 15</u> : Number of fully dedicated	Currently 500 in ST, 50 in Príncipe	MID: 400 ST, 40 Príncipe	N	N	N	N	N

Figure 8: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 3)

Indicator	Baseline	Targets	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
professional traditional charcoal-makers harvesting unsustainably		END: 300 ST, 30 Príncipe	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
<u>Indicator 16:</u> Share of household incomes based on newly adopted sustainable livelihood activities in targeted priority communities	Currently 0%; charcoal makers and users adopt the improved charcoal making techniques; alternative charcoal production increases; market prices for charcoal are favourable for local trade	MID: At least 30% in directly targeted households; at least 10% overall in targeted communities END: At least 60% in directly targeted households; at least 20% overall in targeted communities	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red

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Outcome 3.1, Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated, the chosen indicators are process or input indicators, rather than outcome / performance indicators. Such indicators may be useful in monitoring plans to track implementation, but do not give much information on the intended result or outcome of an activity. In this case, there is an assumption that the planting of native fast-growing charcoal making trees, and the provision of improved charcoal kilns will lead to a measurable reduction in forest degradation, which is the intended outcome. This is not necessarily the case however and separate processes need to be put in place (a baseline survey, followed by period and long-term data collection via survey) to gather the relevant data on this connection. Additionally, the DFB provided its technical opinion on this output, and more broadly on the impact of green charcoal on forest degradation in Sao Tome, drawing on various diagnoses made of regarding Biological Diversity at the national level (Including the 9th National report on and National Biodiversity strategy and Action Plan and concluding that the felling of trees for the production of sawn timber for construction and the manufacture of furniture primary cause of deforestation and of degradation of forests, not felling for charcoal production. The DFB also notes that although green coal may eventually be more affordable, the study does not show a comparative analysis of the value chain between charcoal and green coal. The DFB also notes that there is talk of strong job creation, but the analysis is not completely presented, all of which are legitimate concerns and comments, and have been triangulated through responses from a range of other stakeholders.

Furthermore, planting of native fast-growing trees may inadvertently encourage the traditional charcoal making process, and it is well established that avoiding deforestation in forests for fill ecosystem functionality is superior to replanting / reforestation. The following is a quick overview of some of the problems in associated with plantations for charcoal production:

- Biodiversity Loss: Plantations often consist of single species (monocultures), which can reduce biodiversity compared to natural forests. This lack of diversity can make plantations more vulnerable to pests and diseases
- Soil Degradation: Monoculture plantations can lead to soil degradation over time due to the continuous extraction of the same nutrients, which reduces soil fertility and affects future agricultural productivity.
- Hydrological Impact: Plantations can alter local hydrology, leading to reduced water availability for local communities and natural ecosystems. This is particularly problematic in areas where water resources are already scarce.
- Habitat Displacement: The establishment of plantations can displace wildlife and reduce habitat availability, which negatively affects local fauna and flora diversity.
- Economic Viability: The economic viability of plantations for charcoal production can be questionable if the costs of establishing and maintaining plantations exceed the revenues generated from charcoal sales.
- Carbon Footprint: Although plantations can act as carbon sinks, the process of establishing and maintaining them, especially if it involves the use of machinery and fertilizers, can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions
- Sustainable Yield: Ensuring a sustainable yield from plantations can be challenging. Overharvesting can deplete resources quickly, while underharvesting can make the venture economically unviable.

Given that this output has not proceeded very quickly and based on comments from stakeholders including the DFB, it is a good idea to revisit this output and consider putting the budget associated with this output, towards activities that support better management of the national parks, which suffer from a lack of resources. These funds could support improved the efforts towards better monitoring, but also provide direly needed support to the Botanical Garden, which

has no dedicated staff, and which is one of the few public-facing institutes in the country dealing with terrestrial biodiversity.

In regards to **Indicator 14**, the provision of improved charcoal kilns certainly may have positive outcomes on the health of charcoal makers and is a good reason in itself to make a switch, as well as concrete way to explain benefits and encourage alternative charcoal use, when reasons such as protecting biodiversity and reducing forest degradation can be too conceptual for direct beneficiaries that are facing a reality in which socio-economic constraints dominate. Regardless, the number of improved charcoal kilns in use itself is not linked to an outcome regarding forest degradation, or even reduced traditional charcoal use. That link is something that may take some time to manifest and would likely show its impact over a longer timeframe than the project. This is certainly not a reason to remove the effort itself, as sustainable coconut charcoal has seen significant success in many other geographies, and the idea is conceptually solid, the sustainable charcoal itself has been developed by a national entrepreneur, and the infrastructure exists for scale-up. A good outcome indicator here, which surveys the actual charcoal use at the household level, while also tracking deforestation of trees used for charcoal making, may not be timebound to the remaining timespan of the project, but should be something that the project tracks, followed by the DGA and/or DFB overtime for activities. It is the opinion of the MTR consultant that a decision should be made as soon as possible on the approach to this component, and the related outputs, which is discussed further in the section below on progress towards results. Once a decision is made and the current outputs are either prioritized or adjusted, the indicators can also be adjusted accordingly, ideally with a focus on the impact of the intervention on forest degradation.

Outcome 3.2 shifts its focus to the impact of the change in use of traditional charcoal on the livelihoods of the charcoal makers themselves. The desired shift towards more sustainable activities is tracked through two performance indicators. **Indicator 15** looks at reducing the overall number of fully dedicated charcoal makers, and although the mid-term and terminal targets are specific, they do not seem to be in reference to a well-estimated or accurate baseline, rendering the actual target for the reduction less meaningful. Furthermore, although there has been a very important focus on the creating alternative sustainable livelihoods for charcoal-producers, based on the risk analysis that was carried out in the design phase of the project, it is doubtful that the interventions in the course of the project will be able to achieve a total shift away from the use of traditional charcoal for hundreds of charcoal makers, unless a much greater effort and investment is made on the alternative livelihoods, and if these efforts are well supported over time. Stakeholders interviews and review of past interventions in the realm of livelihoods in Sao Tome and Principe found that livelihood interventions often have poor long term success, due to a range of factors, the most relevant of which include limited technical support past of the life of a project, inadequate provision of support in regards to business plans, marketing and visibility, and top-down livelihood ideas and interventions which do not adequately take into account the needs and desired of communities, and experience very limited ownership. Regarding **Indicator 16**, which look at the share of household incomes from newly adopted livelihood activities, this indicator is good in the sense that it makes a link between livelihood activities and income generated, which will in theory remove a driver to produce unsustainable charcoal in the first place. Although this indicator is SMART, it was the impression of the MTR consultant that data towards tracking this indicator was not being collected in a systematic manner. Since the livelihood interventions in communities are still at a very early stage as described below, it is advisable to collect data towards reporting on this indicator as soon as possible.

Component 4:

Component 4 is a cross-cutting component which looks transversally at the implementation of monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and gender mainstreaming activities across all other components of the project, as well as stand-alone outputs and outcome. Outcome 4.1 accordingly refers to the successful implementation of activities in this sphere and is tracked by three Indicators (see **Figure 9**).

Figure 9: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 4)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 4.1: M&E, knowledge management and gender work fully and successfully implemented							
Indicator 17: % of female members i) in platforms and decision-making forums emplaced by the project, and ii) amongst staff recruited by and for the project	0	MID: i) At least 30%; ii) At least 50% (esp. in enforcement, community work but also beyond) END: At least 30%; ii) At least 50% (esp. in enforcement, community work but also beyond)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y

Figure 9: SMART analysis of project results framework (Component 4)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Indicator 18: % of 52 sub-indicator targets in Gender Action Plan met	0	MID: 40% END: 80%	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Indicator 19: Quality of PIR completed annually by national project staff	N/A	MID: PIRs are completed reliably but with major support from international project staff and UNDP CO END: PIRs are completed reliably by national project staff	N	N	Y	Y	Y

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Indicator 17 tracks the gender balance of members and staff in decision-making platforms and hired by the project respectively, and **Indicator 18** refers to the comprehensive Gender Action Plan (GAP), which is discussed further in the section below, and the percentage of the sub-indicators targets within this plan which are successfully met. **Indicator 19** then looks at a key instrument in the monitoring and evaluation of the project, namely the Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), the level of quality of those reports completed annually by project staff. Indicator 17 may not be realistic given the currently baseline of gender involvement in areas such as enforcement. For Indicator 19, ‘quality’ of reports is a subjective measure, as is ‘reliably’. *A better measure may be that the PIR reflects up-to-date project information from all relevant Responsible parties and Implementing Partners.*

3.1.3 Gender Mainstreaming

A gender analysis was carried out during the project preparation phase, and which described the national context in regards, and signaled the low presence of women in the workforce and decision-making positions, as well as a high burden of unpaid labor reflecting global trends, as well as overall norms related to subordinate roles for women in society, hindering inclusivity and shared benefits in various value chains, as well as in institutional and political spheres.

According, a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was designed to counter these existing trends, and to render the project’s interventions more socially inclusive. The specific objective of the Gender Action Plan is to promote gender equity practices in biodiversity related issues and improve the living conditions of communities bordering conservation areas, often dependent on the resources provided by the forest. The GAP also allows monitoring the progress of project outcomes disaggregated by sex, to ensure an equity-based implementation of the project.

The GAP encourages project staff and responsible institutions to apply gender-based principles in the selection and contracting of their local technical and administrative personnel, including for the environmental surveillance and enforcement unit to be created, and in relation to capacity-building activities. It is also striving to provide participatory approaches at the community level, by including marginalized people (e.g. unemployed youth), with attention to the participation and inclusion of women in the communities targeted by the project. Examples of gender-sensitive indicators (GSI) include a minimum quota of 30% women required for the setup of the platforms to be created by the project, 50% of staff recruited by the project to be women, and the capacity-building activities ensuring at least 1/3 of the participants are women.

The project also strives, through its Gender Action Plan, which identified 52 gender-sensitive indicators, linked to each project output, and across all project components, to engage women and youth in decision-making, training, participatory mapping, and ensure that there are both direct and indirect women project beneficiaries.

With respect to the project’s third component that addresses charcoal, it was noted that women generally play important roles in the charcoal value chain but earn less than men. In response to this, the project includes gender equity criteria in the selection of the low-value grants for alternative livelihoods and sustainable charcoal initiatives. Moreover, the production of coconut-based charcoal briquettes, have lower volatile matter content than traditional charcoal, and this has positive impacts at the household level in terms of limiting health risks associated with inhalation of charcoal smoke, which has a particularly acute impact on women, overwhelming responsible for cooking.

These indicators are therefore useful to track, to help guide project implementation progress and priorities and to help assess broader development impacts, and essential requirement of both GEF and UNDP supported projects. The implementation of the GAP is discussed further below in the section on project implementation, both in the sections

concerning project-level monitoring and reporting as well as regarding work management arrangement, work planning and stakeholder engagement.

3.2 Progress Towards Results

The following section reviews the logframe indicators against the midterm and end-project targets, evaluating the status of implementation, as reported by the PMU, and as assessed by the MTR team, color coding the status of each indicator according to the level of progress achieved as per below:

Indicator Assessment Key:

Green = Achieved	Yellow = On target to be achieved	Red = Not on target to be achieved
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A 6-point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale is then used (according to the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

3.2.1 Progress towards Outcomes Analysis

Objective: Safeguard globally significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement as well as enhancing protected area management and the sustainability of charcoal production
Progress towards achieving the project objective is rated as: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Figure 10: Progress towards results (Project Objective)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm level & assessment	End-of-Project target	MTR Achievement Rating
		Date:	June 2023	
<u>Indicator 1:</u> # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	1,000 (500 men, 500 women) / 1287 (735 men and 552 women)	2,000 (1,000 men, 1,000 women)	Achieved
<u>Indicator 2:</u> # indirect project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	Difficult to assess. / IN THE MIDDLE: 11,000 (5,500 men, 5,500 women)	At the END: 55,000 (27,500 men, 27,500 women)	Not target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 3 - GEF Core Indicator 4.1:</u> Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity	0ha	21 HCVs areas established and PNP management plan approved. / /	END: 6,207 ha	On target to be achieved

Figure 10: Progress towards results (Project Objective)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm level & assessment	End-of-Project target	MTR Achievement Rating
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
		MID: 2,000 ha		
<u>Indicator 4 - GEF Core Indicator 4.4:</u> – Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided	Oha	Difficult to assess. / MID: 2,000 ha	END: 6,207 ha	Not on target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 5: Red List Index of endangered species of terrestrial birds, mammals, and amphibians (Official STP ODS Indicator)</u>	Total species: 150, Critically Endangered Species (CR): 4 / 2.7%, Endangered Species (EN): 9 / 6%, Vulnerable Endemic Species (VU): 5 / 3.3%, Near Threatened Species (NT): 12 / 8%, Least Concern Species (LC): 117 / 78%, Species with Insufficient Data (DA): 3 / 2%.	Not able to assess. / IN THE MIDDLE: Index maintained or improved.	At the END: Index maintained or improved	Not on target to be achieved

The project objective ties together the ambitious interrelated components of the project. Although the project had a significantly delayed start and very little or slow progress in the first two years; it has managed over the past year and a half (last quarter 2022, during 2023 and first quarter of 2024) to start delivering important results towards the intended outcomes. A rating of **Moderately Unsatisfactory** is applied for progress made towards achieving the project objective, as summarized above in **Figure 10**. As the project stands at the time of the MTR assessment, it is likely that the project will achieve part of its objective, but with major shortcoming vis-à-vis what was planned.

It is certainly the case that the project has, at its midterm point, moved closer to the objective of safeguarding significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management. This is evidenced by positive results on the capacity building scorecard which is significant for sustainability of project results as discussed further below. Additionally, the renewal of UNESCO Biosphere Status in Príncipe is important to maintain a focus on biodiversity, as both islands face increasing pressures on their uniquely valuable landscapes. The designation of a biosphere reserve helps in promoting sustainability, addressing challenges like climate change and biodiversity conservation, and supporting the local economy through eco-tourism and sustainable natural resource management, directly in alignment with the project objective.

The project has also initiated a consultancy to revise the environmental base law, started activities around planting charcoal-making trees, and implemented sustainable charcoal awareness-raising activities at the institutional and community levels. The number of indirect beneficiaries targeted by the project has a large proportion based on those impacted positively by a shift in the charcoal value chain and given the slow progress towards Component 3 of the project, this is not on target to be achieved and will depend directly on the how this Component proceeds. The MTR team found the reporting on indirectly beneficiaries to be somewhat exaggerated, though awareness regarding sustainable charcoal was raised in communities through sessions and workshops, as well as TV program aired about ecological charcoal which also underlined the importance of biodiversity.

Most notably 21 High Conservation Value areas have now been established by decree law in Sao Tome (Decree-Law 08/2023, which officially creates the 21 special reserves, was published on 4 September 2023), and a management plan was prepared for the National Park of Príncipe (PNP) and submitted for the Príncipe government official approval in January 2023 and is still waiting to be approved as a legal instrument. This step preceded the public validation of the document. However, it should be noted that the official approval process is pending the government's decision on the best procedure for approving diplomas by the regional government. It is therefore an external factor that is beyond the

control of the project team or consortium. The GEF Protected Area Management Effective Tracking Tool (METT) scores also increased, meeting the midterm targets for the Obo Natural Park (PNOST) and PNP, which is described in some detail below. Finally, a web portal was created which amalgamates a range of biodiversity related information and resources available nationally, which is a significant accomplishment given the lack of systematized biodiversity information at the national level, despite an exceptional wealth of biodiversity.

Regarding the index of IUCN Red species, project activities to date described above may have contributed directly to improving or maintaining index, but comprehensive surveys at the national level face challenges due to limited resources and capacity, which has not been fixed by the project. The country is recognized for its high level of endemism and biodiversity and has participated in various international and regional conservation programs that include monitoring elements, often supported by organizations such as BirdLife International, a key responsible party of the project. Enhancing this work could be part of the budget reallocation for the planned plantations - as the monitoring is lacking and is needed for tracking the results of most biodiversity related projects. These programs sometimes focus on groups of species, like birds or plants, but do not include a comprehensive survey of all Red List species. In general surveys are sporadic or conducted as part of broader regional assessments rather than as stand-alone national projects. A serious issue is that many related studies and conservation efforts tend to be project-based and often supported by international conservation bodies and research institutions, rather than being carried out by national bodies, underlining the importance of a national institute for biodiversity that can adopt the responsibility of systematically collecting this data.

The project objective, furthermore, includes biodiversity conservation and sustainable land and natural resource management *through integrated land use planning*, an essential component of the strategy, which has been blocked indefinitely at a high level of approval. Similarly, efforts to improve environmental law enforcement and to further enhance protected area management through improved monitoring have also proceeded very slowly. Finally, the last element of the project objective includes enhancing the sustainability of charcoal production, and though there has been some progress at the community level, and many preparatory activities, the key agreement which establishes the Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement between the principle private sector partners in the project (Valudo and EcoBlasa) has yet to be formalized at the time of writing and lacks essential government buy-in. All these elements are discussed further in the sections below, and adaptive management will be key to achieve the intended outcomes. Regardless, it is likely that several planned outcomes will not be achieved. Accordingly, the project will certainly achieve part of its objective, but major shortcomings are expected with respect to the original design of the project, and a significant shift in the second half of implementation is required.

Component 1: Enhancing capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land management and environmental law enforcement	
Outcome 1.1: Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management	
Outcome 1.2: Nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system agreed and emplaced	
Progress towards achieving Component 1 Outcomes is rated as:	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Indicative budget in project document²: USD 966,800

Actual cost incurred on this Component through Dec 2023: USD 560,913.76

Progress towards the various outputs of Component 1 were mixed, as shown below in **Figure 11** and **Figure 12**.

Figure 11: Progress towards results (Outcome 1.1)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm level & assessment	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
Outcome 1.1: Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management				
<u>Indicator 6:</u> Scores obtained from the UNDP Capacity Developing Scorecard	CR1 – SCORE 0.42 CR2 – SCORE 0.48 CR3 – SCORE 0.31	+10% each /	+30% each	Achieved

² Including 6,000 USD co-financing from UNDP

Figure 11: Progress towards results (Outcome 1.1)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm level & assessment	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
	CR4 – SCORE 0.4 CR5 – SCORE 0.12	Evidence not provided (but reported in PIR)		
<u>Indicator 7:</u> Emplacement of new streamlined and effective institutes for i) nature conservation and protected area management, and ii) environment and integrated land use planning and management	i) There are structures/teams for biodiversity management at DFB and for environment under DGA, yet there are problems with the legal frameworks and mandates and effectiveness; ii) there is no permanent dedicated structure or team for land use planning and management	Existing structures/teams under review with alternatives for strengthening under discussion, for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii) environment and land use planning and management / i) Structure not yet created and environmental law consultancy to inform new structure not yet complete ii) National Land Use Plan (PNOT) not approved nor related institution	New streamlined and effective institutes agreed and legally created for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii) environment and land use planning and management	Not on target to be achieved

*Baseline and end targets not updated at project inception.

Output 1.1: Frameworks on biodiversity conservation, land-use planning and charcoal strengthened and streamlined.

Currently Sao Tome and Principe lacks a clear institutional and legal framework that unites conservation and management of biodiversity at the national level. For example, although there are two previously created terrestrial protected areas, on Sao tome island and Principe respectively, there is no Marine Protected Area (MPA), despite staggering marine biodiversity and international best practices pointing to the importance of integrated “ridge to reef” approaches. At the time of writing the first Marine Protected Area(s) were on the verge of being created across the island of Principe, supported by a consortium of international and national NGOs led by Fauna & Flora International, and funded by the Blue Action Fund. Two of the NGOs, Fundação Principe and Oikos, are involved in these much-needed efforts and also implementing partners of Liqueza Tela Non, but the activities are carried out with little to no integration with the activities of the project.

Activities around the creation of the MPAs are under the auspices of the Ministry for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, which is also the ministry to which the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB) belongs, responsible for many of the activities around management and enforcement of the terrestrial PAs. Additionally, under the Ministry of Tourism, there are initiatives geared towards ecotourism, which is a significant component due to the country's rich biodiversity and unique landscapes, and the tourism sector in São Tomé and Príncipe generally includes efforts to promote sustainable tourism practices that conserve the environment and improve the well-being of local communities. This has led to further fragmentation where many significant monitoring efforts happen through the support of the private sector actors such as HBD, owner of a chain of luxury hotels on Principe and Sao Tome, which valorize eco-tourism and provide financial support to local NGOs such as Fundação Principe, one of the main actors carrying out biodiversity monitoring. Finally, the Ministry of Planning, Finance, and Blue Economy has understandably taken the lead on efforts to establish sustainable sources of biodiversity finance and is the Ministry taking the lead on the establishment of a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF), which is a key component of the project. The establishment of the CTF will take a leading role in resource mobilization both for terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

Though all of these initiatives are commendable and necessary, they underline the importance of establishing institutional structures and laws that are able to integrate these various efforts in a coherent and strategic manner. This was recognized in the design phase of the project and hence, the institutional and legal framework for conservation is being reviewed under this project output, updating among other things, the responsibilities of national institutions in terms of environmental conservation and will allow for the creation of new institutes/agencies aimed at

strengthening biodiversity conservation. It is expected that the updated legal text will be finalized by June 2024 and then sent to Congress for approval. It is of the opinion of the consultant that this is one of the most important outputs of the project and that efforts in this direction should be prioritized in the second half of implementation.

The project has delivered several activities around technical and administrative capacity building on biodiversity conservation for its stakeholders, including participation in an international conference on financing for biodiversity and sponsoring both national and international internships, as well as training to government technicians and NGOs on reinforcement of legislation, contributing towards the eventual accomplishment of this output.

Due to changes in the organisation of the government structure, with the creation in January 2024 of a government ministry solely for the environment (Ministry of the Environment), there is good promise that this output will be accomplished. At the midterm point however, the activity, which was expected to be finalised by February 2024 and then sent to Congress for approval, continues to face delays. Regardless, a first workshop provided by an international law firm took place in São Tomé on March 1st, 2024 towards the revision of the environmental base law, which is currently underway and will provide a basis for the creation of the new institutional and legal structures. Simultaneously, the project, in close collaboration with civil society, continues to advocate with national authorities on the importance of creating such a structure (agency or institute) to take charge of biodiversity conservation and the effective management of protected areas.

It is also worth mentioning that an office facility, powered by solar panels, called Casa Ambiente has been set up and is being used by the project team as office space as well as a space for facilitating dialogues between all stakeholders on nature and climate. This was originally envisioned to house all key Responsible parties jointly, including not just staff from the PMU, but the Project Director from the DGA and other key staff, as well as NGOs. The building was not big enough to fit this purpose and currently only hosts the PMU staff and various meetings. Once the project has finalized, Casa Ambiente, owned by UNDP, may be made available to co-host the new institutes/agencies for biodiversity protection.

In Príncipe, another move towards the achievement of this output is that the project led the 10-year review of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for Príncipe. Thanks to the support of the project, Príncipe successfully obtained the revalidation of its UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status for another 10 years, as part of the global network of Biosphere reserves. This significantly strengthens national institutional capacities for conservation in the island of Príncipe.

Output 1.2: Environmental sustainability and biodiversity considerations mainstreamed in land-use planning and investments.

Although the project has made significant progress towards the accomplishment of Output 1.1, Output 1.2 which is focused more specifically on the mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in land-use planning and investments is indefinitely stalled. The National Land Use and Territorial Plan (PNOT) has been in development for several years, with the aim of addressing the country's urban, rural, and regional planning challenges. Initially approved and started in 2016 with funding and support from the African Development Bank, the plan sought to create a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development and spatial planning across the nation.

The development of the PNOT has been a multi-sector project involving numerous stakeholders, including various ministries, and international partners. The plan covers multiple aspects such as the revision of land use and construction laws, the creation of detailed maps and geographic information systems, and the formulation of specific regional plans for both São Tomé and Príncipe. Despite these efforts, there have been challenges in implementing the plan fully. At the time of writing, key components like district master plans and a comprehensive legal framework for spatial planning were still under development or pending approval at the highest levels. The plan's implementation is crucial for integrating biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource use across sectors and balancing reduced inequality and economic growth with these goals. Once approved, it will also be a key instrument in controlling some of the greatest threats to biodiversity conservation in Sao Tome, including unregulated construction, expanding land use for agricultural commodities, the construction of large-scale infrastructure such as roads, ports and dams, and for possible future oil and gas development.

Pending the formal approval of the plan, by government and by congress, project activities related to the PNOT are at a halt, a risk that was well identified in the project's risk log. As this key output is not on target to be achieved, it is recommended that the logframe be amended to remove this output and the budget reassigned to strengthen other efforts which show a more positive trajectory.

Output 1.5: Key environmental CSOs and CBOs strengthened.

The Responsible parties of the Liqueza Tela Non include a consortium of NGOs led by BirdLife International, with the participation of one local NGO Fundação Príncipe (FP), which works primarily on marine biodiversity initiatives, as well as livelihood activities on Príncipe which support sustainable livelihoods or encourage communities to shift away from unsustainable resource use. The consortium led by Birdlife International had overall responsibilities towards the delivery of this output.

BirdLife International significantly bolstered environmental CSOs and CBOs by facilitating a variety of educational and development opportunities. They sponsored two six-month internships abroad, focusing on terrestrial and marine biodiversity monitoring and biodiversity communication strategies, helping enhance the technical skills of participants from São Tomé. Additionally, a national "ranger-for-a-day" internship program was developed to promote ecotourism, including comprehensive training for a young Santomean in ecotourism management. Further, multiple training sessions were conducted: a 5-day training involved 16 technicians from Agripalma learning about local biodiversity, and another session trained 11 National Police members on enforcement and biodiversity conservation in protected areas. The ongoing support for developing these capacities aims to sustainably strengthen local conservation efforts. Birdlife, with the participation of Fundação Príncipe and Oikos, plans on continuing to refine and expand internship opportunities and training sessions to cover more areas and include more participants, ensuring ongoing enhancement of local capacity for environmental management and conservation.

The project was also designed to maximize the collaboration with local NGOs, and in doing so also build the capacity of these organizations to deliver according to international fund requirements and reporting standards. Although the project has provided and funds and support (a vehicle) to FP, and the FP has in turn carried out several activities in support of the project particularly in regard to biodiversity monitoring, it is worth noting that the overall feeling is that the relative financial contribution of LTN is very small compared to the burden that participation in this project places on FP in regard to reporting, administrative and human resource needs. As FP functions according to its own strategic framework, as do international NGOs involved in the project such a BirdLife International and Oikos, trying to fit these activities into the framework of the project may not be the best way to support local NGOs. The consensus during the interviews conducted during the MTR field work regarding the involvement of community based and non-government actors was that international projects supported by UN agencies, were sometimes overly complex, with multiples goals, which often had a hard time manifesting real visible change on the ground. It is worth noting, though, divergence on that statement from Oikos, stating that in LTN project several steps were taken to diagnose, dialogue and make decisions in a participatory manner with the communities. A lot of time and energy was invested in this.

It can still be argued that, top-down initiatives, such as livelihood interventions not spearheaded and designed by community themselves were rarely successful in their experience, and in LTN, communities indicated limited understanding of the project. Additionally, given the current vacuum in systematic biodiversity monitoring and expertise within govt agencies, environment and biodiversity related CSO, CBOs and NGOs can play a key role in gathering and sharing biodiversity information with government institutions. All this to say, [one way to strengthen community-based organizations and civil society organizations would be to provide more sustainable funding at a greater scale, rather than limited funds for a range of activities that then have less chance of making a significant impact. Furthermore, it is essential that this information is then shared in a systematic manner with the relevant government agencies, including the DGA, DFB and the RSESD in Príncipe. It was also apparent that the CSOs, CBOs and NGOs involved required greater support and capacity building in terms of reporting to donors and against UNDP requirements.](#)

As noted in the last Progress Implementation Report (PIR) for 2023, capacity building was carried out by UNDP in at least six occasions during the year, related to relevant issues such as project planning and budgeting, HACT, risk management, and stakeholders' engagement. Furthermore, members of the PMU on both Sao Tome and Principe carried out activities at the community level regarding the charcoal value chain, and trainings on gender equity awareness, and entrepreneurial support for setting up alternative livelihoods. The focus on these areas also contributed towards community involvement in sustainable development. [It is advisable however that greater emphasis is placed on long-term capacity building and support of CSOs, CBOs and local NGOs, and that fruits of these activities are tracked and supported by government agencies in turn.](#)

Figure 12: Progress towards results (Outcome 1.2)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm level & assessment	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
Outcome 1.2: Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management				
<u>Indicator 8:</u> Environmental patrolling effort: # patrol days/yr. & total patrol km/yr.	0 in 2019	400 patrol /yr. avg. (3 teams*3x/wk.) / No new guards yet hired nor trained	400 patrol /yr. avg. (3 teams*3x/wk.)	On target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 9:</u> % of reported cases of environmental infractions leading to due legal prosecutions	0	20% / No new reported cases of environmental infractions have led to legal prosecutions	40%	Not on target to being achieved

Output 1.3 Framework and delivery system for integrated environmental surveillance and enforcement employed.

The issue of integrated environmental surveillance and enforcement for the existing PAs of Sao Tome and Principe is key, given that current capacity and resources dedicated to this activity are very low. The project has been able to make some important strides in this direction but has also faced important blocks in the achievement of this output. The acquisition of monitoring and surveillance equipment was completed in early 2023 and delivered to key beneficiaries at the Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity (DFB), Regional Secretary of Environment in Principe (RSESD), and the General Directorate of Environment and Climate Action (DGA), with the goal of enhancing technical capacity to implement better and more frequent surveillance and monitoring of PAs and of other significant areas for conservation.

Unfortunately, the actual recruitment environmental/forest rangers, has been blocked due to a lack of consensus among national stakeholders (specifically between the DGA and DFB) on the definition of institutional competences and where the new environmental/forest rangers should be based, whether they should be considered ‘environmental’ guards vs. ‘forest’ guards, as well as how they should be trained (that is, by international trainers with experience in international best practice in regards to PAs, or by national trainers within the DFB with context-specific experience). In attempts to overcome these challenges, the project encouraged a series of meetings between the DGA, DFB and RSESD, as well as the environmental police (UPBA) to establish a joint path forward. In December 2023 at the very beginning of the MTR period, the institutions involved reached a tentative consensus on the number of staff that would be part of each institution, which led to an increase in the number of guards to be hired, in this case 25 (and not 20 as established in the project plan) but remained blocked on other aspects. The TORs for hiring these guards are currently being finalized, and concurrently payment methods and sustainability of the intervention (that is salaries for the guards beyond the project end date) are being discussed. The Regional Secretariat, functioning more autonomously, and placing priority on the issue took initiative to launch a procurement process and hire the necessary guards, but were then not provided funds by the project to pay guard salaries, leading to significant discouragement among stakeholders in Principe. This underlines the importance of close project coordination and agile project management protocols which facilitate the advancement of activities on Principe, which has different priorities and constraints then on Sao Tome. *It is the opinion of the MTR consultant that the agreement to hire guards on Principe should proceed as agreed as soon as possible, with funds made available and the issues around the hiring of guards resolved with priority to start the necessary training and patrols. Funds for these activities should be prioritized and earmarked a part of the Conservation Trust Fund.*

The support towards this output once achieved would augment patrolling capacities, which are currently very limited due to very small number of guards carrying out patrols in a very large area. By doing so, the project will be able to provide its assistance, contributing significantly to the enhancement of law enforcement within the Protected Areas. *It is worth mentioning that 10 motorbikes were delivered by the Project in 2022 in order to strengthen the capacity of the patrols, however the use of these assets is not being monitored and should be carried out to ensure the investment is used as intended.* It was also noted that the experience with the Guardians of Obô (a voluntary group trained by

Birdlife, which is part of the co-financing of the project) was received with some resistance by national authorities, who consider this a partial threat to their institutional competencies.

Output 1.4 Capacity developed on environmental law surveillance and enforcement.

As mentioned above, a key output of the project is to bolster the environmental surveillance of PAs and adjacent areas of High Conservation value, by increasing the number of guards available for patrol. An associated output is to train those guards, but given the slow progress made in the hiring process itself as described above, it was not possible to achieve this output. Furthermore, there was a lack of agreement on the best modality for guards training and capacity building. Although this renders this also renders this indicator not on track to be being achieved it is hoped that this issue will be prioritized and resolved in the second half of implementation.

There is also still no established nor clear modus operandi on what to do when environmental infractions are registered, either by the DFB, RSESD and/or by UPAB. As reported to the PMU by the UPAB in March 2023, none of the cases brought up by them has advanced to legal prosecutions. Consultations revealed that awareness on environmental law is still limited among institutions, those involved in enforcement and among community members in general. In the case of Príncipe, infractions sometimes occur due to this lack of knowledge, rather than intentional violation of the law and in the case of Sao Tome, there is little political will to properly enforce penalties related to infractions due both to the potential violence that may be experienced by guards, as well as violations of the law by those with political power. The DFB reported to the PMU during the timeframe of the most recently completed PIR in June 2023, that 79 illegal logging materials and 3 chainsaws were seized by forest guards in the field, yet the seized goods are returned after payment of a fine set by the DFB (as is the case in Príncipe), according to the seriousness of the offense, and in many cases the perpetrators in questions are either unable or unwilling to pay the fine. Ideally, the currently proceeding revision and update of the Basic environment Law (carried out by an international consultancy), will strengthen the legal framework to overcome these constraints and find a solution to the issue of enforcement backed by the appropriate institutional resources and clarified legal framework. Therefore although, this output is not currently on target to be achieved, the result of Output 2.2 has potential to bring it back on track. Finally, the project plans to carry out capacity building for judges on environmental law.

Component 2: Management, monitoring and financing of PAs and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas	
Outcome 2.1: Protection of the two existing PAs and adjacent HCV forest areas enhanced	
Outcome 2.2: Nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system agreed and emplaced	
Progress towards achieving Component 2 Outcomes is rated as:	Satisfactory (S)

Indicative budget in project document³: USD 1,491,500
 Actual cost incurred on this Component through Dec 2023: USD 742,562.46

Figure 16: Progress towards results (Outcome 2.1)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
		Date:	April 2023	
Outcome 2.1: Protection of the two existing PAs and adjacent HCV forest areas enhanced				
<u>Indicator 10:</u> GEF Core Indicators 2: METT Scores for Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé and Parque Natural do Príncipe	PNOST Score 35 PNP Score 46	PNOST Score 42 PNP Score 53 Based on a full detailed analysis of the anticipated end state for each METT criterion, including after considering	PNOST Score 57 (range 57-72) PNP Score 68 (68-72) Based on a full detailed analysis of the anticipated end state for each METT criterion, including after	Achieved

³ Including 6,000 USD co-financing from UNDP

Figure 16: Progress towards results (Outcome 2.1)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		April 2023	Dec 2025	
		other parallel interventions / PNOST Score 53 PNP Score 64	considering other parallel interventions	

Output 2.1 Management effectiveness of protected areas and adjacent High Conservation Value areas enhanced.

This output saw substantial efforts to enhance the management of protected areas. BirdLife International, also leading this output, played a key role in the advocacy for and revision of management plans for São Tomé Obô Natural Park (PNOST). They organized meetings with key governmental bodies to promote the establishment of the PNOST Management Committee, crucial for effective conservation efforts. Maintenance of trails was also a significant activity, with the dual goals of enhancing park accessibility and ensuring the sustainability of its ecosystems. Birdlife plans on continuing advocacy for the formalization and operational activation of the management committee, alongside ongoing maintenance and management improvements in the park to ensure it meets conservation goals effectively.

The mid-term targets were met according to reporting in the PIR for both the Obô de São Tomé Natural Park (PNOST) and Príncipe Natural Park (PNP), as per the assessment carried out according to the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). These evaluations were carried out by a multidisciplinary team, which will be called upon again to carry out the same evaluation before the next PIR. Although the MTR assessment reported here is marked as achieved, as reported by the PMU, a closer examination of the METT assessment by the MTR team revealed many noted weaknesses in the assessment, and the fact that the quantitative figures achieved do not reflect the reality of management in the PAs. *Notably, both PA require dedicated funds to operationalize their respective management plans, demarcation of boundaries is an urgent issue, as well as sensitization at the community level and another issue of utmost importance to improve management effectiveness to systematically conduct monitoring in both parks, so that the reality of the situation is reflected in these scores.* The situation of both PAs is discussed in further detail below.

Assessment for the METT evaluation and score was done on the following dates:

Name of protected area	Obô de São Tomé Natural Park (PNOST)	Obô de São Tomé Natural Park (PNOST)	Obô de São Tomé Natural Park (PNOST)
	Nov. 09. 2021	Nov. 02. 2022	July. 20. 2023
Name of protected area	Príncipe Natural Park (PNP)		
	October 8, 2021		

Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management (hectares):

Total Extent by Biome	11/2021	11/2022
Land (insert the dimension "total hectares" of land cover)	32,454	32,454
Obô de São Tomé Natural Park	25,274	25,274
IUCN Category	2: National Park: managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation	
Príncipe Natural Park	7,180	7,180
Global designation or priority lists	Biosphere Reserve	Biosphere Reserve

IUCN Category	2: National Park: managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
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Both, PNOT and PNP were created, respectively, on 02/08/2006 and 13/06/2006, and are not new PAs established through the intervention of this project, but rather protected areas whose management was improved. Both parks are state property and managed by public institutions (the Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural development and Fisheries, and the Directorate of Environment of the Regional Government of Principe).

As mentioned previously, the parks suffer from low enforcement and monitoring with the entire extent of the Obô de São Tomé National Park monitored by 8 staff, only 4 of which are permanent. By contrast, Principe Natural Park (PNP) has 7 permanent workers. The terrestrial protected areas created before LTN totalled 32,500 ha while, by August 2023, 12 383,97 ha of new forest of HCV were created by decree law. The decree law approved the creation of 21 HCVs, officially defining these areas as "Special Reserves". Although as noted above the project does not intervene in Marine protected areas, there are also 11,198.60 ha of MPA under improved management, as part of the Príncipe Biosphere Reserve (whose UNESCO status was renewed with support from the project).

The Obo Natural Park of São Tomé (PNOT) is designated primarily to ensure the preservation, conservation, and protection of São Tomé’s Forest ecosystems. It focuses on safeguarding endangered species and habitats, including those critical for migratory fauna, while promoting sustainable use of natural resources and territorial management that continues to preserve evolutionary processes. Key initiatives include conducting studies on forest dynamics and human impact assessments, establishing a monitoring system for forest exploitation, and defending traditional lifestyles of resident populations that are harmonious with environmental conservation. The park also aims to foster economic development and enhance the well-being of local communities without compromising the area's natural and cultural heritage.

Príncipe Natural Park (PNP) was recognized in October 2021 for its unique biodiversity values, including a distinctive set of endemic species and the presence of globally threatened species, which are integral to the biodiversity of traditional São Toméan medicine. The biodiversity of PNP is also a significant draw for tourism in Príncipe, highlighting its importance not only for conservation efforts but also for its potential to boost local tourism and economic development. This underscores the park's role in preserving unique biological resources while contributing to the sustainable growth of the region.

Threats to the Protected Areas:

PNOT

The protected area Obô de São Tomé Natural Park suffers from several threats, namely the cutting of trees, pressure from the use of land for cultivation, hunting and collection of endemic and threatened species, invasive species, and the development of large infrastructure projects.

In the case of PNOT, the objectives proposed by the LTN to protect against these threats are reduction of illegal logging along transects by 70%, the halting of agricultural and forestry expansion (palm oil and palm wine), reduction of hunting and collection of endemic and threatened species in 35% transect surveys, definition of the rate of invasive alien species expansion (and its subsequent reduction), and reduction in the development of macro-projects without environmental compensation measures.

The established indicators (and their respective baseline status) for measuring the results to be achieved with the LTN, for the PNOT, are:

Indicator	Baseline status: 2016 Jan-Feb season
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardized logging quantity obtained from transect sampling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Result: 1.65. Prior to the start of the project, 104 trees were felled in 63 km.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Area invaded for agriculture and forestry (palm wine) along the transects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Result: Palm wine 1.67; Agriculture 0.04. Prior to the start of the project, 105 palm trees used for palm wine extraction were recorded in 63 km covered; and 25 sections of transect with agricultural activity, for a total of 630 sections.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardized quantity of hunting sign and collection of endemic and threatened species in transect surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Result: 0.08. Prior to the start of the project, signs of hunting were recorded in 48 transect sections (100 meters), out of a total of 630 sections.

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UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

Indicator	Baseline status: 2016 Jan-Feb season
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normalized quantity of invasive alien species identified on transect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to the start of the project, the presence of invasive species was recorded in each 100-meter section of the 16 transects covered: Dog was recorded in 15 sections; Cat in 0; Parrot in 13; Monkey in 58; Pig in 27; Rat in 0; Redbud in 236 (of which it was found alive in 129); Bamboo in 249; Erythrin tree in 158; Avocado tree in 27; Cane tree in 56; Cocoa tree in 60; Fruit tree in 181; Gofe in 227; Coffee in 121; Quina in 127; Cedrela in 21. A total of 63 km covered (630 sections).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of macro-projects with environmental compensation measures for PNOT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0

With the implementation of the LTN, the situation of these threats in 2021 and 2022 is described in the following tables:

	Threat 1: Felling trees	Threat 2: Agricultural pressure / land use	Threat 3: Hunting and collecting endemic and threatened species
Status in 2021: Season Jul - Aug	Result: 0.65. 45 trees were felled in 69 km.	Result: Palm wine 1.39; Agriculture 0.02. A total of 96 palm trees used for palm wine extraction were recorded in the 69 km covered; and 16 sections of transect with agricultural activity, for a total of 690 sections.	Result: 0.02. Traces of hunting were recorded in 14 transect sections (100 meters), out of a total of 690 sections.
	Threat 4: Invasive alien species		Threat 5: Macro-project developments
	The presence of invasive species was recorded in each 100-meter section of the 16 transects covered: Dog was recorded in 6 sections; Cat in 0; Parrot in 8; Monkey in 52; Pig in 36; Rat in 0; Redbud in 103 (of which it was found alive in 30); Bamboo in 230; Erythrin tree in 162; Avocado tree in 35; Canelé tree in 37; Cocoa tree in 46; Fruit tree in 114; Gofe in 214; Coffee tree in 3; Quina in 122; Cedrela tree in 17, Coração-magoado tree in 30, Micoco-campo tree in 1, Sunflower tree in 1 and Raspberry tree in 44. A total of 69 km covered (690 sections).		

	Threat 1: Felling trees	Threat 2: Agricultural pressure / land use	Threat 3: Hunting and collecting endemic and threatened species
Status in 2022: Season Jul - Aug	Result: 0.64. 44 trees were felled in 69 km.	Result: Palm wine 2.16; Agriculture 0.05. A total of 149 palm trees used for palm wine extraction were recorded in the 69 km covered; and 32 sections of transect with agricultural activity, for a total of 690 sections.	Result: 0.02. Traces of hunting were recorded in 12 transect sections (100 meters), out of a total of 690 sections.
	Threat 4: Invasive alien species		Threat 5: Macro-project developments
	The presence of invasive species was recorded in each 100-meter section of the 16 transects covered: Dog was recorded in 3 sections; Cat in 0; Parrot in 0; Monkey in 33; Pig in 38; Rat in 0; Red whelk in 32 (of which it was found alive in 18); Bamboo in 231; Erythrin tree in 157; Avocado tree in 45; Canelé tree in 16; Cocoa tree in 37; Fruit tree in 125; Gofe tree in 263; Coffee tree in 13; Quina tree in 135; Cedrela tree in 7, Coração-magoado tree in 39, Micoco-campo tree in 5, Sunflower tree in 2 and Raspberry tree in 85. A total of 69 km covered (690 sections).		

In the Obô de São Tomé National Park, there has been a general decrease in threats to biodiversity, except for some species of invasive fauna and flora, from the beginning of the LTN until 2022, although in this last year some threats have increased in relation to 2021. [It was unclear why threats to the PAs posed by macro-project development was not included in the analysis, given the scale of large-scale projects planned on in the near future, including a ring road](#)

around the island, as major port as well as large dam in the proximity of PNOT. It is highly recommended that these threats are assessed in the next METT evaluation.

PNP

In the protected area of Príncipe National Park, the threats to biodiversity are the same, except for pressure from the use of land for cultivation, but the production of charcoal is included.

The LTN's objectives to reduce these threats include 100% reduction in logging and illegal charcoal along the transects, normalized signal quantity of Príncipe's thrush and Buzio d'Obo stable, defines the rate of expansion and reduce invasive alien species, and no development of macro-projects without environmental compensation measures.

The indicators established were the following:

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Baseline status: 2016 Jan-Feb season</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardized amount of logging and charcoal in transect surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0 evidence found of charcoal production or logging⁴
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Normalized signal quantity of the Príncipe's thrush and Obô whelk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mockingbird 0.29 individuals per km of transect; whelk 0.05 live individuals per km of transect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Normalized quantity of invasive alien species identified on transect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Red whelk 0 individuals per km of transect⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of tourism infrastructure development projects with environmental compensation measures for the PNP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0 (1 project currently being evaluated by the regional government (water collection on the Papagaio River)

Unfortunately, the assessment suffered from a lack of critical data as PNP did not carry out monitoring actions in 2021 and 2022, rendering it hard to report against the indicators established. It is highly recommended that monitoring of PNP against the indicators listed above is carried out and supported by the project in order to inform subsequent METT assessments.

Overall

Although the METT score assigned for each park, revealed a quantitative rise in the score based on tracking certain parameters within the park, upon examination of the METT scorecard in more detail by the MTR team, and reading the qualitative descriptions of constraints to park management, it is hard to see how project actions, or even broader government actions in regard to management effectiveness may have contributed to improved METT scores, or other attribution towards improved METT scores. Since the creation of the PNOT for example, there has been no PNOT Management Council in place to define management objectives. Therefore, there is an urgent need to provide the PAs with a Management Council to define the management objectives in accordance with their creation. Furthermore, the serious lack of dedicated resources (some trickle towards the Park from projects, such as ECOFAC 6) means that both PAs cannot be managed in such a way as to meet the overall objectives of their creation. There is a need to improve the demarcation of the PNOT, and again the lack of regular budgets and the limited number of staff in both PAs, does not allow many basic activities to be implemented, nor are there sufficient funds available to support planning and decision-making, especially for key areas such as the monitoring and conservation plans for key species and activities engaging and informing surrounding communities, as well as other cultural and socio-economic aspects (given for example the rich heritage of traditional meditation in Sao Tome and Principe, which is based on forest resources). In terms of enforcement within the park, a system exists and has been reinforced by the hard work of a small number of dedicated guards on both islands, but again, enforcement is also often rendered ineffective, due to limited staffing the large areas, often inaccessible, involved. The lack of a national database available on the biology of species and ecological systems has made it impossible to provide effective support for planning and decision-making, and hence it is obvious that this should be a major priority for any new Biodiversity related institution created, whether this is eventually achieved as part of the project, or after project closure. There is clearly a need, above all, to increase the number of staff to manage the Protected Areas, not only guards for enforcement, which has not yet been achieved by the project, but also a scientific advisor, administrative staff, eco-guides with salaries, and a liaison with government

⁴ To ensure more reliable and complete monitoring of these disturbance factors, it would be necessary to extend the sampling area to include areas closer to the communities. The transects selected for thrush and whelk are not suitable for detecting any initial advances of these threats.

⁵ The methodology currently in place does not collect data on invasive species other than red whelk. To obtain data on other invasive species, mainly plants, an additional methodology is required.

departments and directorates which have activities that impact the park (for example with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Infrastructure. Inadequate ability to manage land and water use in ways that consider necessary ecosystem functions within the PAs (a well-informed PNOT would be an important instrument towards this goal). Finally, it is noted in the METT assessment, as well as flagged by the DGA and other stakeholders that there is an urgent need to overhaul the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. Currently, these are very subjective, not necessarily based on facts, pertinent data, or studies, and though there is a provision to consider the PAs, the actual Environmental Impact Study process is currently still not operationalized, and regardless relevant departments do not pass on information to the PAs. There has already been a petition for the PAs to be part of an evaluation committee in the Environmental Impact Assessment process from the outset. This would be an essential move, given that stakeholders in interviews also revealed that some of the most significant infrastructure developments on the islands, including the hotels constructed by HBD on Príncipe (which are branded largely on being ecologically sensitive and having a positive impact on communities and the environment), were constructed without an EIA, and that the proponents were largely unaware that these laws and processes even existed. Although these eco-tourism initiatives play a very important role in raising the profile of Sao Tome and Principe as a destination for unique biodiversity and as an alternative to unfettered and destructive mass tourism development as seen in many other parts of the world, it also reveals a dangerous gap in the countries planning processes and Environmental law, particularly as the hotel built by HBD are all in ecological sensitive areas, and adjacent to national parks. Furthermore, it is the opinion of the MTR consultant that although the ad hoc investments in conservation and community projects by HBD are very much appreciated in Principe, the fact that such significant developments can occur without the requisite studies is an enormous lost opportunity to systematically collect and share biodiversity (and other) information through impact assessments, a cost that is always borne by the developer and a cornerstone of environmental law in most countries globally. Finally, if HBD is able to raise tourism revenue from its guests, surely a portion should go towards broader national efforts of the government to conserve biodiversity and not only towards those efforts of HBDs choosing. Regardless it is clear that the government has potential to raise revenue, similar to models used in other national parks such as the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, as long as reinvestment of those revenues is transparent, well-governed and the results are evident to visitors. Overall, the revision of the EIA process, and building general political will around good governance in implementing EIA laws is not only essential for integrity of the PAs but to avoid or at least mitigate the devastating environmental impacts or certain types of planned infrastructure projects, including a large port, and particularly offshore oil and gas developments. It is therefore strongly recommended that the environmental law consultancy also prioritize this issue in the base law revision.

Finally, although it is the opinion of the MTR consultant that the improved METT scores do not actually reflect the full picture in regards to improved management in either of the parks (that is management plans are still not operationalized, the score does not account for infrastructure developments in the surrounding areas etc.) the outcome rating has remained Achieved here, and the fact that the assessment may not in fact properly reflect the management of the park has been incorporated into the achievement rating for project M&E.

Output 2.2 Capacity developed on biodiversity, zoology/botany, ecosystem services, conservation, and PA management.

Under this Output, the project aimed to raise awareness and technical capacity about biodiversity science, threats and conservation responses, among a range of national stakeholders, with the content suitably adapted to each particular stakeholder group. As some technicians during the PPG requested advanced/specialised trainings (e.g. on remote sensing data), it was planned that the project would carry out a consensus-building training needs assessment guided by the CTA and prepare a capacity development plan for the project. The MTR team was not provided with the training needs assessment nor the capacity development plan in the project information package, nor were these activities reported in the PIR. Stakeholder consultations, particularly with the guards currently working in PNP, as well as volunteer staff working for the Botanical Garden, and finally official guides trained to take tourists and visitors into the national park however expressed the need for training on biodiversity topics. A clearing house mechanism was also established for the amalgamation of biodiversity related information in the country which will be a significant step towards

Output 2.3 New technologies, systems and tools for information-based biodiversity and PA management emplaced.

BirdLife International also played a leading role in the delivery of this output. The main focus was the establishment of the SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) system to improve data collection and biodiversity monitoring across São Tomé's terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Extensive training sessions on the use of SMART were conducted, benefiting 49 technical staff. They also developed a comprehensive SMART database, incorporating geographic and ecological data to enhance monitoring accuracy and efficacy. Birdlife will continue towards the refinement and

expansion of the SMART system, further training sessions to ensure wide-scale adoption and effectiveness, and ongoing consultations with local stakeholders to tailor the system to local needs.

A further assessment and tool that will be prepared by the project under this Output is an economic valuation of the ecosystem services provided by the NPs and their importance to local communities and the national economy. This assessment and tool will inform the management of the NPs and biodiversity, such as on the cost/benefit of tourism concessions or NTFP exploitation, but if favourable, can be used to make a better case for a more sustainable management of natural capital on the islands more widely.

It is worth noting however that BirdLife International is also working with Fauna & Flora International and Fundação Príncipe on the SMART system, as well as other national initiatives that also fall under project outputs, such as the establishment and operationalization of the Conservation Trust Fund. This type of overlap is somewhat inevitable given that international (and local) NGOs have their own detailed strategic plans around which their activities are geared, and rather than depend on projects and the various goals set within the structure of a more limited time frame and funding of a project, they put project funds towards activities that fit within the framework of their strategic plans. This requires greater oversight however in regards to the efficiency in the use of international funds, which should ideally be done eventually by the institute (or other government body) responsible for Biodiversity. This can be complicated when coordination and reporting are not done in a systematic manner. In this case a significant lack of Implementing Partner information was gathered and shared by the PMU and provided by RPs, appearing in the Project Implementation Reports (PIRs). This is a serious issue, discussed further below in the sections on coordination and reporting, and should be resolved as a priority. It should also be noted that during the MTR team’s presentation of preliminary results, the DFB suggested that the funds towards this output also help to support the staffing of the Botanical Garden, which is currently run by dedicated volunteers, and it is the opinion of the MTR team that this would be worthwhile, given the serious lack of funds put towards such activities.

METT score (in August 2023):

	METT Score	
	Baseline	Achieved
	Endorsement	MTR
Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé	35,0	53,0
Parque Natural do Príncipe	46,0	64,0
	81,0	117,0

Figure 18: Progress towards results (Outcome 2.2)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		April 2023	Dec 2025	
Outcome 2.2: Finance for biodiversity conservation and PA management increased				
<u>Indicator 11:</u> Status of Conservation Trust Fund for STP	CTF does not exist	CTF legally established in a European Country following CFA best practices / CTF legally established in the Netherlands.	CTF legally established in a European Country following CFA best practices	Achieved
<u>Indicator 12:</u> Financing made available for biodiversity and protected areas from sources beyond traditional external grants to governments or NGOs, and capitalisation of STP CTF endowment fund	USD 5000/yr non-grant income from tourism, 0 other sources, 0 CTF	USD 10,000/yr non-grant income from tourism, 0 other sources, 0 CTF endowment capital	USD 50,000/yr non-grant income from tourism and related concessions, and USD 2 million launch capital	On target to be achieved

	endowment capital	/ Non-grant income target from tourism not fully assessed nor achieved	attracted into the CTF endowment capital or sinking fund with resulting income distributed to biodiversity conservation interventions in STP	
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Output 2.4 Proven structures and tools to capture and distribute new finance for the national system of protected areas and biodiversity created.

In regards to the Output 2.4 under Outcome 2.2 aimed at increasing biodiversity conservation finance, decent progress has been made. Although the baseline of **Indicator 12**, estimating non-grant income from tourism did not have a strong basis, it has since been investigated further. Although travel cessation related to the COVID-19 pandemic had profound impacts on tourism on the period from 2020 to 2022, tourism has since begun to increase again. In 2022, the Directorate of Tourism and Hospitality reported a significant increase in tourist entries, rising 73% to 26,257, though this still fell below the pre-pandemic level of 34,918 tourists. Regardless, enforcement of entry fees at São Tomé’s National Park remains lax, with many tourists not paying fees, and the collected funds often neither reaching state coffers, nor being put towards park management. In contrast, Príncipe sees better compliance with fee payment, though the total collected is estimated to be less than \$5,000 annually. Given the scale of tourist income, and without a reliable and systematic fee collection protocol implemented, it was decided that the strategy should pivot primarily to a Conservation Trust Fund for long-term financing requirements. *It is of the opinion of the MTR consultant however that modes of collecting and distributing tourism related income should still be investigated and offer promise for the valuation and improved support of Sao Tome’s unique biodiversity and eco-tourism related initiatives.*

Regardless in response to these challenges, Birdlife International, under the Responsible Party Agreement, initiated a project with Rio Impact, an international consultancy to investigate options for sustainable finance and design a solution. This project, which began in May 2023 and will run until 2025, aims to establish and operationalize a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) in São Tomé and Príncipe, marking a pioneering effort in the region. At the time of the MTR, the CTF was in the process of being formally incorporated in the Netherlands, thereby on its way to achieving the target for Indicator 11. The project also is actively building awareness on the CTF having presented its concept to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Planning, Finance and Blue Economy, the Minister of Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment, the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Rural Development, and the Prime Minister. An induction workshop on the CTF was held in June 2023 with the attendance of 45 entities representing 22 institutions. The action plan for the creation and operationalization of the fund was also presented and validated. Birdlife also developed digital training modules on sustainable financing and conducted workshops and webinars to build understanding and support for the fund. Birdlife will continue in its efforts to finalize the fund's operational structure, continuing advocacy for governmental and private sector involvement, and launching additional promotional and educational activities to ensure broad support and successful implementation of the CTF.

The Sustainable Finance Plan has also been presented to high level authorities and policy makers and its main results discussed. In parallel, the project is working closely with the Minister of Finance to set up an inter-ministerial committee to oversee the creation and implementation of the sustainable financing mechanisms proposed in the Sustainable Finance Plan for Protected Areas and Biodiversity in São Tomé and Príncipe. This will ensure individual, institutional, and political engagement at national scale with the integration of all actors involved in the conservation and management of PAs and biodiversity nationally. The successful creation of the CTF and its subsequent financing, as well as its oversight and governance structures is key to the sustainability of project results and the long-term implementation of biodiversity initiatives nationally. *Furthermore, as the efforts to promote greater management effectiveness of the PAs reveal, finance for improved management, including to pay salaries for environmental guards, for qualified tour guides, for biodiversity conservation staff and to carry out systematic surveys, as well as fully implement the remaining actions in the PA management plans is both critical and urgent, in light of the pressures facing both PAs. It is of the opinion of the MTR consultant the government should better manage the revenue that is generated by the high-end tourism on Príncipe Island by HBD towards community and conservation projects. Earmarking a portion of the income collected from guests towards the management budget of the PAs is an obvious move, and easily attainable, evidenced by the leftover funds collected in 2022 which reached ~60,000USD, which would more than fulfill the tourism revenue target indicated in the projects results framework.*

Component 3: Reducing forest degradation and ecosystem services loss from unsustainable charcoal-making	
Outcome 3.1: Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated	
Outcome 3.2: Prevalence of traditional high-impact charcoal-making livelihoods reduced in favor of more sustainable options	
Progress towards achieving Component 3 Outcomes is rated as:	Unsatisfactory

Indicative budget in project document⁶: USD 1,258,450

Actual cost incurred on this Component through Dec 2023: USD 236,552.69

Progress towards achieving the two outcomes under Component 3 has been limited, with only USD 236,552.69, or less than 20% of the indicative budget of USD 1,258,450 for this component incurred through midterm, Dec 2023.

⁶ Including 6,000 USD co-financing from UNDP

Figure 20: Progress towards results (Outcome 3.1)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm target / Midterm status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
Outcome 3.1: Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated				
<u>Indicator 13:</u> Native fast-growing charcoal-making trees planted and surviving across the forest landscape.	Approx. 25 ha restored so far by DFB under different pilot actions = between 2,500-25,000 trees for low (100/ha) and high (1000/ha) planting density estimates; Príncipe plans to reforest 5,000 trees/year but is far from achieving this goal	10 per day/pax * 8 pax * 2 teams * 100 days/yr. =16,000/yr. in the mid-term year, with at least 60% surviving / Following the onset of the rainy season, 9,019 fast-growing tree seedlings were planted on the two islands in co-operation with the DFB/Regional Secretariat.	Effort maintained throughout final years for a total of 4*16,000/yr. = 64,000 planted by project end, with at least 60% surviving	Not on target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 14:</u> Number of improved charcoal kilns effectively in use	0 improved charcoal kilns	1 semi-industrial improved kiln (ST) producing coconut-based charcoal and 10 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation / Due to the change of authorities, following general elections in September 2022, the process of purchasing improved charcoal kilns had to be restarted from zero. Yet important progress has been achieved in Q2 2023:	2 semi-industrial kilns (1 ST, 1 Príncipe) producing coconut-based charcoal and 40 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation	

Output 3.1 Charcoal supply and value chain analysis prepared to identify further options for reducing wood-based charcoal extraction drivers.

Illegal logging, the second leading cause of deforestation in São Tomé and Príncipe, and related to partly traditional charcoal production, is being addressed by the project through the development of a coconut-based charcoal value chain. This initiative not only aims to reduce charcoal production significantly, thereby reducing pressure on forest resources, but also seeks to enhance the overall health of charcoal producers by reducing their exposure to harmful smoke. Firewood and charcoal are the main sources of energy for domestic consumption in the and approximately 75% of households in São Tomé and Príncipe use firewood or charcoal for cooking (with wealthier households relying on cooking gas). According to UNDP, the primary use of charcoal is for cooking and charcoal buyers mostly reside in the peri-urban and urban centers. The Project document noted that there are also major retail and hotel chain consumers of charcoal, seeking to replace charcoal with more sustainable sources related to consumer-facing environmental commitments, but no project outputs were designed to intervene in this regard, choosing rather to focus on producers, and consumers at the household level in peri-urban and rural areas.

Significant efforts were made to design this intervention well, as well as have the necessary information to mitigate its potential negative impacts. The interventions in Component 3 of the project therefore started with a value chain assessment, which in the Project document was intended to cover the following: “ The value chain assessment will involve desk review but also comprehensive field surveys and interviews with stakeholders to provide quantitative data along the supply chain considering *inter alia*, extraction rates, trees species, location, seasonality, other livelihoods and degree of dependency, role of men/women, cost, risk, transport, market access, sales price, income level, education, charcoal quality, type of end use, openness to substitutes, health impacts.”

Several assessments were then carried out to gather this information, starting with one of the first consultancies of the project, a Green Charcoal value chain assessment, with a focus on the implication for charcoal makers regarding economic displacement, and an accompanying "Livelihood Action Plan related to the Risk of Economic Displacement." The first gives a detailed assessment of the charcoal value chain, revealing the significant reliance of certain communities on charcoal production and sale for their livelihoods, despite very small overall revenues. The findings underscore the potential economic impacts on these groups and stress the importance of implementing measures to provide short-term benefits and promote long-term sustainable involvement. Recommendations for the action plan included creating alternative livelihood opportunities, particularly in communities heavily dependent on charcoal. It suggested choosing specific geographic areas for intervention based on various indicators like prevalence of charcoal use and socioeconomic profiles. The plan also suggests technical assessments to better understand local capacities and needs, promoting diversification of livelihoods, and enhancing occupational satisfaction among charcoal producers and other related groups. Moreover, the plan emphasizes the need for regular monitoring and adaptation of the strategies to ensure they effectively mitigate the risks of economic displacement. *Although these initial assessments were well-done, their focus was very much on the impacts of charcoal makers, and not as much on the potential for green charcoal to replace existing charcoal, as well as various aspects related to the market necessary to design uptake of the new product within communities and at the national scale, as well as the causal links between green charcoal production and reduced deforestation. It is also evident from this study that an emphasis on alternative livelihoods is necessary and that this may not be adequately emphasized/ budgeted for in the overall project structure (despite the inclusion of Output 3.5 below).* The project has planned the hire of a SES officer and international specialist who will support the update and implementation of SES management tools, which will surely include consideration on economic alternative for charcoal producers' communities, and proposed associated budget revision.

Separately, a value chain assessment was carried out by an independent consultant hired by Valudo, which presents solid justification for green charcoal use and delves into the technical aspects of production, but also does not appropriately contextualize the economic and market aspects to Sao Tome and Principe. Furthermore, the study focused on the operational costs, and revenue generated from instruments such as carbon credits, not relevant to the initiative supported under the project. The results of this assessment were presented to the government in an information note, presenting the relevant facts, and with the purpose of facilitating the establishment of a Public-Private Partnership between the private sector entities of Valudo and EcoBlasa on the one hand, and the DGA on the other. Unfortunately, the lack of certain key information in these value chain assessments, as well as persistent worries regarding the impacts on livelihoods of charcoal makers remain among key stakeholders within the government. Furthermore, it is evident that there are doubts around the overall approach itself, which puts a significant part of the budget of this component towards the purchase of a semi-industrial kiln (discussed further below) to be used in the charcoal manufacturing process, and the worry is around funds being geared towards the private sector rather than government agencies where the long-term national impact and ownership may be greater. Finally, the DFB shared its technical opinion of this component, highlighting the fact that other economic activities, including the use of wood for construction as well as large-scale infrastructure, have a greater impact on forest degradation than cutting for charcoal, as mentioned above, and so collectively the enthusiasm around this component and its related outputs remains low among key stakeholders, further contributing to the slow pace of its implementation.

It is also worth noting that based on the Social and Environmental Risk Analysis of the project, a Human Rights Risk Assessment was also undertaken prior to the launch of project activities, which included a Livelihood Action Plan and Human Rights Action Plan, respectively, as well as defined an appropriate project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism. The project was supposed to hire a Safeguards Officer (which was not done), with dedicated part-time responsibilities to oversee that social and environmental risks were continuously monitored, and adaptive management conducted when required. A procurement process is ongoing to fill this gap through international expertise and national capacity-building on that prospect. *The HRIA also includes a suggestion to implement Land Use Policy with a resettlement component, to be established with specific action plans developed when the individual project components and relevant information becomes available. Although at the time of writing, the National Land Use policy approval was blocked, it is important that recommendations such as these can inform its updating, and implementation, or make it*

into a final draft, if not approved in its current form. As the use of GEF funds cannot support in any way implementation of a resettlement policy, the strengthening of the SES dimension of the project team will contribute to preventing the project's contribution to resettlement.

The Human Rights Action Plan also indicated it would be necessary to have a member of the PMU staff monitor the Livelihoods Action Plan, but the Environmental Management System Officer role was never recruited, and no other member of the PMU took on this important role. Although both the M&E officer and the gender experts were involved in activities of the community level, the scope of their roles did not allow them to systematically engage with the implementation of this work, particularly the social and environmental risk monitoring. Thus, following discussion with UNDP SES, it has been agreed upon the hiring of a dedicated staff for SES until the end of the project, deputized by an international expert who would update and develop the project's SES system, and will build the team skills managing social and environmental safeguards.

Unfortunately, it seems that although solid work has been carried out towards the implementation of this activity with some emphasis in the early stages of the project, given the Chief Technical Advisor's focus on the charcoal value chain, the results of this work seem to have fallen through the cracks, with no real follow-up of the recommendations and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement still not signed at the time of writing. Overall, outputs establishing the alternative charcoal value chain are lagging, and the indicators related to this outcome are not on track to being achieved, due partly to a lack of complete information in the value chain assessment to secure the necessary political will. The discussion regarding the progress towards these interrelated outputs is continued below.

Output 3.2 More sustainable charcoal kilns and charcoal sources mobilised.

The project design called for the purchase of more sustainable charcoal kilns as well as charcoal sources mobilized under this output. The sustainable charcoal kilns, refer to two types of kilns, the first a semi-industrial kiln to be used at a larger scale, with primary material provided by a company involved in the transformation of coconut products, Valudo, and hence with a significant volume of coconut waste at their disposal for the creation of green charcoal. Expertise in the actual transformation of coconut waste to green charcoal would be provided by another company, a local entrepreneurial initiative known as EcoBlasa. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was facilitated by UNDP between EcoBlasa, (which is currently the only coconut-based charcoal producer in the country) and Valudo (which is STP's largest coconut-product manufacturing and trading company). The partnership between the two enterprises was also conceived to alleviate initial concerns about Valudo's potential monopoly in this new market, as they were the only company identified in the Project Document. At the time of writing, the PPP agreement was being drawn up between the state and the consortium, and advocacy with the government continued (including the new Minister of Environment) on the importance of the activity for the project and for the country more broadly, leading to the purchase of the semi-industrial kiln once approved.

In addition to the reason for delays described above, another reason for significant delay is that following the general elections in September 2022, there was a shift in authorities that necessitated restarting the process of purchasing improved charcoal kilns from scratch. In April 2023, the project's objectives, and the progress towards establishing a green charcoal offer were discussed again with the Minister of Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Environment. Follow-up conversations with the new Director General of Environment and Climate Action were also productive, with a commitment from the government to finalize decisions regarding the kiln purchase by August 2023. This work however was somewhat undone again by the departure of the Minister and the appointment of a new Minister of the Environment in January 2024. During the MTR mission, and at the time of writing, it was clear that doubts remained, the PPP had not yet been signed, and the fate of this Component remains uncertain. Additionally, there are unresolved issues concerning the budget provision for the larger industrial kilns, as the project document (and results framework) indicate that two kilns would be purchased (one for Sao Tome and one for Principe) but then the project budget only accounts for one kiln. This discrepancy in the project document has understandably led to tension between those responsible for implementation in São Tomé versus Príncipe, as the infrastructure for green charcoal lies currently in Sao tome under the auspices of Valudo and EcoBlasa. Although, it was unclear to the MTR team why the issue had not been discussed and resolved at a previous Project Board meeting, or by the CTA focused on this component, *if this component is pursued as designed, priority should also be given to finding an appropriate use of funds in Principe towards alternatives to the charcoal value chain, which has its own particularities on the islands based on the tree species used and the viability of timber cooperatives. Again, if it is decided by this project board to refocus the project on the first two components, then there is a plethora of activities related to biodiversity surveys, monitoring and strengthening of PA management plans and operationalization that would benefit greatly from a re-allocation of funds.* According to the national GEF focal point, given the importance of this component and its substantial budget share, a dramatic revision of the project is unlikely to be approved by GEF. If this is the case, then the modification would have to be more minor and that efforts to formalize the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) agreement between the

government and the private sector need to proceed with some urgency to ensure the component's successful implementation and operationalization.

Additionally, the project has made strides in improving traditional wood-based charcoal production at the community level through improved kilns, which is the second type of kiln referred to under this output (specifically through Indicator 14). In June 2023, a consultant was hired to develop prototypes for improved kilns, which will be constructed within traditional charcoal-producing communities. Communities had also received training in the use of the improved kilns and their production, with pilots in a few target communities. Although the kilns have good potential to produce positive health outcomes for users, it is of the opinion of the MTR team that is equally important to track how the kilns are being used, and if their use does in fact mean a decrease in the use of traditional charcoal, and most importantly does not inadvertently cause increased pressure on forest resources due to their relative efficiency. It is imperative that this is monitored at the community level, both as part of the project, and in any follow up projects or by the sustainable charcoal platform, and should be added as an indicator in the results framework.

Given the relative importance of this component in the overall goal of the project, a decision should be taken immediately by the Project Board as to how to proceed, and priority given to gathering the missing information regarding the value chain, tracking the use of improved kilns at the community level, monitoring the impact that both types of kilns have, in terms of pressure on forest resources, and appropriately prioritizing the impacts on charcoal makers through emphasis on (and sustainability of) the livelihood activities, which is the focus of the following output. Alternatively, if a decision is made not to proceed with this component due to lack of government buy-in, a decision should be made by the Project Board, and in close communication with GEF and UNDP, as soon as possible of how to re-allocate the funds earmarked for this component towards other outputs of the project that are farther along and show good promise for long-term impact (such as improved management of the PAs, environmental law reform or the operationalization of the CTF).

Output 3.3 Awareness raised, and capacity developed on more sustainable charcoal production and alternatives.

In regard to raising awareness about the consumption of green charcoal, the project made various donations of green coconut-based charcoal to support charity institutions, national partners, and charcoal producing communities. This output, despite the broader challenges described above, showed good progress at the community level with the design of the improved kiln completed, and training done at the community level with the pilot kilns provided to communities.

The PMU staff, particularly the M&E and gender expert in Sao tome were directly involved in these activities, also ensuring that training and capacity building was done in a way that was gender sensitive and inclusive. This activity would be more structured and effective and useful in terms of lessons learned for other projects and going forward if a Midterm survey was taken of participants involved in these training and activities and then again at the Terminal evaluation stage to have some measure of the impact of these training activities at the community level. Interviews which took place during the field mission revealed very inconsistent knowledge of charcoal production alternatives and impacts and the reasons for making a shift. Although some respondents mentioned the protection of biodiversity, it was clear that this was overly conceptual, and reasons such as improved respiratory health at the household level were much clearer and concrete. It was also clear that there is also significant project intervention fatigue at the community level with several stakeholders' expression confusion as to the purpose and particular project to which these interventions related, and little distinction of Liqueza Tela Non, vs other project interventions in regard to livelihoods they had seen over the years.

Output 3.4 Fast-growing native charcoal tree species planted in degraded forests and shade plantations.

This output was led under the auspices of the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB). As the national body currently responsible for biodiversity (particularly in regard to forests), the coordination of activities with DFB has faced challenges, leading to notable delays and complications in project execution. Despite these hurdles, some progress has been made towards this output, although for the time being it is not on track on meeting the overall target and documentation and integration of DFB activities within the framework of LTN, in regard to project reports and tracking activities has been lacking.

Despite initial difficulties in integrating DFB into the project's activities, recent developments have shown improvement; an agreement was successfully negotiated and signed, marking a significant step forward. This agreement has delineated specific roles, particularly emphasizing DFB's responsibility in organizing training for forest guards (discussed above) and specified that DFB would manage the training for guards under its direct control, with separate sessions planned for UPAB and DGAAC agents. Regarding this particular output, in 2022, efforts were made to support the

expansion of nursery and seedling production in collaboration RSESD, and local communities on both islands involved in the project. The production of seedlings was slated to begin in October 2022, aligned with the wet season to take advantage of optimal growing conditions. Funding has been earmarked to facilitate the direct planting of 17,000 trees in 2024 and an additional 32,000 by the end of the LTN’s timeline. In 2023, following the onset of the rainy season, 9,019 fast-growing tree seedlings were successfully planted.

It is worth noting here that the lack of comprehensive Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) due to the omission of activities and outcomes from key partners like BirdLife and DFB in these reports have been pinpointed as areas needing urgent improvement. Immediate action is called for to centralize and share all documents, activity reports and to ensure transparency and enhance the project’s efficacy. It is to be noted that on the NGO's own initiative, a shared folder with all the documents was created and given access to all those involved in implementing the project. Special attention has to be given now to inclusion of information on the Birdlife implemented activities - the Project Coordinator can share the PIR reports and their format / template and UNDP can provide guidance of what needs to be included for reporting. The project has a shared folder, managed by the PMU, which all project stakeholders have access to, and which population should be carefully monitored by the M&E officer. This would help improve data collection and analysis for PIR, with support from UNDP CO.

Figure 21: Progress towards results (Outcome 3.2)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
Outcome 3.2: Prevalence of traditional high-impact charcoal-making livelihoods reduced in favour of more sustainable options				
<u>Indicator 15:</u> Number of fully dedicated professional traditional charcoal-makers harvesting unsustainably	500 ST, 50 Príncipe	400 ST, 40 Príncipe	300 ST, 30 Príncipe	Not on target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 16:</u> Share of household incomes based on newly adopted sustainable livelihood activities in targeted priority communities	0 %	At least 30% in directly targeted households; at least 10% overall in targeted communities	At least 60% in directly targeted households; at least 20% overall in targeted communities	Not on target to be achieved

Output 3.5 Community stakeholders consulted, and sustainable livelihoods introduced and adopted.

For this output, BirdLife International, in collaboration with the partner NGO Oikos, and with support of the PMU on both islands, has been actively engaging local communities on São Tomé Island to introduce sustainable livelihood options and reduce environmental impacts. This initiative is part of a broader effort to address the environmental challenges associated with the charcoal value chain. To provide tangible examples and encourage community participation, Oikos constructed pilot models of pigsties and chicken coops using sustainable materials and techniques. These models serve not only as functional facilities but also as demonstrations of sustainable practices that can be replicated throughout the community. To complement these efforts, environmental cinema events were organized, successfully reaching 250 participants. These events serve to raise awareness and educate the community on conservation themes, further embedding the principles of sustainability within local practices. Encouraged by the positive reception and impact of these activities, Oikos, and the Project Management Unit (PMU) plan to expand these initiatives. The future plans include refining sustainable construction techniques and enhancing community engagement through additional educational programs and direct involvement in conservation activities. Moreover, the project has been actively engaging charcoal-producing communities through capacity-building and sensitization sessions focused on gender issues, sustainable charcoal production, and healthcare. Led by two gender and community facilitators, one per island, these sessions have reached a total of 826 participants, comprising 353 women and 473 men. The sustainable charcoal platform further facilitated two significant meetings aimed at mobilizing partners and community leaders, one in São Tomé and another in Príncipe.

Despite these successes, the expansion of these initiatives to more communities, particularly on the island of Príncipe, has been slow. Oikos faces logistical and financial challenges as they do not have a physical presence on Príncipe. This absence complicates the implementation of similar projects on the island, highlighting a significant gap in the reach of their efforts. It should be noted however that Oikos does not consider its lack of physical presence on Príncipe a barrier to timely implementation, but rather the delays in receiving necessary project funds. Furthermore, stakeholder

consultations at both the institutional and community levels have revealed challenges in the long-term viability of these livelihood initiatives. For instance, it was noted that while some solutions temporarily address subsistence needs, they fail to engender sustained engagement or self-driven continuation by the communities after project conclusion. This issue is compounded by the provision of free material support and training bonuses, which, although well-intentioned, may inadvertently reduce the incentive for personal investment and long-term commitment to these initiatives.

Community members have expressed concerns over the lack of necessary technical support for various initiatives once projects end. There is also a noted deficiency in areas such as business planning, marketing, and visibility of entrepreneurial initiatives. Although these observations were not in reference to the livelihood interventions led by Oikos, given that these activities had not yet commenced as planned, without adequate emphasis on these critical aspects of livelihood support, it should be noted going forward that promising initiatives risk being abandoned despite their potential. This underscores the need for a more integrated and sustainable approach to community development initiatives, where logistical support, consistent presence, and a focus on building long-term capacities are prioritized to ensure the success and sustainability of efforts aimed at improving livelihoods and reducing environmental impacts in these communities. *It is therefore recommended that there is an institutional mechanism set-up that can continue to support communities in the alternative livelihood mechanism initiated by the project. The PSC should also consider a re-allocation of budget towards the long-term and more integrated support of livelihood initiatives at the community level. Finally monitoring and evaluation should track the level of uptake and success of various initiatives as to systematically apply lessons learned. Finally, given Fundação Príncipe experience with sustainable livelihoods and presence on the island of Príncipe, it may be prudent to keep the Oikos budget for implementation as is and focus it towards more robust efforts in the communities targeted in Sao Tome, while allocating more funds to FP to carry out the requisite livelihood activities in Príncipe.*

Component 4: M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender	
Outcome 4.1: M&E, knowledge management and gender work fully and successfully implemented	
Progress towards achieving Component 4 outcomes is rated as:	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Indicative budget in project document⁷: USD 356,830
Actual cost incurred on this Component through Dec 2023: USD 205,319.77

Figure 18: Progress towards results (Outcome 4.1)

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:		June 2023	Aug 2026	
Outcome 4.1: M&E, knowledge management and gender work fully and successfully implemented				
<u>Indicator 17:</u> % of female members i) in platforms and decision-making forums emplaced by the project, and ii) amongst staff recruited by and for the project	0	i) At least 30%; ii) At least 50% (esp. in enforcement, community work but also beyond)	i) At least 30%; ii) At least 50% (esp. in enforcement, community work but also beyond)	On target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 18:</u> % of 52 sub-indicator targets in Gender Action Plan met	0	40%	80%	Not on target to be achieved
<u>Indicator 19:</u> Quality of PIR completed annually by national project staff	N/A	PIRs are completed reliably but with major support from	PIRs are completed reliably by national project staff	Not on target to be achieved

⁷ Including 2,000 USD co-financing from UNDP

		international project staff and UNDP CO		
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Output 4.2 Gender strategy and action plan operationalised to guide project implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

The project's Gender Action Plan is crafted to integrate gender considerations systematically across all its components, ensuring that both men and women benefit equitably from the project and contribute to its objectives. The plan is based on numerous gender-sensitive actions (GSAs) with corresponding indicators (GSIs) that address the specific needs and roles of different genders within the project framework.

Component 1 of the project focuses on enhancing capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management. It includes actions such as revising legal and regulatory frameworks to integrate gender considerations, ensuring equal job opportunities in the revised institutional frameworks, and accommodating the specific needs of women in office environments to enhance their work participation. The effectiveness of these actions is measured by indicators such as the inclusion of gender references in legal documents, the gender balance in new recruitments, and the availability of supportive office facilities like day-care centers.

Training and capacity building are also key components of the gender action plan. For instance, workshops have been designed to include sessions on gender equity issues in land use and environmental law enforcement. These workshops aim to ensure that all technicians and field officers are not only aware of but also proficient in addressing gender equity issues in their daily operations. The participation of women in technical processes and multi-stakeholder consultations is actively encouraged and monitored, with specific targets set for female representation.

Component 2 addresses the management, monitoring, and financing of protected areas (PAs) and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas, ensuring that governance structures and operational mechanisms do not discriminate based on gender. Actions under this component include supporting women in eco-guide vocations and ensuring gender inclusivity in communication campaigns for biodiversity and ecotourism. Indicators for these actions include the percentage of women trained as eco-guides and the demographic reach of communication campaigns.

The plan also recognizes the prominent role of women in the charcoal value chain, as outlined in **Component 3**. Actions here aim to reflect women’s perspectives adequately, such as ensuring that women’s views are incorporated in the National Sustainable Charcoal Platform and that training workshops for charcoal makers are inclusive. Indicators measure the participation rates of women in these initiatives and assess the impact of training on women’s economic empowerment.

Finally, **Component 4** ensures that all monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and knowledge management (KM) activities are gender-disaggregated where appropriate. This component also includes training for the Project Management Unit (PMU) and other project staff on gender equity issues, ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into all project activities. Indicators for this component include the inclusion of gender-specific information in project results frameworks and KM products.

Overall, the Gender Action Plan employs a comprehensive approach to embed gender sensitivity into the project’s operational and strategic frameworks, aiming to foster an inclusive environment that supports sustainable and equitable development outcomes.

The implementation of the Gender Action Plan within the biodiversity conservation project has yielded significant strides toward bridging the gender gap in the communities it impacts. Initially, during the first Project Implementation Report (PIR) period, women’s participation stood at 32% compared to 68% for men. This figure has encouragingly risen to 44% for women, showing progress toward gender parity in participation rates. As the project progresses, it aims to achieve equal participation and benefit sharing among all genders in the conservation efforts, fostering a balanced approach that values contributions from both men and women equally.

Significant efforts have been made not only to increase participation but also to enhance the safety and empowerment of women and girls within the communities. Through various empowerment sessions, the project has effectively contributed to the reduction of multiple forms of violence, including domestic violence. These sessions, alongside the introduction of new project activities, are expected to further boost women's participation and help create safer community environments. Such initiatives are crucial for challenging and changing the deep-rooted gender stereotypes that persist within these communities.

In addition to focusing on women and girls, the project's gender approach recognizes the critical role of men in the journey towards gender equality. Upcoming activities are designed to promote positive masculinity, encouraging men to become proactive agents of change in this endeavor. This balanced approach underscores the project's commitment to full gender equality, recognizing that true progress requires the involvement and transformation of societal roles across all genders. Highlighting this commitment, the project collaborated with the Minister of Women's Rights to develop and publish an article titled "Why gender equity is important for biodiversity conservation" on UNDP's website for International Women's Day in 2023. This publication aimed to raise awareness and underscore the importance of inclusive conservation practices.

Overall, the project has not only increased the participation of women in environmental conservation activities but has also heightened the awareness of gender disparities within biodiversity institutions. Although specific environmental outcomes related to this enhanced inclusivity are yet to be quantified, the project anticipates that a more inclusive approach will lead to greater resilience and sustainability in its conservation efforts.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing the MTR, the project had just lost its Gender expert in Sao tome. This is a significant loss to the project, given that both the M&E specialist and the Gender expert played significant roles in the implementation and follow up of community-based activities. It was also the impression of the MTR consultant that [although the GAP is well-constructed and comprehensive, the targets set were overambitious, and did not account for the long time periods required to change norms and values around gender, both at the household level and the institutional level. It is therefore recommended that to continue successful implementation of the GAP, a gender expert is hired to fill the recently vacated role.](#)

Output 4.1 M&E and Knowledge Management Plans implemented

The project has developed and implemented a both a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework and Knowledge Management and Communication Plan (KMCP) in collaboration with various partners. In order to implement the M&E framework and work in a results-based manner, as well as implement the KMCP, an officer was hired with explicit responsibilities to operationalize both. The structure of the pre-existing M&E framework provides the requisite background for the current analysis, with the MTR a pivotal part of the M&E plan. The issues with the M&E framework in regard to specific targets and indicators has been discussed above in the section on Project Design. The progress towards each of the outcomes, as identified in the M&E plan has been discussed in depth throughout this section. The recommendations that come from both of these analyses have informed the suggested modifications to the results framework, which are found throughout the MTR in [blue](#). This section focuses on implementation of the M&E plan and further analysis is provided below in the section on Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.

The KMCP plan is structured around five fundamental pillars: Knowledge Capture, Creation, Storage, Distillation, and Sharing, which collectively ensure a systematic approach to managing and disseminating information.

Creation of Knowledge: The project actively promotes the generation of new knowledge through various mechanisms. Participatory workshops and content production related to established knowledge areas are central to this effort. These activities foster the exchange of ideas and experiences, thereby enhancing innovation. Over the recent period, the project successfully conducted six workshops and produced two articles, significantly contributing to the knowledge base.

Knowledge Capture: To capture the wealth of information generated, the KMCP in theory utilizes diverse tools such as interviews, reports, and questionnaire surveys. It also engages partners and relevant entities to contribute articles and content that align with the project's themes. All captured knowledge (should be) stored both in the cloud and on an external disk designated solely for this purpose, ensuring security and accessibility. Additionally, this information is made available on the biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) page specifically developed for the project. The project's website has become a significant repository, hosting over 70 pieces of content including scientific articles, studies, strategic documents, legal regulations, and multimedia resources.

Distillation of Knowledge: The KMCP prioritizes making the complex knowledge gathered both accessible and usable for diverse audiences. This is achieved through various means including restitution workshops in communities, sensitization sessions, and thematic workshops. To aid in the clear and concise dissemination of information, the project utilizes brochures, posters, role plays, and social media posts. This phase has seen the production of 21 brochures/posters and 47 social media posts, each designed to engage and inform stakeholders effectively.

Sharing of Knowledge: A critical component of the KMCP is the sharing of knowledge with all target audiences to ensure widespread access to the valuable information developed through the project. Guided by the KMCP, the project facilitates restitution workshops within communities and amongst partners and stakeholders. These activities are complemented by press releases and events that not only share experiences but also foster an environment of learning.

Notably, two key restitution workshops were conducted in 2023, focusing on the induction for the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) and the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM), demonstrating the project's commitment to broad and effective knowledge dissemination.

Through these coordinated efforts across the KMCP's pillars, the project attempts to ensure that knowledge is not only generated and captured but also effectively distilled and shared, thereby enhancing the overall impact and sustainability of the conservation initiatives.

Although both the KMCP described above is comprehensive, and the M&E plan and accompanying monitoring framework were relatively well-designed (despite the significant weakness in the Logical framework and the chosen indicators and targets discussed in some detail in the section on project strategy above) in practice there was significant weaknesses in the implementation of the both the KMCP and the M&E. The implementation benefitted greatly from the dedication of the project M&E and KM Specialist hired as part of the PMU, who made significant strides in many areas of the KMCP as well as the monitoring progress as delineated in the project's evaluation matrix. Unfortunately, though, the M&E plan was not actually used in a systematic manner to ensure the project was on-track to fulfill its intended outcomes. The project implementation reports were of generally poor quality, and incomplete, with a significant improvement shown in the PIR for 2023, completed collaboratively with the PMU. Regardless, the PIRs for the project contained very little info from various Responsible parties (including the DGA, which is the official project owner) and applying across the board to the DFB, the RSESD, as well as BirdLife, Fundação Príncipe and Oikos as a consortium. Little to no adaptative management occurred although it was clear that the project was behind on multiple outcomes under multiple components. This is a shared responsibility, due to changes in the Project Director, lack of ownership among Responsible Parties, little oversight and management from the side of UNDP, poor project coordination leading to opaque and unclear expectations on reporting among partners, a lack of prioritization by the CTA and finally low knowledge of reporting requirements to GEF among partners (with the exception of UNDP, who did not step in to fill the gap). A notable weakness for example was the almost non-existent information package provided to the MTR team, which contained no financial or cost data, did not contain implementation information from project partners, and did not aggregate the main project outputs and deliverables. Given that the project has suffered from weak internal communication and knowledge sharing (discussed further in the section below on Communication), a shared responsibility between the project director, UNDP, the CTA, Project Coordinator and M&E specialist, as well as key responsible parties, this was reflected in the lack of comprehensive information in the information package. Even the project evaluation matrix, with the most up-to date information on the status of outputs, was only completed collaboratively with the MTR team during the mission and was not provided in a form that could be used for MTR reporting until months after the MTR mission. This is mentioned above in limitations to the assessment but underlines the importance of [actually using the M&E framework as a tool for project management. It therefore took the MTR team a significant amount of time to gather the relevant information in a SharePoint to be used by all project partners and as part of the continuing M&E of the project, which will hopefully be used going forward by the PMU, as a shared depository of information for all project stakeholders, and eventually for the terminal evaluation team. It is the hope of the MTR team that this will be a significant move towards improving project coordination, and importantly to start reporting and planning activities around the outputs and outcomes of the project. Unfortunately, the time of writing LTN had lost its M&E specialist. The collective departure of the CTA, M&E specialist and Gender expert from the PMU means that urgent action is needed in regard to filling these roles, as well as additional oversight and management of the project and monitoring of the various tools by UNDP \(Evaluation matrix, monitoring plan, SESP monitoring and GAP monitoring\) in order to ensure the achievement not only on this output, but of the project's broader intended outcomes.](#)

3.2.2 Remaining Barriers to Achieving the Project Objective and Opportunities to Enhance Project Benefits

As the project enters its second half, it faces considerable challenges in achieving the desired objectives and outcomes, compounded by recent changes in leadership, including a new Environment Minister in 2024 and Project Director at the beginning of 2023. To effectively navigate these transitions and maintain momentum, the project urgently requires that both the Project Director and Environment Minister take strong ownership of the project, which seems promising, however is also challenged by the broad and significant mandates of both positions. [It is also essential that the project finds a better solution to integrate staff from the DGA in project activities, decision-making and follow up, and that the committed co-finance materializes in this regard.](#) In the opinion of the MTR team, it would also be advisable to [hire a new Chief Technical Advisor \(CTA\) with expertise in the Management of Protected Areas, Environment and Biodiversity Legislative Frameworks, and possibly on Biodiversity Finance](#) in order to bring to completion project outcomes that are on a promising track. Additionally, [the team needs to be bolstered by hiring a new Monitoring and Evaluation \(M&E\) Officer and a Gender Specialist in Sao Tome](#), to ensure all aspects of the project's goals are comprehensively addressed. If the project is to proceed as planned in regard to Component 3 and the charcoal value chain, [it is recommended that a Environmental and Social Safeguards Officer is also hired as soon as possible to follow up systematically on the](#)

recommendations made in the Livelihood Impact Assessment and to work with communities, as well as Oikos, to ensure the requisite support and uptake of livelihood initiatives. This round of new hiring however has its own risks, given slow UNDP procurement processes to date.

Moreover, the project requires enhanced oversight and support from UNDP, particularly in financial processes and administrative matters, but also in matters such as follow up on M&E, on reporting and communication and in guiding the process of creating Annual Work Plans. This support should also include training on reporting, project management, and other administrative functions to improve efficiency and compliance. These measures are crucial for the project's success, ensuring that it not only meets its strategic objectives but also adheres to governance and accountability standards.

The ongoing efforts to establish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) on Príncipe are near completion at the time of writing, which is a significant step towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management in Sao Tome and Príncipe. Care should be taken to integrate these efforts with those of the project's focused on institutional reform, legal reform and improved management of Terrestrial PAs. Given that the efforts are taking place within different ministries, there is some risk of operating in silos. It would therefore significantly advance project benefits if the efforts to create a new institution with a mandate focused on biodiversity was done in an integrated manner, which accounts for both marine and terrestrial biodiversity, and that the Environmental law revision also encompasses both spheres.

3.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management is rated at: Unsatisfactory

3.3.1 Management Arrangements

The Assisted National Implementation Modality (NIM) is a specific approach used in Global Environment Facility (GEF) supported projects, and is the approach used by the project. This modality is designed to strengthen national ownership and build capacity while ensuring adherence to both national and international standards. The key aspects of Assisted NIM are:

1. **National Ownership and Capacity Building:** emphasizes the enhancement of a country's capacity to manage and implement environmental projects according to its priorities and national development plans.
2. **Role of Implementing Agencies:** a GEF Implementing Agency (in this case UNDP) provides additional support and oversight compared to regular NIM. This can include technical assistance, capacity development, and help in meeting fiduciary standards. The Implementing Agency ensures that the project adheres to both GEF policies and the country's regulations.
3. **Compliance and Quality Assurance:** UNDP ensures that the project meets international environmental and social safeguards, financial management standards, and procurement procedures.
4. **Enhanced Coordination:** there is a strong emphasis on coordination between the national government, UNDP, and other stakeholders. This coordination helps in aligning the project's objectives with national environmental strategies and action plans.
5. **Flexibility and Adaptability** allows for flexibility in addressing the specific needs and circumstances of the national context.

Overall, Assisted NIM is designed to foster stronger national ownership of GEF projects while ensuring that they meet high standards of quality and effectiveness. The modality is supposed to help bridge the gap between national capabilities and the rigorous demands of GEF, making it a valuable approach for countries looking to enhance their environmental management practices with GEF support.

The intended support provided by UNDP, detailed in a signed Letter of Agreement attached to the Project document, includes the recruitment of project personnel, contract management, procurement of goods and services, and the handling of direct payments associated with procurement, amounting to an estimated cost of USD 43,075 charged to the GEF project grant. The rationale behind this support stemmed from capacity and systemic challenges within DGA and broader governmental operations identified in the design phase, and through an independent third-party assessment conducted in 2019 (HACT assessment or Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers) which highlighted significant risks in DGA's organizational structure, programme management, and internal controls, necessitating that cash transfers be managed directly by UNDP to ensure accountability and transparency.

In addition to administrative and logistical support, the project attempted to facilitate technical capacity development by integrating the efforts of DGA with those of BirdLife International. This collaboration was aimed at maximizing

resource sharing and capacity building between the local project team and BirdLife International's office in São Tomé, ensuring more sustainable project outcomes.

In reality, the assistance provided by UNDP as part of this assisted NIM modality has been inadequate and has led to the several significant issues besetting the project, having multiple domino effects on the overall project delivery. National ownership has not been achieved and one of several factors which limits it, is the lack of control over project funds, which is exacerbated by very slow and often bureaucratically opaque disbursement processes. Although there have been positive results according to the capacity development scorecards, and certainly some capacity has been developed within the PMU, the sometimes-limited involvement of staff from the actual government ministries responsible for implementing the project calls into questions this result, with only the Project Director substantively involved within the DGA, and light involvement on the part of the DFB until more recently. Involvement on the part of the Regional secretariat in Príncipe seems more integrated and enthusiastic, given their overall emphasis on and commitment to protecting biodiversity, but has also suffered due to a lack of progress on key initiatives within Príncipe (hiring of guards and the uncertainty about the purchase of the semi-industrial kiln). Ironically, although one of UNDP's primary roles within the assisted NIM modality is to meet fiduciary standards and to assist with procurement, payments managed by UNDP have been very slow, including to staff, and often for relatively straightforward payments such as salaries and reimbursement of travel, causing a lack of morale among project staff and partners, as well as reputational risks. Procurement processes have been similarly slow, with long delays in hiring key project staff. Finally, although the environmental and social risk analysis and associated assessments have been relatively well done, as well as done in a timely manner (taking priority at an early stage in the project) it is unclear why the staff necessary to follow up on the assessments, as specified in the Project document and subsequent analysis was not hired, and the risk monitoring framework has not been adequately updated. Finally, it is clear from the extensive interviews conducted by the MTR team, that project coordination is perhaps the greatest challenged faced by the project thus far, with little adaptation of the projects outputs and goals based on the constraints encountered, very little collective decision making and often incomplete sharing of information between project partners. Improving coordination and more frequent PSC meetings that are used for decision-making is therefore the primary recommendation of the MTR.

Project Steering Committee:

The Project Steering Committee (PSC), also known as the Project Board, is responsible for taking the necessary corrective actions to ensure that the project achieves the desired results. If the PSC is unable to reach a consensus on an important matter, the UNDP Resident Representative should mediate to find a consensus, and if not reached make a final decision to ensure that project implementation is not unduly delayed. The PSC also has the power to make major and minor amendments to the project as needed within the established UNDP-GEF parameters and the role also extends to ensuring robust coordination between various donors, government-funded projects, and programs, to enhance the integrated delivery of project outcomes. The PSC also has the responsibility to raise and coordinate with other government agencies and initiatives, to ensure that the project aligns with national priorities and leverages governmental support effectively.

Monitoring and evaluation also form a critical part of the governance responsibilities of the PSC, including following up and monitoring co-financing aspects of the project, analyzing its progress, and evaluating the performance against the Annual Work Plan. The evaluation process should also provide a thorough review of the annual implementation reports (PIRs) and the quality assessment ratings and flag the areas of the project that require attention. Furthermore, the PSC should monitor resource commitments and ensure that there are adequate human resources for implementation. If there are any complaints received it is also the PSCs responsibility to find a resolution. Finally, the PSC approves key project documents, including the Initial Report, Mid-term Review, Final Evaluation reports, and the management responses, ensuring the project is critically assessed.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) has only convened twice between project initiation and the time of the MTR:

1. 2022-03-17
2. 2023-08-04

This is clearly not sufficient for the PSC to fulfill the important project governance responsibilities listed above and is another reason that the project is not on target to meet several of its intended outcomes.

The overall project management structure is as follows:

The Implementing Agency (IA), UNDP STP, which acts on behalf of GEF. The IA is responsible for delivering GEF project cycle management services comprising project approval and start-up, project supervision and oversight, and project completion and evaluation, as well as responsible for the Project Assurance role of the Steering Committee. The Implementing Agency apart from the functions mentioned above has also assumed the GEF fund administration, including procurement and payments, due to the reasons presented above.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) with responsibilities as described above, is composed of the following members: i) Minister of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment – PSC Chair; ii) Director of DGAAC; iii) Secretary for Environment and Sustainable Development of Regional Government of Príncipe; iv) Director for Forests and Biodiversity; v) Head of BirdLife International's Office in São Tomé e Príncipe; vi) National Project Coordinator of FAO/TRI Forest Landscape Restoration Project; and, vii) UNDP STP Representative.

The PSC is supposed (though this is not explicitly specified in the project document), to have meetings twice a year, but during reporting period (30 June 2021 to 31 December 2023) it had only 2 meetings, on 2022-03-17 and 2023-08-04 as mentioned above. [The second meeting made the following specific recommendations to the Project management unit](#) i) greater ownership and leadership of the Project by the General Director of Environment and Climate Action, being a country project and under her responsibility; ii) greater proximity between DGAAC, UGP, UNDP and implementing partners through periodic coordination meetings; iii) preparation of the project communication flowchart; iv) improve the coordination and communication mechanism between all project stakeholders, DGAAC, UGP, UNDP, DFB, RSEBD, Birdlife International, Oikos – Cooperation and Development and Fundação Príncipe; v) greater speed in opening a project account; vi) greater speed in the hiring process for launched consultancies, and, vii) the agreement with the DFB on reforestation must be made.

The Implementing Partner (IP) is the General Directorate for Environment and Climate Action (DGAAC), a structure that belongs to the Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment, which tasks include i) project planning, coordination, management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting; ii) risk management; iii) procurement of goods and services and human resources; iv) financial management; v) approving and signing the multiyear workplan; vi) approving and signing the combined delivery report; and, vii) signing the financial report or the funding authorization and certificate of expenditures. The General Director is the Project Director (PD), of which there has been two since project inception. The impression of the MTR team is that the first project director did not fully recognize the importance of the project to achieve the intended results. The current Project Director has shown greater commitment to the project, though given she has just begun her role as the Director General of the Environment, it has understandably taken some time to start to take active actions.

Responsible Party (RP) which is to develop the project's technical tasks and manages fund transferred by UNDP STP. The project started with one RP (Birdlife International - BLI), but in 202XX the Regional Secretariat for Biosphere, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development (SRBAAD), Regional Government of Príncipe, was designated RP by the IP. The consortium BLI, OIKOS and Fundação Príncipe is achieving results, but has significant issues regarding cash transfers from UNDP, and suffers from a lack of coordination with other executing partners (PMU, DGAAC and DFB). Finally, regarding the livelihood activities taking place at the community level, there have also been delays.

Birdlife International signed the RP contract on 11-06-2021 and received its first transfer in July 2021. It is a partner, in conjunction with Fundação Príncipe, for biodiversity activities and results and, with OIKOS for the charcoal communities' livelihood activities. The NGO consortium has got the best project results so far.

Regional Secretariat for Biosphere, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development (RSEBD) that started the project as an implementing partner to the project activities in Príncipe but, in 2022, became a RP. In terms of executing partner, it works through the Regional Directorate for Environment. The structure faces issues of lack of autonomy and in-time cash transfers to undergo its tasks, but also lack of adequate coordination with partners, namely the PMU, Fundação Príncipe, DGAAC and DFB. Another hurdle is lack of adequate personnel, both in number and capacity.

In addition to the Responsible Parties listed above, there are other executing parties, responsible for the implementation of activities and achievement of results within the project's components: They are:

The Department of Forests and Biodiversity (DFB) responsible for co-delivering several output packages related to the charcoal/forest management interface and ensure that the project's activities are well coordinated with its own activities including the FAO/TRI Forest Landscape Restoration Project; and Private sector partners include i) Valudo; and ii) EcoBlasa, who have signed an MOU to work together on the production of coconut-based / green charcoal.

The DFB is responsible for the forestation and charcoal making activities. There were issues from the onset between the DFB and DGAAC concerning which agency should have the mandate to direct / take charge of a biodiversity project, underlying the importance of institutional reform and clarity in this regard. Furthermore, DFB does not consider the idea of tackling traditional charcoal-making through the introduction of coconut charcoal to be the appropriate approach, but rather focusing on the establishment of plantations of rapid growing trees that can be used for charcoal production instead. Although it is the opinion of the MTR team that plantations for this purpose have their own risks and are not the ideal solution, given the risks that are identified in the project's SESP, it is still worth pursuing the scale of planting identified in the project. Another challenge is that the number of qualified personnel in the DFB is also limited and very busy, and the proportion of funds allocated to them for project delivery is considered inadequate.

Regardless of these constraints, the project activities led by the DFB are important for the project's objective, and a focal point between the DFB and PMU is required for follow-up.

Valudo, as one of the project's main private sector partners, signed a commitment letter to create a coconut charcoal value in the design phase of the project (before official project starting date and upon request) and to enter a public-private-partnership with the government, with GEF assuming the role of purchasing of the required equipment for the outputs within the project's framework. Initially, Valudo acted with considerable energy and enthusiasm towards this goal, making its own investments to fulfill the commitment but has since lost considerable momentum in the face of government indecision to advance. [EcoBlasa is a coconut charcoal making entrepreneurial enterprise, based in Sao Tome, which would be in partnership with Valudo to produce the charcoal, collecting the necessary biomaterial from Valudo and taking a lead in the actual technical aspects of production process in regard to the charcoal briquettes. Both are still ready to go forward with the business, and hence it is important that a decision is made during the next PSC meeting.](#)

Project Management Unit (PMU) runs the project on a day-to-day basis. Its primary responsibility is to ensure that the project produces the results specified in the project document. The PMU is led by the i) Project Manager and comprises the ii) Chief Technical Adviser (CTA), iii) National Project Procurement Admin & Finance Officer, iv) National M&E, KM and Project Safeguards Officer, v) PMU Representative in Príncipe Island; vi) National gender-focused conservationists-community organizers for local/community work on PAs, charcoal, livelihoods and gender (two – 1 for São Tomé, 1 for Príncipe).

Part of the issue is that within the complex project structure and with multiple partners and roles, reporting lines are not clear, whether that is among members of the PMU, between the PMU and government agencies, and even within the consortium led by Birdlife. Decision making is often not transparent, or properly communicated to all concerned stakeholders (for example regarding the hiring of forest guards in Príncipe).

[It is highly recommended that at the next PSC meeting, issues of coordination are clarified collectively, and reporting lines are decided upon and tested in the implementation of the Annual Work Plan. It is also imperative that relevant project staff is hired as planned, including a new CTA, M&E officer and Safeguards and Gender officer. The Project Coordinator should play a more proactive role and be granted decision making power when the Project Director is not available, and the Birdlife International-led consortium should work in a more integrated manner with the PMU, as well as play a stronger role in integrating and reporting on the work carried out by themselves, Fundação Príncipe and Oikos respectively. The PMU should also consider working from the offices of the DGA for the remainder of the project, as Casa Ambiente, although a highly functional and well-built facility, leads to isolation from the workings of the government. Alternatively, if feasible, the Project Director, along with certain key staff within the DGA should consider spending a few days a week at Casa Ambiente, to promote a more integrated work environment and facilitate decision-making and capacity building. Finally, it is essential that UNDP substantially increases its oversight and support of the project, which seems promising given the hiring of a new staff member within UNDP at the time of writing, tasked partially with LTN oversight. In regard to project financial arrangements, it is also essential that various implementing partners have access to the funds allocated for their portion of the delivery, according to the annual work plan, and hence can start working without as many significant delays in disbursements. Sufficient funds to pay smaller costs such as per diems and fuel should be handled directly by the PMU, so that long wait times for reimbursements are reduced.](#)

3.3.2 Work Planning

The project officially started on February 16th, 2021 (signature date), and the inception workshop took place on May 28th, 2021, but the Project Coordinator and the International Chief Technical Advisor only started in August 2021 and September 2021, respectively. The Knowledge Management Expert and M&E officer didn't start work until April 2022 and the Gender Expert in Sao Tome in August 2022. To summarize, it took one and a half years from project signature to have the PMU adequately formed, yet still not complete. As mentioned, before the commencement of the MTR, the CTA left the project, ending the contract period prematurely. This was already a significant loss to the project given that Component 3 had not yet progressed sufficiently (the technical expertise area of the CTA) and given that the CTA played an important role of coordinating between the PMU and UNDP, given previous experience with UNDP. Regardless, the departure also had a significant impact on the MTR process given most project documents were not centralized, nor the necessary documentation prepared prior to MTR commencement. The M&E/KM expert was very helpful in the filling the gap and did his best but was also somewhat constrained in the pro-active preparation of documents (up to date Project evaluation matrix, cost information, compendium of activities from all partners etc.). Unfortunately, the M&E expert also left the project as the time of writing, as well as the gender expert. This instability within the PMU reflects the frustration of slow project progress, difficult bureaucratic processes, as well as low (and sometimes delayed) pay of staff, facing difficult circumstances regarding coordination. [Measures clearly should be taken, in terms of](#)

improving the attention and commitment of the remaining PMU staff, and that of all the PSC members and RPs, including the project director, and filling the gaps in human resources.

Regardless, the last PSC meeting in August 2023, offers good insight into project constraints and challenges. Led by the then Minister of Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and the Environment, it highlights that a collaborative approach is required to overcome the issues faced during the project’s execution period from July 2022 to August 2023. Key discussions focused on the revision of environmental legislation and strengthening the capacities of local institutions and personnel involved in biodiversity management. Project achievements were noted during the meeting including the renewal of Biosphere status for Príncipe, and the delivery of essential equipment and vehicles to improve monitoring and enforcement capabilities, and strides in community engagement and education. The meeting also identified several areas where the project is "off track," particularly concerning the enforcement of environmental legislation and the reduction of forest degradation from charcoal production. The meeting underscored the need for high-level decision-making to expedite processes and improve coordination among the diverse project stakeholders, which is an opinion shared by the MTR team. Looking forward, it is recommended that the next PSC meeting be used to track and make decisions regarding the recommendations made in this MTR, and during the last PSC to enhance project execution. These include improving the project's financial and operational transparency, increasing the frequency and effectiveness of coordination meetings, using the project’s monitoring plan and evaluation matrix as guidance in planning activities and revised said matrix for a more streamlined project structure, and establishing clearer communication strategies among all parties involved. These recommendations align closely with those of the MTR.

The lack of organized documentation and reporting mechanisms was identified as a project management unit (PMU) issue, calling for immediate action to centralize and share all documents. The incomplete Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and the absence of activities and outcomes from key partners like BirdLife and DFB in these reports were highlighted as areas needing improvement. Issues with efficiency of the use of funds, and little or no coordination among different partners and agencies on any overlap in the use of funds, and the systematic tracking and reporting of fund use in a transparent and easy to interpret manner, are also essential for better work planning. This should also be coordinated by the GEF focal point, in collaboration with other ministries working on issues related to biodiversity (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Planning Finance and Blue Economy. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development).

3.3.3 Finance and Co-finance.

The Midterm review team did their best to carry out a pertinent analysis of the finance and co-finance of the project but encountered significant limitation regarding information provided by the PMU and UNDP. No co-finance numbers were provided, and financial information was poorly organized, presented, and incomplete. The issue of fund management was one that was repeatedly raised by all stakeholders across the board, not only among those directly responsible of affected by the management of project funds, but also by primary stakeholders and external parties. Overall, there is a feeling that the project is a significant investment that has accomplished little in its first half, despite the size of the project relative to others. UNDP provided Combined Delivery Reports (CDR) disaggregated by project activity. The CRD reports provided were in a form that was very hard to decipher and was not organized in a coherent or transparent manner. During the MTR period, an audit was done which included a component on the use of funds towards Liqueza Tela Non.

Financial Expenditures:

Figure 19 shows the budget planned for the LTN for the entire project period, as set out in PRODOC, the budget planned for the end of year 3 (more or less, at the time of the MTR), either those financed by the GEF, or co-financing. It also shows the expenses incurred by the GEF and the contributions from the UNDP until 03/05/2024. Co-financing expenses from other institutions are not available.

Figure 19 Approved Budget against Cumulative expenditures

Financing Source	Approved Budget for entire project period	Cumulative Budget through the end of this reporting period	Cumulative Expenditures through to the end of this reporting period
GEF Total	4,262,559.00	2,751,217.00	1,850,331.63
Component 1 - Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management	960,800.00	646,050.00	560,913.76

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Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

Financing Source	Approved Budget for entire project period	Cumulative Budget through the end of this reporting period	Cumulative Expenditures through to the end of this reporting period
Component 2 - Management, monitoring and financing of PAs and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas	1,491,500.00	943,650.00	742,562.46
Component 3 - Reducing forest degradation and ecosystem services loss from unsustainable charcoal-making	1,252,450.00	846,250.00	236,552.69
Component 4 - M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender	354,830.00	212,730.00	205,319.77
Component 5 - PMU	202,979.00	102,537.00	104,982.95
Co-Financing			
UNDP	20,000.00		25,006.00
Directorate General for Environment / MOPIRINA	516,000.00	258,000.00	0.00
Regional Government of Príncipe	282,000.00	141,000.00	
Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity / MAPDR	306,000.00	153,000.00	
Birdlife International	4,800,000.00	2,400,000.00	2,957,259.19
Valudo	300,000.00	150,000.00	245,025.47
Co-financing Sub-total	6,224,000.00	3,102,000.00	3,237,284.66
Total for project	10,486,559.00	5,853,217.00	5,052,129.60

At the time of writing the MTR team had not received information on the co-financing amounts from institutional partners that have committed to contributing, with the exception of the contribution from UNDP itself. Regarding Valudo’s contribution, although a formal agreement has not yet been reached for the creation of the value chain of the coconut charcoal value (the PPP not yet signed), the MTR team learned, in an interview with its CEO, that the company had already incurred preparation expenses with a view to carrying out said activities.

The budgeted amount, including co-financing, for the entire project was USD 10.48 million, with USD 5.85 million by the end of year 3. The expenses incurred represent 17.6% and 31.6% of those values. In relation to GEF financing, the budget was USD 4.26 million and USD 2.75 million, respectively for the total project and at the end of year 3, with the expenses incurred representing 42.5% and 65.96%. If we consider that the LTN had an overall performance of 35% (Moderately Unsatisfactory), it is concluded that the financial efficiency of GEF funds has been low.

Figure 20 shows, in percentage, the expenses made with GEF financing⁸, by component. It is noted that Components 1 (Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management), 4 (M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender) and 5 (PMU) used more than 50% of the amounts allocated to them for the entire Project period. The expenses incurred for the period up to the MTR are considered satisfactory, apart from Component 3 (Reducing forest degradation and ecosystem services loss from unsustainable charcoal-making) which had expenses of 28%, much lower than expected.

Figure 20 Percentage of expenses made in relation to the total budgeted and budgeted by the end of year 3

Total budget	Budgeted at the end of Year 3
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⁸ Including UNDP co-financing

Component 1 - Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management	56%	87%
Component 2 - Management, monitoring and financing of PAs and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas	50%	79%
Component 3 - Reducing forest degradation and ecosystem services loss from unsustainable charcoal-making	19%	28%
Component 4 - M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender	58%	97%
Component 5 - PMU	52%	102%

Considering the amounts allocated to each component and the challenges that the LTN faced when starting up, the expenditure incurred can be considered satisfactory, except for Component 3. The challenges faced by Component 1 were great, particularly because it was difficult and time-consuming to make the purpose, objectives and results of the Project understood both within the PMU and to government staff. The fact that there were several key changes in key government roles related to the project in the meantime (the Minister of Environment and the Director of the Environment) worsened this situation, although the change in commitment to LTN is an added value. On the other hand, because the PNOT has not yet been approved, it has prevented and will probably prevent the actions linked to it from remaining unexecuted. The actions to be developed and the results to be achieved in this component are distributed between DGAAC, DFB, Regional Secretariat and Birdlife. The later, due to its greater experience and organization, performed much better than state institutions.

Component 2 was the one with the greatest achievement, almost all of which was carried out by Birdlife. These 2 components correspond to 57.5% of the total budgeted for the entire project period, but during the MTR they accounted for 68% of the expenses, which demonstrates the relative dynamism in implementing the respective actions. On the contrary, Component 3, whose results will fundamentally contribute to mitigating the second biggest cause of deforestation in STP, had a very low performance in terms of financial achievement, as a consequence of the low physical performance reflecting, to a large extent, the uncertainties in the decisions of political actors.

The expenditure carried out in Component 5 must be looked at with concern and are worthy of analysis, which, in addition to having exceeded the amount allocated for the end of year 3, already accounts for 70.6% of the amount allocated for the total period, considering that it is still halfway through the Project. The need to reallocate funds from one Component or activity to others must also be analysed, such as those from the PNOT to be transferred to strengthen subsistence activities in communities or to reinforce budget lines in Component 5. [In accordance with the recommendations from the MTR, an activity plan for the remaining period of the Project must be prepared, together with the respective budget for analysis by the PSC, addressing these concerns.](#)

The administration of GEF funds at the Project level was done through the Assisted NIM modality as described in some detail above. According to the HACT assessment carried out in the initial stage, Birdlife was the only RPs eligible to manage its own funds, with the funds that should be managed by the other Responsible Parties to be managed by the UNDP which, in turn, has very bureaucratic and time-consuming rules for unlocking and paying for the services provided. Interviews carried out with the RPs indicate delays in payments of up to 6 months, which discourages the provision of services to the LTN by suppliers. The same applies to transfers of funds from UNDP to Birdlife, which should be quarterly, but has also faced significant delays. To try to alleviate the delays having an impact on project execution, UNDP has also asked the members of the consortium (Birdlife, OIKOS and Fundação Príncipe) to continue with the activities using their own funds, to then be reimbursed, with reimbursement also facing delays. This entire arrangement in the administration of GEF funds has been a major factor in the delays in implementing the Project and will have to undergo changes so that the RPs have greater ability in implementing the activities under their responsibility. There is a lack of coordination between the responsible parties regarding the information to be provided between them, particularly with the PMU, regarding payments made to service providers. The PMU does not always know whether a payment requested by it has been made or not.

The difficulties in lack of disbursement to Birdlife, is created and exacerbated by the bureaucratic weight UNDP procedures and the lack of administrative capacity within the PMU (and within UNDP itself) in regards to these procedures, and has been triggered and worsened by the lack of a dedicated focal point within UNDP dedicated exclusively to LTN and to help with financial administration, as well as the PMU's lack of preparation in dealing with these financial complications. Although decentralization of financial administration is a risk, it seems necessary in this case to speed up project delivery and to encourage project ownership.

The direct beneficiaries of the LTN, as referred to in Project document, will be 2000 people at the end of the Project, which means that the expected cost per direct beneficiary is USD 2,131.28, which is a high cost. At the time of the MTR,

1287 direct beneficiaries were counted for the LTN, with a per capita cost of USD 1,410.00. The gender balance however as reported by the PMU is solid thus far in relation to the current delivery, as shown below.

Figure 21 Number of direct LTN beneficiaries, by component

	Men	Women	
Component 1	94	52	
Component 2	30	15	
Component 3	129	119	
Component 4	482	366	
Total Beneficiaries	735	552	1,287

Co-financing

The total sum of confirmed co-financing at project endorsement was USD 6,224,000, with contributions from national government (DGA) and provincial government (RSESD) partners, as well as UNDP as the GEF agency.

Through project midterm, defined as Dec 2023, according to information provided by the co-financing partners to the PMU, the amount co-financing that has materialized through midterm, defined as Dec 2023 (though in the case the latest figures are from June 2023), is USD 3,237,284.66, which is 52% of the sum confirmed at project endorsement (see Figure 22). Evidence of Co-finance to be provided by UNDP.

Annex 9: Co-financing Table

Sources of co-financing	Name of co-financer	Description of actual Co-financing Contributed at Stage of Midterm Review	Type of Co-financing	Amount Confirmed at CEO endorsement - USD	Actual Amount Contributed at Stage of Midterm Review - USD	Expected amount by the Project Closure - USD	Actual % of expected amount - USD
GEF Agency	UNDP	Purchase of a vehicle.	Grant	20,000	25,006	20,000	125%
Government	Directorate General for Environment / MOPIRNA	Technical staff assistance, Senior Staff Oversight, training workshop logistics, community mobilization and awareness and use of premises and equipment.	In-kind	516,000	N/A	516,000	N/A
Regional Government	Regional Government of Príncipe	Costs of technicians and senior officials, monitoring tasks, training workshop logistics and venues, community outreach activities, communication, use of equipment and premises.	In-kind	282,000	N/A	282,000	N/A
Government	Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity / MAPDR	Costs of technicians officials and guards, guides in PA management and field works, biodiversity monitoring, forest surveillance, forest product regulations, community engagements and use of equipment and premises.	In-kind	306,000	N/A	306,000	N/A
International NGO	Birdlife International	Technical assistance, travel, supplies, studies, publication, research, training workshop, community mobilization and awareness, sustainable financing market assessment, stakeholder identification and finance plan development, park and ecotourism infrastructure, local empowerment and support to micro-projects to improve local livelihood and	Grant	4,550,000	2,957,259.19	4,550,000	65%

Midterm Review Report, 2023-2024

Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

		community engagement in natural resources engagement.					
		Vehicles and equipment	In-kind	250,000	245,025.47	250,000	98%
			<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>5,924,000</i>	<i>3,227,290.66</i>	<i>5,924,000</i>	<i>54.5%</i>
Private sector	Valudo	Provision of raw material, collection and transport of coconut and other plant waste material, production of plant-based charcoal briquettes, transport, promotion, distribution and sale of charcoal.	Grant / in-kind	300,000	N/A	300,000	N/A
				Total	6,224,000.	3,227,290.66	6,224,000 51.85%

Figure 22 Materialized Co-Finance (Note these figures should be provided by UNDP)

Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement /Approval	Materialized co-financing as of Jun 30, 2022	Materialized co-financing as of Jun 30, 2022
BirdLife International	Grants	4,550,000	2,957,259.19	65%
	In Kind	250,000	245,025.47	98%
Directorate General for Environment / MOPIRINA	In Kind	516,000	0	0%
Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity / MAPDR	In Kind	306,000	0	0%
Valudo	Grants	225,000	0	0%
	In Kind	75,000	0	0%
Regional Government of Príncipe	In Kind	282,000	0	0%
UNDP	Grants	20,000	25,006	125%
		Total	6,224,000	3,227,290.66 51.85%

Co-financing source	Co-financing amount & type	Use of co-financing	Risks to co-financing being realized	Risk Mitigation Measures
UNDP	USD 20,000	Purchase of vehicle	Low risk as confirmed by UNDP CO Resident Representative	Annual budget planning confirmed
General Directorate for Environment / MOPIRINA	USD 516,000 in-kind	Technical assistance, senior staff oversight, training workshop logistics, community mobilisation and awareness through field staff, use of premises and equipment	Low risk and low potential impact. These are basic confirmed/ expected annual operational budgets	Mobilise Minister of MOPIRINA to ensure the pledged co-finance/ recurrent budget is obtained from treasury
Directorate for Forests and	USD 306,000 in-kind	Cost of technicians and senior officials - field work, PA management, biodiversity monitoring, forest surveillance, forest	Low risk and low potential impact. These are basic	Mobilise Minister of MAPDR to ensure the pledged co-

Biodiversity / MAPDR		product regulation, community engagement, nursery, reforestation	confirmed/ expected annual operational budgets	finance/ recurrent budget is obtained from treasury
Regional Government of Príncipe	USD 282,000 in-kind	Cost of technicians and senior officials (nursery, reforestation, monitoring, etc.), training workshop logistics and venues, community outreach activities, local national and international visibility	Low risk and low potential impact. The departure of the President of the Regional Government could lead to a downsizing of the environment work in Príncipe	The share in the overall project budget is small, wherefore project activities could proceed without this co-finance; IP and RP would deploy capacity and means to compensate.
Birdlife International (Responsible Party)	USD 4,750,000 grant USD 250,000 in-kind	Technical assistance, travels, supplies, publications, studies, research, training workshops, community mobilisation and awareness, sustainable financing market assessment, stakeholder identification and finance plan development, parks and ecotourism infrastructure, local empowerment, and support to micro-projects to improve local livelihoods and community engagement in natural resources management, use of vehicles and equipment	High potential impact, if proposals to secure \$2.3m of the pledged co-financing are not approved/secured, because this would undermine the field presence and workstreams on protected areas and livelihoods as well as the technical assistance provided to government, NGOs and local stakeholders. However, the risk is low given the concrete outcomes obtained by the ongoing Govt/ BirdLife collaboration (also reflected in the present project), and donors have already expressed preliminary interest.	The GEF grant resources assigned to BirdLife International under the Responsible Party Agreement are large enough to allow the maintenance of sufficient capacities to keep the project share executed by the RP afloat.
Valudo	300,000 (225,000 grant, 75,000 in-kind)	Provision of raw material for more sustainable alternative charcoal as per business plan; collection and transport of coconut and other plant waste material to the charcoal production facilities including manpower, health, safety & security procedures, and insurance and maintenance of equipment; production of plant-based charcoal briquettes especially from coconut shells and fibre (all costs of productions and storage); promotion, distribution/transport to sales point(s) and sale of more sustainable charcoal.	Low risk but high potential impact. If Value changes management or objectives, or if the business model is not considered viable then this PPP would not be realised, and there is no better centralised alternative in the country as Valudo is the largest company working in coconut	Other private companies interested in sustainability and/or business model would be approached, such as HBD or SATOCAO, to organise transport and transform the idea into a viable business. Alternatively, a community-based cooperative could be created bringing together interested individuals/ entrepreneurs that could supplant the centralised approach proposed so far and create this value and supply chain in a more fragmented manner

Materialized project co-financing and estimations of expected amounts by project closure are detailed in the co-financing table compiled as **Annex 9** to this report. The cumulative total of expected co-financing by project closure is USD 5,924,000 compared to USD 6,224,000.

3.3.4 Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan was prepared using the standard GEF template. A separate monitoring or evaluation plan was included as part of the project document. The structure of the monitoring and evaluation plan has been discussed in some detail in the section above on Project Strategy and the analysis of the project’s log frame regarding the specificity, measurability, accuracy, realisticness and time-boundness of the indicators. The issues around tracking of the necessary information to execute the M&E plan and the considerable issues on coordination in reporting towards the PIRs and lack of up-to date monitoring tools has also been described in the preceding sections on management arrangements and work planning. It is clear overall that although the M&E tools as designed provide a good opportunity to track project progress, but the necessary information is not being collected from all the various project implementation partners in a timely and consistent manner. Collating much of this information has been one

of the primary undertakings of the MTR team, working in conjunction with the M&E specialist, after the beginning of the MTR review period to collect the necessary documents for the MTR analysis, and which can be used in the future for the Terminal Evaluation (TE). It is clear however with the departure of the M&E specialist there will be a greater gap in this process and UNDP should assign someone to take over these duties and collect the necessary information for the next PIR until the position is refilled. When the position is refilled, UNDP should also take the time for adequate training on M&E tools, and the expectations regarding reporting internally within UNDP (for example to the regional hub) and to GEF.

The estimated cost for implementation of the M&E plan, is USD 354,830 which is approximately 8% of the GEF grant. Based on the current UNDP project document template for GEF-6 projects, the total M&E costs should be 5% of the GEF grant, so this is considered high. The budgeted M&E costs include USD 10,000 for the project inception workshop and report, USD 37,000 for the midterm review, USD 37,000 for the terminal evaluation, and USD 24,000 for audits. There was no evidence available to the MTR consultants that the project has estimated the M&E budget for the following two activities listed in the M&E plan: (1) measurement of means of verification of project results, and (2) measurement of means of verification for project progress on output and implementation.

Two further challenges regarding M&E in addition to coordination and lack of integration of information from all partners on reporting in the PIR and the current state of outputs as reported in the project's evaluation framework was in terms of lack of integration or mainstreaming with national systems. An example of this is the fact that the status of Red List species was included in the project's indicators, befitting a protected area management and biodiversity project, but systematic monitoring of the Red List species is not carried out systematically at the national level. These are gaps that will hopefully be fulfilled eventually with the creation of a national biodiversity institute which tracks parameters in regard to Biodiversity. It is also clear from the above that the project monitoring and evaluation budget is not being adequately managed given the large proportion spent to date as shown above. This required greater oversight and correction by UNDP in coordination with the PMU.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the SESP monitoring was not adequately carried out and an Environmental Integration and Safety Officer (as identified in the projects SESP, and alternatively as an Environment Mainstreaming Officer in the project document as part of the project management unit) was not hired, as mentioned as a mitigation measure in the project SESP. It is essential to meet the commitments made in the Prodoc as this forms the basis of the funding approval. This is discussed further below on the section on the project's Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards).

3.3.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

The project's stakeholder engagement strategy is crucial for ensuring that its implementation is effective, inclusive, and aligned with the needs of all partners as well as the local communities. Accordingly, a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy designed to integrate valuable insights and recommendations from the initial stakeholder consultations during the project design stage was prepared as part of the Project document. These consultations highlighted the importance of coordinating with ongoing initiatives, building on past successes, empowering local actors, addressing capacity gaps, utilizing national expertise, and ensuring equitable participation across gender lines. Key lessons included the empowerment of communities through local involvement in defining target areas and establishing management entities, as well as the significant role of partnerships, particularly in a small island context like São Tomé and Príncipe (STP), where local capacity may be limited.

Despite these robust plans, the actual stakeholder engagement has experienced varied levels of success across different partners and stages of the project. The Directorate General for the Environment and Climate Change (DGAAC), the main implementing partner and project, has struggled with effective project coordination, multiple changes of project director, and physical distance with the PMU, as well as significant competing responsibilities as issues, which has been identified as a critical gap during the Mid-Term Review. This lack of coordination has hindered efficient information exchange and the implementation of planned activities, and involvement among a larger range of staff within the DGA also appears limited. The reason for this lack of broader participation was cited as due to the fact the DGA already suffers from very limited human resources and given the limitation of GEF funds in providing salaries from public sector workers, staff within the DGA feel they have little incentive to participate, except for training opportunities and per diems related to project workshops and events. The new project Director, the director general of the environment within the DGA, started her role at the beginning of 2023, and her commitment to the project goals and energy seem promising for greater involvement. Regardless, she also underlined the need to greater incentives for project staff, given their existing workloads. Conversely, the Regional Secretariat for Biosphere, Environment, Agriculture, and Rural Development (SRBAAD) has shown proactive engagement but is constrained by financial limitations and dependency on decisions from DGAAC.

Furthermore, other key stakeholders such as the Directorate of Geographical and Cadastral Services (DSGC) and various regional directorates have yet to make significant contributions to the project. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a pivotal role in facilitating financial and logistical support, though there is a need for more timely cash transfers and procurement processes. BirdLife International (BLI), as a responsible and executing partner, has successfully led a consortium of NGOs, contributing effectively to project outcomes.

Regarding partnerships and private sector involvement, Valudo, tasked with creating a coconut charcoal value chain, initially began its activities enthusiastically but has since been impeded by governmental indecision. This highlights a broader challenge in engaging and maintaining active participation from government bodies and private sector partners. The project's engagement with women and girls has been proactive, with specific efforts to incorporate gender considerations into all aspects of project activities, addressing potential legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation. However, there is still room for enhancing these gender benefits, particularly through targeted training and capacity-building initiatives.

In conclusion, while [the project has developed necessary partnerships and engaged a wide array of stakeholders, the effectiveness of these engagements varies significantly across different entities and activities. To advance towards the project's objectives, it is crucial to strengthen coordination mechanisms, enhance support for key partners, and ensure that gender inclusivity is effectively implemented and monitored. These actions will help build a more resilient and inclusive approach to biodiversity conservation in STP.](#)

Stakeholders' recommendation at project design stage:

Most frequent recommendations: (i) ensure coordination with on-going initiatives and avoid duplication; (ii) build on past achievements and learn from mistakes and experiences from past projects; (iii) ensure empowerment of local actors and grassroots beneficiaries; (iv) fill capacity gaps through specific training; (v) maximize the use of national expertise and resources; (vi) ensure equal participation of men and women; (vii) work on both islands.

Main lessons learned from consultation with stakeholders at design stage:

- **Empowerment of Communities:** Interventions are most successful where empowerment of communities is strongest, especially in terms of: (i) local community definition of target areas; (ii) involvement of community leaders and legally recognized community-level management entities; (iii) involvement of communities in the establishment of community forest management rules governing access and use; and (iv) inclusion of marginalized groups that hold a stake in the resources.
- **Partnerships and Outsourcing:** Given the small size and relatively low capacity of STP institutions, the achievement of project objectives, especially in the case of complex, articulated projects, is not possible without the establishment of a broad range of partnerships that can help the leading implementing agency to outsource and delegate the implementation to reliable partners from the civil society sector or private sector, while retaining the overall leadership and stewardship of the program, monitoring the progress of the work, and establishing connections between the different parts of the work plan.
- **Coaching and Backup:** The initial phase of implementation of a project is critical to its successful completion and the achievement of the objectives. It is important that UNDP (executing agency) ensures robust coaching at this stage and makes sure that team members and partners gain a full understanding of the purpose of each intervention, the synergies between the different components.
- **Learning and Capacity Building:** Local staff is critical in determining the degree of success of a project. The implementing agency should make sure that contracted staff gain and keep an adequate level of empowerment and motivation throughout the project lifetime. It is important to put in place mechanisms for on-going learning, through a regular assessment of capacity. Learning visits to best practices and case studies abroad are very valuable tools, as experience shows that the beneficiaries of these programs often return to their countries with renovated motivation and energy. This is particularly true for small, relatively isolated island countries like STP.
- **Benefits and Incentives:** Interventions are more successful and sustainable over the long term where donor and/or government objectives coincide with community objectives. This is especially true when the benefits and incentives for communities are clear and tangible and equitably distributed between national and local level stakeholders, as well as within participating communities.

The goal of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is to involve all stakeholders of the project, as early as possible in the implementation process and throughout project duration to ensure that, their views and concerns are made known and taken into account.

Actual stakeholder engagement

DGAAC is the Implementing Partner in charge of overall project implementation. But from the project inception to MTR Review, DGAAC did not exercise adequately project coordination which is one of its main tasks. The project needs a substantially better coordination among executing partners and responsible parts. The exchange of information and best practices was insufficient. Apart from a few activities (Inception Workshop, participatory appraisals of community needs) DGAAC has so far had significantly weak performance regarding the tasks assigned in the project document.

The DFB is also an important LTN's executing partner, at the same level of responsibility as the DGAAC, BLI and Regional Secretariat, but it also delivered very little according to its responsibilities, likely due to the conflict and competition in mandates between it and DGAAC, and the Regional Secretariat of Príncipe. Among DFB's task are reforestation and livelihood activities, but up to now, it has not completed any of these activities, though a proposal has been sent to the PMU to complete planting tasks and regarding training of forest guards.

RSEBD (Regional Secretariat for Biosphere, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development) as a responsible party and an executing partner has been very active in its assignments and responsibilities, thus far showing a proactive approach in comparison to Sao Tome Island institutional partners and has principally been slowed by the lack of financial resources and dependency on decisions come from DGAAC. Accordingly, it is clear to the MTR team that RSEBD need more financial and decision-making autonomy in regards to both funding and activities.

DSGC (Directorate of Geographical and Cadastral Services) was slated to collaborate on specific actions regarding Component 1 related to land use at PNOT. DSGC has not been a LTN partner so far and as mentioned previously the PNOT related activity is at a standstill.

UNDP is the GEF implementing agency and hence an essential partner yet even their contribution has been not nearly as involved as required by the assisted NIM modality. UNDP therefore needs to prioritize providing administrative, technical and financial support, particularly in regard to providing in-time cash transfers, and undertaking more rapid procurement processes, and assigning staff exclusively dedicated to the project that can provide oversight of the the project's M&E, budget and capacity building within the PMU and among partners.

BLI (Birdlife International) is a Responsible Party and an Executing Partner and has mostly performed its tasks in accordance with the project document and achieved some project results, although there are issues or coordination with the PMU and within the consortium. It leads a consortium of NGOs composed by Oikos – Cooperação e Desenvolvimento and Fundação Príncipe. Again, Fundação Príncipe has been relatively more efficient in carrying out its assigned responsibilities and greater support should be provided to Oikos to increase the delivery of activities in regard to livelihood activities, particularly in light of the departure of PMU members working on related tasks at the community level.

Regarding Valudo's and EcoBlasa's involvement, they are both ready to deliver their respectively identified responsibilities within Component 3 in regards to creating a coconut charcoal value chain, but are now stuck by government indecision and hence their involvement has been slowed.

Other stakeholders referred to in the Project Document, listed below, have had so far minor or non-existent contribution to the project: Regional Department for Public Works, Urbanism and Spatial Planning, Regional Directorate of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Culture, Regional Directorate for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Department of Land Affairs – MAPDR, National Platform for Forest and Landscape Restoration of São Tomé and Príncipe – DFB, Implementation Cell of the National Land Use and Management Plan, National Committee on Climate Change, General-Directorate for Natural Resources and Energy, Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development – MAPDR, Directorate of Study and Planning – MAPDR, Rural Development Support Centre & Regional Delegations, Agricultural Technical Improvement Centre – MAPDR, Agricultural and Technological Research Centre (CIAT) – MAPDR, Directorate for Fisheries – MAPDR, General Directorate for Tourism and Hospitality (DGTH), Ministry of Defence and Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and Public Administration and Human Rights. IFAD, FAO, AfDB, WBG, EU, IUCN, FONG-STP, Platform for Responsible and Sustainable Tourism, We Are Changing Together (WACT), Mar Ambiente Pesca Artesanal (MARAPA), and Associação Programa Tatô (APT)

3.3.6 Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

As part of the project preparation phase, the UNDP Environmental and Social Screening Procedure (SESP) was applied to the project, and accordingly the project rated Moderate Risk with several significant social risks identified based on the project interventions.

The first risk was regarding monitoring and enforcement activities potentially influencing the livelihoods of rural communities by restricting access to resources, and resulting in economic displacement for specific user groups, such as loggers and charcoal burners. Furthermore, as the project supports the creation of new formally protected areas of high conservation value, also potentially leading to economic displacement through restricted access. The

establishment of a National Land Use Planning instrument potentially has the same implications, and in general interventions related to Component 3 on the charcoal value chain, designed to decrease the production of traditional charcoal has clear and direct implications for the livelihoods and incomes of traditional charcoal makers and their families.

To better understand these risks, as well as to design appropriately scaled mitigation measures, a four-pronged approach was taken. Firstly, the project design directly accounted for livelihood impacts on charcoal makers (as well as addressing the economic driver to produce charcoal) by incorporating an output related to alternative livelihood support. The project also required studies be carried out on the Charcoal value chain and regarding economic displacement, and finally a Human Rights Impact Assessment and associated Human Rights Action Plan to better understand the human rights implications of all activities (with a focus on economic displacement) and then to mitigate them. The project also hired an International Expert to develop a Livelihood restoration plan to account for these restrictions and inform the projects livelihood output.

Unfortunately, although the projects SESP was generally well-completed and relatively complete in identifying risks, and the required analysis and documents related to more detailed understanding of the human rights impacts and economic displacement impacts were understood through appropriate studies carried out by appropriately experienced consultant, the implementation or the identified mitigation measure lagged. Industrial charcoal production could lead to competition involving prices decrease of charcoal on national market while maintaining the levels of charcoal production produced by tree felling, resulting in a decrease in producers' incomes and the economic non-viability of the proposed PPP. In the worst-case scenario, the implementation of more sustainable charcoal kilns could lead to increased pressure on native forests with, on one side, export of coconut and other plant waste material produced coal, and, on the other side, decrease in the income of small producers, which could increase their production to reach their usual economic profitability level.

In regard to gender mainstreaming, a comprehensive Gender Action Plan (GAP) was prepared which is discussed below. Also, the project will mobilize more-sustainable charcoal kilns and charcoal sources; women generally play important roles in the charcoal value chain but earn less than their male counterparts. This is mainly because the participation of women is rarely in the middle of the value chain (mostly at the end, sales of the final product), where profits are concentrated.

Environmental Mainstreaming Officer

Finally, as part of the Project Management Unit (PMU) it was envisaged that an Environment Mainstreaming Officer (who is referred to in the project SESP as an Environmental Integration and Safety Officer), would be hired to play a key role in preventing / managing the impacts of large -scale changes. Although this is considered an important role given the extent of potential social impacts (both positive and negative) on beneficiary communities, and more broadly on community impacted by the project, this role was never filled.

Project-Level Grievance Mechanism

No project level Grievance mechanism established at the time of writing of the MTR. Beneficiaries can complain about problems to community leaders or directly to the LTN, but there is no complaints mechanism. When there are contacts with the community, not only the community leader is informed, but also other people linked to the activities, so that everyone is aware of the events, as previously there were complaints regarding participation.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with select communities as part of the HRIA process sought to identify examples of grievance mechanisms used as part of other projects, as well as existing processes within communities for resolving community conflicts. Participants in community interviews expressed that there are not necessarily formal, traditional community structures for managing conflict. It is largely handled between individuals on a case-by-case basis and, if things escalate, police may be involved. However, individuals who act in some leadership capacity within the community may be called upon to help resolve conflicts. Regarding grievances related to specific projects within communities, participants stated that the person to contact with any issues would differ based on the project. [It is recommended that a Project-level grievance mechanism be established as soon as possible with a protocol communicated to community beneficiaries as well on the project's Facebook page.](#)

3.3.7 Reporting

There have been two project implementation reviews (PIR) produced to date, one in 2022 and the most recent one for June 2023. The second PIR improved on the first completed in 2022. Although the PIR completed in 2022 lacks significant information from Responsible parties, the omission was not as obvious given how few activities had yet been initiated and though it did signal the project initiation was slow but was not proactive in identifying potential solutions. The PIR also mentioned materialized co-finance and the budget management on track, but it is unclear if supporting

evidence was provided, and this was not provided to the MTR team. It assigns a rating of “Moderately Satisfactory”, taking an optimistic view based on the progress in the short period between having a full team and beginning implementation. The second PIR was completed collaboratively with certain members of the PMU with support from the CTA in June of 2023. It is the opinion of the MTR team however that the PIR does not come near to honestly addressing challenges the project has faced up to that point and continues to face, including the continuation of significant delays, and in general assigns ratings to that do not capture the shortcomings in achieving outcomes. The ratings applied in the 2023 PIR were also “Moderately Satisfactory” for progress toward development objective, and “Moderately Satisfactory” with respect to implementation, both of which are unrepresentative ratings in the opinion of the MTR team given the shortcomings in implementation and the significant administrative challenges. The overall risk rating was “Low” which also fails to capitalize on the opportunity to assess honestly the present and evolving risks, both institutional, political, environmental and socio-economic as discussed below, and ignores many of the legitimate risks presented in the project document.

Given the complex project management structure, with many equally important responsible parties, the omission of more detailed reporting from those partners within the PIR is an obvious and important omission and entrenches the issues of coordination faced by the project more broadly. The other major omission in regards to reporting in the PIR, is the fact that the report focuses very much on listing activities that have been completed, which although important and necessary, does not link those activities in a systematic way to the outputs and outcomes identified in the Project document / in the project’s evaluation matrix, therefore also missing an opportunity to apply results-based management principles, and gives a somewhat distorted view in regards to the project’s progress. *It is unclear why at this stage in the project, there is no attempt to adjust the project target’s or indicators based on identified weaknesses and/or inconsistencies (for example the fact that environmental patrolling efforts do not track according to distance patrolled, that High conservation value areas (HCVs) have just been designated or the discrepancy in regards to the budget assigned to purchasing a semi-industrial kiln), and the PIR shows no attempts at adaptive management.* The section on minor amendments, which covers a range of issues is an opportunity to make small but meaningful changes to the Project that do not necessarily have to be approved by the project board / PSC is not used, and the section on risks management contains almost no information whatsoever, particularly regarding the social and environmental risks. Finally, in regard to the charcoal value chain, the lack of buy-in from government counterparts is not signaled, which continues to be a major issue in the implementation of Component 3. *It is highly recommended that going forward the PIR is used as a tool to signal issues, propose solutions and aggregate supporting information about both the successes and challenges encountered by various Responsible Parties in the delivery of their respective outputs. The PIR also required ownership both on the part of the PMU and should be completed collaboratively with all members in Sao Tome (most pertinently now the Project’s coordinator and Finance officer, along with the Project coordinator and gender officer in Principe, until the newly vacated positions are filled) as well as the Project’s director. The PIR also requires greater oversight from the UNDP CO, and the regional team.*

3.3.8 Communications and Knowledge Management

Internal Project Communication with Stakeholders

The internal communication as discussed in throughout, has faced several challenges. While regular communication channels exist including through formal and informal meetings, events organized in the context of the project, through the field level activities carried out in partnership, through the capacity building opportunities as well as the formal channel of the PSC meetings (although there have only been two), and of course through email and phone, the effectiveness of this communication has been inconsistent. As mentioned, previous, relatively straightforward but important issue such significant delays in processing payments and in procurement, adversely affecting the morale and operational efficiency of partners and staff, is not resolved through regular follow up, and actions such as reimbursements remain unresolved for months on end. This suggests that *while communication may be regular between certain parties, it is not always effective due to these consistent operational bottlenecks, nor is it comprehensive between all relevant parties.*

Key stakeholders, such as the BirdLife International and OIKOS, have expressed dissatisfaction with the responsiveness and support from UNDP, indicating a gap in effective communication and feedback mechanisms. Furthermore, there appears to be limited joint work and communication flow issues among executing parties, leading to coordination challenges and delayed project activities, and lack of decision making.

Despite these issues, efforts have been made to enhance understanding and engagement through training sessions, more informal meetings and joint work on community engagement. However, there is still a *significant need for clearer lines of communication and more robust feedback mechanisms (things as simple as making sure all RPs are copied on important project milestones or bottlenecks) to ensure stakeholders are fully aware of project outcomes and can contribute effectively to the sustainability of project results.*

External Project Communication

Externally, the project has established some means of communication to express its progress and intended impacts, according to the robust Knowledge management plan described above, but again the limited awareness of project objectives, activities and intended outcomes among the public, even beneficiaries' communities and broader stakeholders, signals that there are areas needing improvement. For instance, the project has conducted various training and awareness-raising activities focused on biodiversity conservation and sustainable practices, which have been well-received by community members. The community members however are not necessarily aware of which project the activities are attached to (not necessarily significant) but also the purpose of the knowledge in regard to implications on their livelihoods and relationships to resources (more significant).

However, the dissemination of information through public channels such as a dedicated web presence or extensive outreach campaigns appears to be limited. It is of course hard for the MTR team to judge this thoroughly given the time allowed in the field for the MTR assessment, but many several key stakeholders were unaware of the project's objectives of accomplishments. Key stakeholders did note a lack of visibility and recognition of UNDP's contributions in community activities, highlighting a need for better public awareness efforts. To improve external communication, the project should consider slightly more emphasis on the implementation of the KMCP, including enhanced use of digital platforms (the creative of a dedicated project website that is not just a part of UNDP's site) and more frequent public updates on project milestones and successes.

Project's Progress Towards Results

The project has made some notable progress towards sustainable development and global environmental benefits. The project has initiated sustainable charcoal production methods at the community level, improved environmental governance (with support to the national parks and progress some progress on enforcement, and the initiation of the environmental law consultancy), and established a conservation trust fund. These efforts have the potential to contribute to reducing deforestation, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and enhancing biodiversity conservation. However, the project still faces challenges related to institutional coordination, financial management, and political support, which need to be addressed to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

Knowledge Activities and Products Developed

The project has developed several knowledge activities and products to support its knowledge management approach. These include:

1. Training sessions on sustainable charcoal production and biodiversity conservation.
2. Environmental impact studies and the preparation of an environmental management plan for São Tomé and Príncipe islands.
3. Establishment of a conservation trust fund and the development of a sustainable finance plan.
4. Awareness-raising activities focused on the importance of preserving trees and using improved charcoal production technologies.
5. Community engagement initiatives to promote alternative livelihoods and sustainable resource management practices.
6. Establishment of the Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (CHM), the website of which contains more than 70 items of content, including scientific articles, studies, plans, strategies, laws, regulations, protocols, images, and photos.
7. Production of brochures, posters, role plays, and social media posts, producing 21 brochures/posters and 47 social media posts in the period between 2022 and 2023.

These knowledge activities have been crucial in building capacity, raising awareness, and promoting sustainable practices among stakeholders and communities involved in the project.

3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits from the project after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, which means that the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one among the four assessed risk dimensions.

Overall:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

The likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases is influenced both by the structure and design of the project itself, as well as external and contextual factors, some of which may be resolved over time by applying the lessons of success and failure of various similar and related projects, but some of which are larger structural issues which remain outside of the sphere of influence of the project itself. which has been decreased by the lack of progress of the project by midterm in several key areas. Realigning with the most important and achievable outcomes of the projects is one strategy that can improve the overall sustainability of results. These efforts further increase the likelihood that project results will be sustained.

The project faces several critical risks, encompassing operational, institutional, environmental, and social dimensions. These risks are identified and rated in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs, by the projects Social and Environmental Procedure (SESP) and related analysis (such as the Economic Displacement and Livelihood Impact Assessment and the Human Rights Impact Assessment), as well as the ATLAS Risk Register. Validation of these risks confirms that they are appropriately identified and rated, reflecting the project's complex operational environment. The weakness therefore not been in the appropriate identification of risks but rather in the appropriate response.

The operational risks include slow decision-making processes and constraints in institutional capacity, which are significant barriers to timely project delivery. Social and environmental risks, such as potential economic displacement of vulnerable groups (e.g., charcoal producers and loggers) and impacts on livelihoods due to law enforcement, are rated as moderate to high. Institutional and governance risks include weak inter-agency coordination and insufficient political will, impacting the project's sustainability and effectiveness. Environmental risks, like planned infrastructure and oil and gas projects, and insufficient integration of efforts to protect both terrestrial and marine diversity, as well as the inadvertent promotion of invasive species, are also significant.

Overall it is essential to place greater emphasis on improving the Institutional capacities of the implementation partners and to integrate staff from the involved government agencies in the implementation of the project. Other overarching factors which diminish the prospects that project results will be sustained is the slow progress and specifically the very limited progress that has been made on Component 3, which aims transform the country's charcoal value chain. Furthermore, ambitious legal and institutions reforms have been planned which are facing significant inertia at a high political level and among the ministries involved. There is limited time remaining to overcome these legal and institutional obstacles and it is unlikely that the timeframe of such changes will match the timeframe of the project. The following sections include brief analyses of the four sustainability risk dimensions, including financial, institutional and governance, socioeconomic, and environmental.

3.4.1 Financial Risks to Sustainability

Financial Risks:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

The likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once GEF assistance ends is high. Attainment of project objectives in the long term (and those of the country in general) heavily relies on donor funding and the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms. However, there are significant concerns about the long-term viability of these mechanisms without continuous external support, the reliability of external support relies on many external factors, including the ever-shifting development priorities of donors. The project's success in mobilizing additional financial resources from public and private sectors and income-generating activities is critical for sustaining outcomes. The design and establishment of the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF), which is the project's most explicit and comprehensive attempt to address the issue of financial risk, while promising, is still in its nascent stage and requires robust management and continuous funding inflows to remain viable

At the macro level, reliance on external donors and fluctuating financial contributions can create significant uncertainties. On the micro level, delays in the disbursement of funds, as noted throughout, can lead to operational interruptions, demotivation among staff and reputational risks for UNDP. Establishing a self-sustaining financial mechanism such as a Conservation Trust Fund is challenging, requiring substantial initial capital, effective management, and long-term commitment from stakeholders.

To address these financial risks, the project considers several solutions, including diversifying its funding sources to reduce dependency on any single donor. This includes engaging more with the private sector, exploring income-generating activities related to ecotourism, and leveraging international environmental finance mechanisms such as newly created sources of biodiversity finance. Building a robust financial management system that can efficiently handle funds, forecast financial needs, and ensure transparency and accountability is also vital. Such systems would help in building donor confidence and ensuring steady and predictable funding streams.

The "Sustainable Finance Plan for Biodiversity and Protected Areas in São Tomé and Príncipe," developed by Natural Strategies, addresses significant funding requirements for the management of protected areas (PAs) and biodiversity conservation. Recognizing the financial strain due to escalating environmental pressures, the consultancy, guided by BirdLife International, outlines a multi-faceted approach aimed at securing sustainable financial resources. The primary mechanisms proposed include a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF), carbon finance options, and a concession mechanism targeting High Conservation Values areas for activities like ecotourism and agroforestry.

The report details a comprehensive strategy to bridge the identified financial gaps which amount to between 460,000 and 800,000 EUR annually. This includes setting up the CTF as a strategic tool to harmonize and enhance financial efforts across various stakeholders involved in conservation and PA management. The fund aims to be robust, incorporating multiple funding windows to ensure diversified and sustainable resource mobilization. Additionally, the plan explores leveraging carbon finance and impact investments to catalyze biodiversity conservation while delivering economic returns.

A significant portion of the plan is dedicated to the feasibility of these financial mechanisms, particularly emphasizing the structure, governance, and operational strategies of the proposed CTF. It proposes establishing the financial entity of the CTF offshore to ensure donor confidence and optimize tax conditions, while maintaining a local management entity in São Tomé and Príncipe to ensure local engagement and control. The governance model suggested involves various public and private stakeholders to ensure a balanced and transparent decision-making process. The plan not only highlights financial instruments to fund biodiversity conservation in São Tomé and Príncipe but also stresses the importance of strategic governance, stakeholder involvement, and careful consideration of environmental and social impacts. At the time of writing the CTF had been established, but not yet secured financing. [Efforts to quantify and rigorously analyse the potential of raising funds through eco-tourism initiatives and fees paid by visitors however, had not yet been undertaken and it is the opinion of the MTR team that it should continue to factor into sustainable finance initiatives going forward. In regards to the CTF, a sufficient emphasis on not only the fundraising, but also on robust governance and clear plans and guidelines for the use of funds, should be paramount.](#)

3.4.2 Socioeconomic Risks to Sustainability

Socioeconomic Risks:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely (ML)

Socio-economic risks to project sustainability stem from both the deep-rooted practices and economic structures within local communities that might resist change, for example regarding the attempted change in the charcoal value chain, but also to broader socio-economic trends related to demographics, available livelihoods and migration. Traditional methods such as charcoal burning are not only economically significant but also culturally ingrained, posing a challenge to sustainable alternatives that the project aims to introduce. Although it may not seem like a significant risk, the taste and smell produced using traditional charcoal is an essential part of the Sao Tomean national dish Calulu, as well as the various "grelhados" (grilled foods) beloved by the population. The project therefore faces the challenge of ensuring that these alternatives are both culturally acceptable and economically viable to ensure adoption and continuity, and sufficient emphasis should be placed on these aspects when engaging with communities.

More broadly, the emigration of skilled labor from São Tomé and Príncipe is a persistent issue, one that has dramatically increased just over the last few years, depleting the local talent pool necessary for the project's management and technical needs. This outflow could reduce the effectiveness of the project due to a lack of adequately skilled local personnel to sustain project initiatives.

Potential solutions discussed include the development of capacity-building programs that are directly linked to local socio-economic benefits, ensuring that project outcomes align with community needs and values. Additionally, the project itself might consider strategies to incentivize skilled individuals to remain or return, such as providing competitive benefits, and engaging in local and international career development programs. The fact that the project has lost three key staff in the past 6 months, is an indication of not only challenging project circumstances, but also of rising inflation and cost of living in the country, where salaries may not be commensurate.

Finally, as discussed above, community members and other stakeholders have expressed concerns over the lack of necessary technical support for the livelihood initiatives supported under the project, included on technical and operational business planning, marketing, and visibility of entrepreneurial initiatives. Without adequate emphasis on these critical aspects of livelihood support, promising initiatives risk being abandoned despite their potential. The more livelihood initiatives are community driven and led and tailored for the realities of the local market, including existing demands, the more likely they are to succeed. External incentives such as per diems to attend meetings or to join

training should be avoided to not entrench the notion that the extent of benefits of such initiatives are temporary and minimal economic gains, rather than long-term strategies for socio-economic resilience.

3.4.3 Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

Institutional Framework and Governance Risks:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Unlikely (MU)

The institutional risks to the sustainability of the project are significant and multifaceted. Coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, and community groups, present considerable challenges. Fragmentation in responsibilities and a lack of clear leadership often lead to inefficiencies, duplicative efforts, and conflicts that undermine the project's objectives. This problem is further exacerbated by frequent bureaucratic changes, such as multiple changes in the Minister for the Environment during the project's lifetime, and a lack of institutional memory. These disruptions can stall critical activities and hinder project continuity, particularly as many government initiatives depend on project-to-project funding.

One major risk is the project's reliance on multiple layers of governmental approval and cooperation. If these entities are not fully aligned or if political priorities shift, the project's initiatives could face significant delays or obstacles. To mitigate these risks, enhancing institutional coordination through formal agreements or integrated management systems is essential. The project documents recommend establishing regular coordination meetings and creating shared platforms for information and resource exchange. This includes not only inter-agency communication within the government but also between UN agencies and at the individual project level, which was intended with the FAO's TRI project but has been minimal thus far. Additionally, training sessions and workshops are suggested to align various stakeholders on project goals and methods, ensuring that all parties, including those in the Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity (DFB), the Directorate for Natural Resource and Environmental Services (RSEBD), and other relevant ministries, are adequately informed and engaged.

Strengthening institutional capacities has been a focus of the project, but it must remain a primary focus moving forward. Ensuring the financial sustainability of key roles, such as the payment of forest guards, is critical. This responsibility should be assigned to the appropriate institution and secured through mechanisms like tourism income or the newly established Conservation Trust Fund (CTF). The creation of a new institution for biodiversity, while complex, will be significantly supported by the revision of the environmental base law. Nevertheless, existing institutional tensions, mandate competition, and overlap among various ministries involved in biodiversity conservation remain substantial challenges.

The National Land Use Plan is another key element in ensuring sustainable development around national parks. It is crucial for balancing the demands of urban construction, which drives the need for timber and sand, with the preservation of natural habitats. This plan must also address the environmental impacts of new infrastructure and agricultural plantations. Effective coordination between NGOs and the government is necessary, particularly for sharing high-resolution and systematic biodiversity data collected by international and national NGOs. This data should be shared transparently and collaboratively with national structures to enhance decision-making and conservation efforts.

Additionally, there are significant institutional risks due to insufficient coordination and cooperation between UN agencies and other development partners, reducing the effectiveness of aid and exacerbating the lack of coordination between government ministries. Within UNDP itself, there is a shortage of human resources to adequately support the scale of finance received and to follow through on project implementation effectively.

Furthermore, there are notable differences between the environmental, social, and institutional contexts of São Tomé Island and Príncipe. The government of Príncipe has shown a strong focus on biodiversity conservation by controlling infrastructure development and prioritizing eco-tourism initiatives. Efforts should be made to integrate this positive focus on São Tomé Island, while also providing additional autonomy and financial incentives to Príncipe for its accomplishments in valuing biodiversity.

In conclusion, while the project has made strides in strengthening institutional capacities and fostering coordination, ongoing efforts are needed to address the complexities of governance structures and processes. Enhancing accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer mechanisms is crucial for sustaining the project's benefits.

3.4.4 Environmental Risks to Sustainability

Risks:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Unlikely

Environmental risks associated with the GEF/UNDP project on enhancing biodiversity conservation and sustainable land and natural resource management in São Tomé and Príncipe are significant and multifaceted. These risks stem from both the potential negative impacts of project interventions and external factors somewhat beyond the project's control but very much within the realm of influenceability.

Firstly, the project's interventions in the charcoal value chain pose potential risks to local ecosystems. These include the creation of a parallel market for alternative charcoal that does not actual replace or reduce traditional charcoal, maintained or increased deforestation due to the use of improved kilns, and reforestation activities that may inadvertently harm biodiversity. Such interventions, if not carefully managed, could undermine the very conservation efforts they aim to support.

Moreover, significant external factors also threaten the sustainability of the project's outcomes. The continued overexploitation of natural resources, coupled with the lack of a national land use plan and inadequately operationalized environmental and social impact assessment procedures, presents a critical challenge. Planned infrastructure developments, both onshore and offshore, exacerbate these risks by threatening biodiversity and the sustainability of ecosystems that the project seeks to protect. That is, STP is either undertaking or has planned, several significant infrastructure and oil and gas development projects that could severely impact its biodiversity conservation efforts. Key among these projects is the planned construction of a new deep-water port, which aims to enhance maritime trade and connectivity. Additionally, the government is working on developing a ring road to improve transportation around the main island, São Tomé. In the realm of energy development, São Tomé and Príncipe has signed oil and gas concession agreements with Nigeria, focusing on exploring and exploiting hydrocarbon resources in the Joint Development Zone (JDZ) within the Gulf of Guinea. The JDZ, managed jointly by São Tomé and Príncipe and Nigeria, is divided into several exploration blocks, with ongoing activities aimed at assessing and utilizing these resources. Simultaneously, there is a local construction boom driven by a rising demand for housing. This surge in construction activities is particularly pronounced in urban areas, leading to increased pressure on natural resources such as timber and sand, which are essential for building materials. The involvement of local authorities in these exploitation activities also represents a risk for governance.

The planned infrastructure and oil and gas development pose profound risks to the unique terrestrial and marine biodiversity of São Tomé and Príncipe. The construction of the deep-water port and ring road will lead to habitat fragmentation, disrupting ecosystems and wildlife corridors. These projects will also increase pollution and sedimentation in coastal areas, adversely affecting marine habitats and species. The exploration and extraction of oil and gas in the JDZ carry the most significant environmental risks, including potential oil spills and increased pollution, and the disruption of marine megafauna and other species, including the breeding grounds and migration routes of whales and turtles, which could devastate marine ecosystems. The activities associated with these developments also lead to habitat degradation and loss of biodiversity, particularly in sensitive coastal and offshore areas. The lack of sufficient financial, technical and institutional capacity to manage these risks raise their potential negative impact significantly.

Finally, the local housing construction boom exacerbates these risks by accelerating deforestation and the destruction of mangroves, which are critical for maintaining ecological balance and protecting against coastal erosion. Mangroves and other forested areas are vital for numerous species and serve as important carbon sinks, helping mitigate climate change impacts (PNOT).

Overall, these development projects require careful planning, stringent environmental impact assessments, and robust mitigation strategies to ensure they do not undermine the conservation efforts and ecological integrity of São Tomé and Príncipe's unique biodiversity. Robust and aligned political will, extensive coordination, careful planning, improved institutional and legal frameworks will be required. Without such measures, the environmental sustainability of the region could be severely compromised, threatening both its natural heritage and the livelihoods dependent on these ecosystems

Finally, international best practice in biodiversity conservation have evolved considerably towards integrated approaches with take into account the connectivity of ecosystems. One of the environmental risks of the project is that it focused on terrestrial biodiversity without sufficient coordination in regards to ongoing efforts to protect marine biodiversity. Here's an overview of best practices in these areas:

Integrated Management of Terrestrial and Marine Protected Areas

1. **Coordinated Management Frameworks:** Establishing integrated management frameworks that connect terrestrial and marine protected areas helps ensure that conservation efforts are not siloed. This can include

joint management bodies or coordinated plans that address the needs and characteristics of both terrestrial and marine environments.

2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Successful integration often involves engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and NGOs. This engagement helps in understanding the diverse needs and ensures that management practices are inclusive and locally relevant.
 3. **Comprehensive Monitoring and Research:** Continuous monitoring and research are crucial to understand the dynamics between terrestrial and marine ecosystems. This includes the study of species that rely on both habitats, as well as the impact of human activities and natural processes that affect these areas.
 4. **Sustainable Funding Mechanisms:** Secure, sustainable financing is essential for the long-term success of integrated protected areas. This can include government funding, private investments, international grants, and innovative financing mechanisms like payments for ecosystem services.
- 5. Ridge to Reef Approach**
1. **Holistic Planning and Zoning:** Implementing R2R approaches involves planning that considers the entire watershed as a single entity. This includes zoning that reflects the ecological connections between upland, lowland, coastal, and marine areas.
 2. **Pollution Control:** Managing pollution from agricultural runoff, sewage, and industrial discharges is crucial to protect downstream ecosystems, particularly coral reefs and mangroves that are sensitive to pollution.
 3. **Restoration Activities:** Restoration projects that enhance both terrestrial and marine habitats can help to recover degraded areas and improve ecological connectivity. This includes reforestation, wetland restoration, and coral reef rehabilitation.
 4. **Climate Resilience:** Building resilience against climate change impacts is a critical aspect of the R2R approach. This might involve enhancing coastal defenses naturally through mangrove conservation and other natural barriers, or by designing infrastructure that minimizes environmental impact.
 5. **Adaptive Management:** As ecological and social conditions change, adaptive management allows for the modification of strategies based on new data and outcomes. This flexibility is crucial for responding effectively to unforeseen challenges or shifts in ecosystem dynamics.

In conclusion, the environmental risks to the sustainability of the project's outcomes are substantial and multifaceted. Addressing these risks requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that involves strong political commitment, effective coordination, and adaptive management to navigate the complex interplay of local and external factors impacting biodiversity conservation efforts in São Tomé and Príncipe.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusions Project Relevance and Strategic Alignment: The project is well aligned with national priorities, focusing on biodiversity and conservation that address significant environmental challenges. Its initiation was strategically planned to enhance the implementation of the Aichi targets and adhere to the broader frameworks set by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reflecting the objectives highlighted in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). This alignment ensures that the project not only tackles immediate environmental concerns but also contributes to long-term sustainability goals.

Challenges in Project Kickoff: Although the project holds immense potential for impactful outcomes, it faced considerable delays in its early stages, primarily due to prolonged negotiations with multiple partners and slow recruitment processes. These delays highlight the need for refined strategies to streamline operations, ensuring that future activities are executed without further setbacks, thereby maintaining the project's momentum.

Decentralized Implementation and Engagement: The project adopts a decentralized implementation strategy that effectively promotes local involvement, enhancing stakeholder engagement and community participation. While this approach brings several benefits, including increased local support and direct engagement, it requires robust and well-coordinated mechanisms to ensure that activities across various locations are harmonized and lead to uniform achievement of the project's objectives.

Workforce and Capacity Challenges: Staffing inadequacies and varying capacities across partner organizations pose significant hurdles to the project's effectiveness. Addressing these challenges through targeted capacity-building

initiatives and strengthening the recruitment processes is crucial for enhancing the operational efficiency and impact of the project.

Legal and Regulatory Enhancements: The project underscores the necessity of updating legal frameworks to effectively address contemporary conservation challenges. Strengthening legal structures is fundamental to enhancing enforcement capabilities and ensuring that conservation efforts are both effective and compliant with current environmental standards.

Financial Sustainability and Viability: Establishing sustainable financial mechanisms is essential for the project's longevity. The project endeavors to create reliable financial structures that can support conservation activities in the long term, emphasizing the importance of financial stability for ongoing environmental efforts. Sustainability of project results after GEF funding ceases has been addressed in the project design, particularly regarding integrating the professional appointments / focal points into the organizations of the implementation partners.

Community Involvement and Acceptance: Effective community engagement has been pivotal to the project's acceptance and success. By involving local communities in the decision-making process and ensuring they benefit from conservation activities, the project has managed to secure essential local support, which is critical for the sustainability of its outcomes.

Expansion of Protected Areas: The project has successfully expanded the scope and area of protected zones, significantly contributing to national and regional conservation goals. This expansion not only enhances biodiversity preservation but also increases the ecological resilience of these areas, providing long-term environmental benefits. Emphasis however should be placed on operationalizing management plans and improving monitoring.

Continuous Stakeholder Engagement: The project recognizes the importance of maintaining continuous dialogue with all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone involved is aligned with the project's goals and actively participates in its activities, however has a weakness in implementation in this regards. Ongoing engagement and better coordination both internally and externally is crucial for adapting project strategies to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Need for Enhanced Training and Capacity Building: Continuous capacity enhancement and training for all project participants are fundamental to sustaining the achievements of the project. By investing in human capital, the project aims to build a knowledgeable workforce that can carry forward the conservation efforts effectively and efficiently.

Socioeconomic Considerations: Integrating socioeconomic benefits into the project's framework is essential for justifying the conservation efforts to the broader public and garnering widespread support. By demonstrating the economic and social advantages of biodiversity conservation (and the potential of a new charcoal value chain), the project can enhance its relevance and sustainability.

Resource Management Efficiency: There is a pressing need to manage financial and human resources more efficiently to meet the project's ambitious goals. Streamlining resource allocation and utilization will be crucial in ensuring that the project delivers its intended outcomes without unnecessary expenditures.

Public-Private Partnership Challenges: While public-private partnerships (PPPs) are integral to the project's strategy, aligning these partnerships with overarching project goals is necessary to prevent conflicts and ensure that all parties are working towards common objectives. The project has not yet developed an adaptive management strategy for implementation of Component 3.

Risk Management Deficiencies: The project currently lacks comprehensive risk management practices, which are essential for navigating uncertainties in project execution. Establishing robust risk management frameworks can help in pre-empting potential issues and devising effective mitigation strategies.

Impact on Biodiversity Conservation: The project has made commendable strides in conserving biodiversity, though sustaining these efforts remains a challenge. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of conservation strategies will be key to maintaining the gains achieved and expanding their scope.

Institutional Support and Leadership: Strong leadership and institutional backing are imperative for navigating the operational and bureaucratic challenges that the project faces. Enhanced leadership can drive the project towards achieving its objectives more effectively, ensuring that administrative hurdles do not impede progress.

Adaptability to Local Conditions: The project must remain flexible and responsive to the local environmental, social, and political conditions. This adaptability is crucial for ensuring that the project remains effective and relevant in varying contexts, thereby maximizing its impact.

Through project midterm, the actual date considered having been 30 December 2023, a total of USD 1,850,331.63⁹ or 43% of the USD 4,262,559 GEF implementation grant have been incurred. The project will need to sustain a high level of efficiency in the second half to ensure available funds are disbursed judiciously towards achievement of the intended outcomes.

4.1 4.2. Recommendations

No.	Recommendations	Responsible Entities
1	Enhance Operational Efficiency: Address procedural delays in payment and procurement by streamlining processes and improving internal coordination within UNDP and among project partners. Expedite procurement and payment processes (with follow up from UNDP focal point) to maintain partner and staff morale and efficiency. Implement more efficient fund management practices by empowering the Project Management Unit (PMU) with direct control over financial resources, thereby improving response times and operational efficiency. Ensure that DGA opens project account and fund are transferred according to Annual Work Plan. Ensure that all implementing partners report activities according to costs. Allow for greater autonomy in decision making on the use of funds by RSED in Príncipe to expedite activities.	UNDP, PMU, PSC members
2.	Improve Coordination and Communication: Lean more heavily on the project steering committee for adopting decisions and following up on the LTN, including deciding on the fate of Component 3 in the next meeting, as well as streamlining project activities, revising the Logframe targets and indicators and reallocating budget. Establish robust mechanisms for better coordination and communication among stakeholders, including for the Project Implementation reports and establishing a SharePoint with all project documents. Establish clearer lines of reporting, communication and coordination mechanisms among all stakeholders, including government bodies, UNDP, partners, and the community, to ensure cohesive project execution.	PMU, with inputs from implementation partners
3.	Enhance Capacity in both Project Management and Biodiversity Conservation: Increase training and support for national institutions and NGOs in project management and administration, reporting to GEF, and risk assessment, to improve efficiency. Assign focal points within the DGA and DFB to help address specific project-related technical and administrative issues more efficiently, ensuring progress and facilitating better coordination. Emphasize technical capacity building within government bodies on biodiversity conservation, as well as among enforcement staff, eco-guides, and community members.	UNDP, PMU, implementation partners
4.	Apply Adaptive Management, Review and Adjust Project Indicators and Targets: Review and revise the project indicators (targets and baselines) to ensure they are realistic, measurable, and achievable within the project's timeline according to the suggestions in the MTR. Ensure that a new M&E expert is hired, and that future implementation of the project is guided by the log frame and the monitoring matrix is used. Ensure that UNDP provides guidance and training on results-based management and reporting and fills the M&E gap, and updates monitoring framework and project information for all partners and eventually for the terminal evaluation team. For activities that are removed or revised (for example those related to the PNOT) reallocated budget towards the areas suggested in the MTR accordingly.	PMU, PSC members, UNDP-GEF regional technical specialist
5.	Prioritize Improvement of Legal and Institutional Frameworks: Collaborate with legal experts to update environmental laws and ensure that consultants have access to all project documents including the MTR. Ensure these frameworks include clarified institutional mandates, collaboration between Ministries involved in Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity and PAs, as well as eco-tourism, and penalties for non-compliance, and mechanisms for transparent and accountable enforcement.	PMU, PSC members, UNDP-GEF regional technical specialist
6.	Evaluate and Adapt PPP Frameworks: Review and adjust public-private partnership frameworks to ensure alignment with strategic goals and make a final decision regarding this at the next PSC. Enhance the framework and operational guidelines for PPPs, ensuring alignment with national development goals and the sustainability of environmental conservation efforts and livelihoods if taken forward. Supplement information in the value chain analysis to thoroughly characterize market aspects of sustainable charcoal. If the decision is made to not go forward, consult with GEF on the revision of project objective and the re-allocation of funds from this component	PMU, UNDP, implementation partners

⁹ Including UNDP co-financing

No.	Recommendations	Responsible Entities
	towards other urgent activities, such as operationalizing the PA management plans, long-term budgets for enforcement, and systematic Biodiversity monitoring.	
7.	Approach Biodiversity Conservation in an Integrated Manner: Develop a unified conservation strategy that incorporates marine biodiversity, leveraging synergies with terrestrial strategies to enhance overall ecological integrity. In absence of and pending land use planning instrument, ensure through coordination that biodiversity and PA management takes into account infrastructure and agriculture, and that robust revised Environmental and Social Impact Laws are applied and enforced.	PMU, implementation partners
8.	Speed up implementation of funding for Conservation Trust Fund, Analyze potential for eco-tourism income and additional flexibility for Príncipe activities and funds: Prioritize the funding and governance structure of the Conservation Trust fund for future sustainability of all project related initiatives. Strengthen the institutional framework and support in Príncipe, possibly through the establishment of dedicated institutes for biodiversity conservation in the CTF, to facilitate / incentivize pro-biodiversity development pathways and more effective fund management. Consider raising funds from eco-tourism initiatives and/ or a tourism tax by carrying out an appropriate analysis.	PMU, UNDP, implementation partners
9.	Optimize Coordination Among Government Agencies, NGOs and Donors: Improve inter-agency collaboration between DGA, DFB, and regional authorities and integration of project monitoring frameworks with established or new monitoring frameworks within agencies and NGOs (for example Red List monitoring). Establish regular communications and structured decision-making processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in regards to how donor funding is used (for example to avoid duplication of activities).	PMU, implementation partners
10.	Mitigate Livelihood Risks, Expand Community Engagement & Awareness Programs and Integrate Economic Incentives into Project Design: Incorporate the thorough evaluation of the socio-economic impacts of project interventions on traditional livelihoods, emphasizing and designing further sustainable alternative livelihood strategies in close consultation with affected communities, as well as strategies for long-term monitoring and support. Ensure that economic benefits are clearly linked with conservation efforts to foster community support. Increase efforts to engage communities and raise awareness about sustainable practices. Consider given a larger budget to Oikos for livelihoods on Sao Tome island that includes more integrated and long-term support, and then shifting the livelihood component on Príncipe to Fundação Príncipe with a greater budget allocation.	PMU, implementation partners
11.	Gender Inclusion and Empowerment: Hire a new Gender specialist in Sao Tome to continue to integrate gender considerations into project activities by developing targeted training and capacity-building initiatives for women and ensuring gender-balanced participation as per the GAP. Revise the GAP where necessary for more feasible targets.	PMU
12.	Develop a Comprehensive Risk Management Framework: Use the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure recommended mitigation measures and track monitoring plan. Train PMU staff and other key personnel to monitor risks both environmental and social but also operational, and a incorporate the monitoring plan into the annual work plan. Identify critical risks and develop strategies to mitigate them effectively, particularly in regard to the livelihoods of charcoal makers. Establish a project level grievance mechanism.	UNDP/ PMU
13.	Enhance Advocacy for Environmental Prioritization and Foster High-Level Governmental Support: Engage with senior government officials to secure backing and facilitate smooth project implementation. Strengthen efforts to advocate for environmental sustainability within the national agenda, leveraging the energy of the Project Director and new Ministerial position to foster greater governmental engagement and support. Continue to build and maintain strong engagement and political will among new directors and ministers for sustained project momentum and success.	Government Partners/ UNDP
14.	Prioritize Protected Area Management, Enforcement and Monitoring: In the second half of the project apply a view in terms of technical tasks, reallocation of funds and PMU expertise on protected area management. Consider hiring a CTA with expertise on this aspect of the project and realign the log frame to reflect greater emphasis on legal and institutional frameworks, as well as technical capacity in monitoring and enforcement.	UNDP/PMU

Annex 1: MTR Mission Itinerary

Date	Time	Activity / Participants (Name, Role)	Location (Physical Location / Virtual)
12 Dec 2023 (Tuesday)		Meeting with Mr. Damiano – LTN Technical Consultant	Online
08 Jan 2024 (Monday)	09.00	Meeting with António Correia - National expert to review field mission planning	Sao Tome city
	11.00	Meeting with Sumner Metzger – LTN Project Coordinator	LTN Office - Casa Ambiente, Sao Tome city
	02.30	Meeting with Mrs. Sulisa Quaresma – LTN Director and Director General to Directorate of Environment and Climate Action	Sao Tome city, Directorate of Environment and Climate Action
09 Jan (Tuesday)	09.00	Meeting with Mr. Agostinho Fernandes - Director to Birdlife International in Sao Tome, and staff	Birdlife International Office - Campo de Milho, Sao Tome city
	10.30	Meeting with Mrs. Rute da Cruz – Interim Director to Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity, and staff	Sao Tome city, Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity
	15.00	Meeting with Mrs. Maria T. Mendizabal – UNDP Program coordinator for environmental projects	UNDP Office - UN House, Sao Tome city
	17.30	Meeting with Mr. Aderito Santana – UNDP Programs coordinator	UNDP Office - UN House, Sao Tome city
10 Jan (Wednesday)	09.00	Visit to Praia das Conchas (land) Community and meeting with Charcoal makers	District of Lobata – Sao Tome Island
	10.00	Visit to Plancas I Community and meeting with Charcoal makers	District of Lobata – Sao Tome Island
	11.00	Visit to Plancas II Community and meeting with Charcoal makers	District of Lobata – Sao Tome Island
Day off			
12 Jan (Friday)	10.30	Meeting with Mr. Júlio Mendes – Regional Secretary for Biosphere, Environment and Agriculture	Regional Secretariat Office, Santo Antonio, Principe Island
	12.30	Meeting with Mrs. Maria dos Prazeres – Regional Director for Environment	Regional Directorate Office, Porto Real Plantation, Principe Island
	15.30	Meeting with Mrs. Estrela Matilde – Director of Fundação Príncipe	Office of Fundação Príncipe, Santo Antonio city, Principe Island
13 Jan (Saturday)	11.30	Meeting with Mr. Dean Martin, President of the Loggers Association	Santo Antonio city, Principe Island
	12.30	Meeting with Mr. Alcides – Owner of a hotel located in the buffer zone	Principe Island
15 Jan (Monday)	09.00	Meeting with Príncipe Forest Rangers	Regional Directorate Office, Porto Real Plantation, Principe Island

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Date	Time	Activity / Participants (Name, Role)	Location (Physical Location / Virtual)
17 Jan (Wednesday)	11.30	Meeting with Mrs. Dalila Vila Nova – LTN Gender specialist	LTN Office - Casa Ambiente, Sao Tome city
	15.30	Meeting with Mr. Guillaume Taufflieb – Director of Valudo Company	Valudo Office, Favorita – Trindade city, São Tome Island
	16.00	Meeting with Mr. Darnel Baía - Director and GEF Focal Point in STP and member of the GEF Board	Sao Tome city, Directorate of Environment and Climate Action
18 Jan (Thursday)	09.00	Conversation with Mr. Francisco – President of the Monte Pico Association	Bom Sucesso Botanic Garden, PNOT, São Tome Island
19 Jan (Friday)	08.15	Meeting with Mr. Argentino Pires dos Santos – Assistant to the FAO Representative in STP	FAO Office, Sao Tome city
	09.00	Meeting with Mrs. Maria T. Mendizabal – UNDP Program coordinator for environmental projects	UNDP Office - UN House, Sao Tome city
	11.45	Meeting with LTN Project Management Unit (PMU)	LTN Office - Casa Ambiente, Sao Tome city
22 Jan (Monday)	15.00	Debriefing to present Mission's results to stakeholders	LTN Office - Casa Ambiente, Sao Tome city
23 Jan (Tuesday)	12.00	Lunch with Mrs. Sulisa Quaresma and Mr. Sumner Metzger	CACAU, Sao Tome city

Annex 2: List of Persons Interviewed

Name	Designation/Department	Interview method
Mr. Damiano LTN Technical Consultant	WhatsApp: +39 349 3611021, damiano.borgogno@undp.org	Online
Mr. António Correia National expert to MTR	9913460, antoniocorreiaa@hotmail.com	Personal
Mr. Sumner Metzger LTN Project Coordinator	996 7530, sumnertrindade@outlook.com	Personal
Mrs. Sulisa Quaresma LTN Director and Director General of Environment and Climate Action	9971852, sulisa.dgaac@gmail.com	Personal
Mr. Agostinho Fernandes Director to Birdlife International in STP	9900106, agostinho.fernandes@birdlife.org	Personal
Mrs. Rute da Cruz Interim Director of Forest and Biodiversity	9965008, rutesuana@hotmail.com	Personal
Mrs. Maria T. Mendizabal Manager Portfolio CESA-Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability	WhatsApp: +34 603772918, maria.mendizabal@undp.org	Personal
Mr. Aderito Santana UNDP Programs coordinator	9906323, aderito.santana@undp.org	Personal
Mrs. Zenaide, Mr. Gabriel Paulo, Mr. Laucílio, Mr. Darilson Rocha	Praia das Conchas (land) Community and Charcoal makers	Personal
Mrs. Edineida Medina, Mrs. Lurdes Sanches, Mrs. Melícia, Mr. Cândido Sanches	Plancas I Community and Charcoal makers	Personal
Mr. Jade Quaresma, Mrs. Nelma André, Mrs. Alexandra Vieira, Mr. José Luís Fortes, Mr. Genício Santos, Mrs. Edlísia de Carvalho, Mrs. Ludmila Pires and Mrs. Teresa Tavares	Plancas II Community and Charcoal makers	Personal
Mr. Júlio Mendes Regional Secretary for Biosphere, Environment and Agriculture	9929214, mpmendes120@gmail.com	Personal
Mrs. Maria Alice Príncipe Regional Director for Environment	9965496, nacyprazeres@gmail.com	Personal
Mrs. Estrela Matilde Director of Fundação Príncipe	9869031, WhatsApp: 351 965 601 129 estrela.matilde@fundacaoprincipe.org ;	Personal
Mr. Dean Martin President of the Loggers Association		Personal
Mr. Alcides Owner of a hotel located in the buffer zone		Personal

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Name	Designation/Department	Interview method
Mr. Manuel Leal, Mr. Manuel Morais, Mr. Ronaldo Tavares, Mr. José Tavares, Mr. Isac Martins, Mr. João Leite (John), Mrs. Isabel	Príncipe Forest Rangers	Personal
Mrs. Dalila Vila Nova LTN Gender specialist	997 8383, pereira-04@hotmail.com	Personal
Bruno D. Silva LTN Monitoring & Evaluation + Knowledge Management Officer	9949251, b.silvabio@outlook.com	Personal
Mr. Guillaume Taufflieb Director of Valudo Company	g.taufflieb@valudo.st	Personal
Mr. Darnel Baía Director and GEF Focal Point in STP and member of the GEF Board	992 1463, darnelbaia@sapo.pt	Personal
Mr. Francisco President of the Monte Pico Association	Jardim Botânico de Bom Sucesso, São Tome	Personal
Mr. Argentino Pires dos Santos Assistant to the FAO Representative in STP	9903198, argentino.piresdossantos@fao.org	Personal
Maria dos Prazeres LTN Representative in Príncipe	985 3105, cunyprazer@gmail.com	Personal

Annex 3: List of Documents Reviewed

Document title
Proposta de criação de áreas de AVC/HCV
Relatório de Spot-Check projeto biodiversidade, 4 trimestre
Revisão periódica da Reserva da Biosfera - Ilha do Príncipe
UNESCO renovou o estatuto do Príncipe como RMB
Plano de ação dos meios de subsistência com risco de deslocamento humano
Atlas vendor profile Birdlife STP - STN
BLI - Pedido de avanço de fundo, ofício
Cash advance BirdLife final
Cash advance BLI
Cash advance BLI 15-06-2021
Cash advance BLI, 05-06-2023
Financial statement 2017, BLI
Fund request June - Dec 2022
NEX advances to date
NEX Q1 Q2 2022, Pedido
Reimbursement of expenditures Jan. April, FACE - LTN + BLI
Relatório financeiro Abril 22
Relatório financeiro BLI 07-01-2022
Relatório financeiro, Abril 2022
Report BLI cash advance 1 Dec 2021
Revised budget GEF-UNDP 2023 - 2026
Relatório financeiro, Dez. 2021
Human Rights Risk Assessment, IC
Avaliação de riscos em direitos humanos
Avaliação dos riscos associados aos direitos humanos
Direitos humanos, contrato, adenda 2, IC
Direitos humanos, contrato, adenda, IC
Human Rights Action Plan
Human right risk assessment report
Plano de ação em matéria de direitos humanos
Gender action plan, Table and indicators
Gender action plan, Table and indicators 1
Biodiversity micro-assessment mitigation plan, HACT, 03-06-2021
Comparative advantage analysis, PIMS 5881
Formulário de avaliação para a Millenium Consulting
Micro assessment report DFB, HACT
Micro assessment report DGA, HACT

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Document title
Micro assessment report RAP, HACT
Micro assessment, BI report, Face sheet
Partner capacity assessment tool, BLI, PIMS 5881
Relatório de micro avaliação HACT DFB
Relatório de micro avaliação HACT DGA
Relatório de micro avaliação HACT RAP SECR AMB
Relatório final micro assessment, Birdlife International
Resumo das questões HACT BLI
Summary of issues HACT BLI
Étude de faisabilité de création institution biodiversité AP 2021
Framework evaluation sheet
Guideline on Project implementation LA+MM, Annexe D, 17-04-23
Guideline on Project implementation, Annexe D
Guideline on Project implementation, Annexe D, 01-03-2023
Mapa de locais de localização
Maps of location sites
Monitoring plan
MTR Inception report 2023
PRODOC
PRODOC 1, Gender Analysis and Action Plan
PRODOC, Biodiversidade, 09-04-2020
Project Results Framework
Artigo 8 de Março, Ministra dos Direitos das Mulheres
Gestão das redes sociais da DGAAC, Act 7, 11-04-23
Plano Nacional de Adaptação às mudanças climáticas
Poster sobre finanças sustentáveis
Posters digitais
Sustainable finance plan for biodiversity and protect areas in STP
Acordo de parceria entre DGAAC & DFB
Apresentação do plano de trabalho, Act 4, 15-03-23
Birdlife, Signed Agenda, 06-2022
Pedido de extensão do contrato PNUD - Birdlife International, Signed
Monitoring Plan 8-02-2022
Plano de finanças sustentáveis
Plano de gestão do conhecimento e comunicação
Plano de gestão do conhecimento e comunicação e género
Plano financeiro para a biodiversidade
Stakeholder Engagement Plan
Workplan and budget, Birdlife, Extension request

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Document title
Plano de Manejo PNOST 2021 - 2025
Plano de manejo do PNP 2022 - 2026
PIR, 2022
PIR, 2023
Relatório 3 CNS ECOFAC 6
Relatório celebração do dia da Biodiversidade 2022
Reuniões formais, lista resumida
Biodiversity project RPA UNDP-Birdlife
UNPD -BLI RPA 2021, PIMS 5881
Initial social and environmental screening procedure
SESP
SESP, Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
UNDP CPD São Tome and Príncipe
UNSDCF São Tome and Príncipe 2023 - 2027

Annex 4: Evaluation Matrix

Theme	Indicator	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy			
Project Design:	To what extent is the project suited to local and national development priorities and policies?	National development strategies, sector plans, medium term development plan, project document	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	To what extent is the project in line with GEF operational programs?	GEF focal area strategies, project design, PIR reports	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	To what extent are the objectives and design of the project supporting regional environment and development priorities?	UNDP CPD, regional treaties and agreements, etc.	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	Project design remains relevant in generating global environmental benefits.	GEF strategies, national and subnational development plans, PIF, project document, CEO endorsement request, reviews, PIRs	Desk review, interviews
Results Framework:	Results framework fulfils SMART criteria and sufficiently captures the added value of the project.	Strategic results framework, tracking tools, inception report, PIRs	Desk review, interviews
Results Frameworks:	What changes could be made (if any) to the design of the project to improve the achievement of the project's expected results?	SMART analysis of results framework, current national and local development strategies	Desk review, interviews
Mainstreaming:	Broader development objectives are represented in the project design.	Project document, social and environmental social screening procedure, gender action plan, work plans for community activities, training records, monitoring reports of community activities, project steering committee meeting minutes, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards Results			
Progress towards Outcomes Analysis:	Has the project been effective in achieving the expected outcomes and objective?	PIRs, self-assessment reports by PMU, annual reports, monitoring reports, output level deliverables, midterm tracking tool, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards results:	To what extent has the project increased institutional capacity to sustainably manage the national protected area system?	Progress reports, national and local development strategies, etc.	Desk review, interviews, field visits.
Progress towards results:	How has the project been able to influence monitoring and evaluation associated with protected area management?	Progress reports, national and local development strategies, budget allocations, increased level of awareness	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Risk management:	What were the risks involved and to what extent were they managed?	Project document, risk log, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Theme	Indicator	Sources	Methodology
Lessons learned:	What lessons have been learned from the project regarding achievement of outcomes?	Progress reports, lessons learned reports, back-to-office reports	Desk review, interviews
Remaining Barriers to Achieving the Project Objective:	Delivered outputs address key barriers.	PIRs, annual reports, project steering committee meeting minutes, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management			
Management Arrangements, GEF Partner Agency:	Lessons learned on other projects incorporated into project implementation.	PIRs, project steering committee meeting minutes, audit reports, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Management Arrangements, Executing Agency/Implementing Partner:	Effective management response to recommendations raised by project steering committee.	PIRs, project steering committee meetings, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk reviews, interviews
Work Planning:	Milestones within annual work plans consistent with indicators in strategic results framework.	Project document, multi-year work plan, annual work plans, PIRs, financial expenditure reports, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Finance and Co-finance:	Efficient financial delivery.	Financial expenditure reports, combined delivery reports, audit reports, project steering committee meeting minutes, PIRs, midterm co-financing report, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Cost-effectiveness:	How cost-effective have the project interventions been?	Analysis of progress towards results, financial delivery	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:	Timely implementation of adaptive management measures.	PIRs, midterm tracking tools, monitoring reports, annual progress reports, self-assessment reports by PMU, project steering committee meeting minutes, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Stakeholder Engagement:	Inclusive and proactive stakeholder involvement.	Stakeholder involvement plan in the project document, meeting minutes, records of exchange visits, stakeholder feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Partnership Arrangements:	How effective have partnership arrangements been?	Partnership agreements, contracts, progress reports, co-financing realized	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Local Capacity Utilized:	Has the project efficiently utilized local capacity in implementation?	Contracts, financial expenditure records, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Reporting:	Adaptive management measures implemented in response to recommendations recorded in PIRs.	PIRs, annual progress reports, midterm tracking tools, output level project deliverables, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Communication:	Project information is effectively managed and disseminated.	Internet and social media, press releases, media reports, statistics on awareness campaigns, evidence of changes in behaviour, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Sustainability			

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Theme	Indicator	Sources	Methodology
Risk Management:	Timely delivery of project outputs.	Project document, SESP, risk logs, PIRs, project steering committee meeting minutes, feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Lessons Learned:	What lessons can be drawn regarding sustainability of project results, and what changes could be made (if any) to the design of the project to improve sustainability of project results?	Progress reports, monitoring and evaluation reports, feedback from stakeholders, current national and local development strategies, and sector plans	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Financial Risks to Sustainability:	Verifiable progress towards improving sustainability.	Budget allocations, progress reports, government publications	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Socio-Economic Risks to Sustainability:	Verifiable progress towards improving sustainability	Project outputs realised, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability:	Verifiable progress towards improving sustainability	Tracking tool, training records, evidence of policy reform	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Environmental Risks to Sustainability:	Verifiable progress towards improving sustainability	Tracking tool, budget allocations, training record, statistics on awareness campaigns	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Impact			
Verifiable improvements to biodiversity conservation and natural resource management and forest degradation as well as livelihood outcomes within communities, and institutional and policy improvements.	To what extent has the project contributed to verifiable improvements to the resilience of water resources to the impacts of climate change, and improvement of health, sanitation, and quality of life?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring, and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 5: Appointments of Staff and Technical Assistance Consultants

Information provided by project management team.

Project Management Unit (PMU):

Position	TOR prepared Y/N	Position Procured Y/N	Position Filled Y/N	Contract Date	Contract Duration	Name
PMU						
Project coordinator		Y	Y	18/08/2021	17/08/2022 (renewable)	Sumner Metzger
Monitoring & Evaluation and Knowledge Management Officer		Y	Y	11/04/2022	11/04/2023 (renewable)	Bruno Da Silva
Accountant (Project Finance Control Officer)		Y	Y	01/02/2022	01/02/2023 (renewable)	Claudia Neves
Project Coordinator Principe		Y	Y	18/11/2022	18/11/2023 (renewable)	Maria Prazeres
Gender Expert Sao Tome		N	Y			Maria Imaculada
Gender Expert Principe		Y	Y	01/09/2022	31/08/2023 (renewable)	Dalila das Neves
Chief Technical Advisor		Y	Y	29/09/2021	12/11/2023	Damiano Borgogno

Executing Partners: Based upon my understanding of the staff appointed among the executing partners are listed in the table below. Please fill in the table with the names of the people appointed, the agency/organization they represent, their physical location, and any relevant comments.

Position	Name	Office, Location	Date hired / started	Contract duration (if relevant)
DGA				
Project Director	Lourenço Monteiro de Jesus	DGA		Not specifically hired for this project – He was the Director of DGA at the time the project started
DFB				
Director of the Directorate for Forest and Biodiversity	Adilson da Mata	DFB (Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity)		Not specifically hired for this project - He is the director of the project partner and member of project board, Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity
DFB focal point for the project LTN	Wilder Costa Carvalho	DFB		Not specifically hired for this project – Within the DFP, he is the focal point for the project PIMS 5881
BirdLife Consortium				

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Position	Name	Office, Location	Date hired / started	Contract duration (if relevant)
Focal Point	Barbara Campos	Birdlife International in STP		She wasn't specifically hired for the project – She does coordinate the activities attributed to Birdlife and the consortium under the project PINS 5881
Fundação Príncipe				
Oikos	Rogeiro Rosa	Oikos in Sao Tome and Principe		Not hired for the project – He is the country director for Oikos
Private Sector				
EcoBlasa	Edilasio Nunes	Ecoblasa		Not hired for the project – He is the entrepreneur and founder of Ecoblasa
Valudo	Guillaume Taufflieb	Valudo		Not hired by the project – He is the representative of Valudo in STP

Technical Assistance Consultants: Please indicate if terms of reference documents have been prepared for the envisaged technical consultants, which positions have been procured, and indicate the name of the person hired, the date of the relevant contract, and duration:

Position	TOR prepared Y/N	Position Procured Y/N	Position Filled Y/N	Contract Date	Contract Duration	Name of Consultant
Economic Displacement	Y	Y	Y	29/09/2020 28/01/2021	28/01/2021 28/01/2022	Ana Nuno
Human Rights Impact Assessment	Y	Y	Y	10/08/2020 11/12/2020 30/09/2021	10/12/2020 30/09/2021 30/01/2022	Rachelle Jackson
Environmental Law Consultant	Y	Y	Y			Not hired
PPP Draft Consultant	Y	Y	Y	27/12/2023	29/03/2024	Jaime Oliveira
Conservation Trust Fund Scoping Study	Y	Y	Y			Procurement process with Birdlife International
Mid Term Review Consultants	Y	Y	Y	20/11/2023 01/04/2024	30/03/2024 30/06/2024	Sohinee Mazumdar (international)
	Y	Y	Y	11/12/2023	14/03/2024	Antonio Correia (national)

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Position	TOR prepared Y/N	Position Procured Y/N	Position Filled Y/N	Contract Date	Contract Duration	Name of Consultant
				15/03/2024	30/06/2024	
Charcoal Value Chain Analysis	Y	Y	Y	29/09/2020 28/01/2021	28/01/2021 28/01/2022	Ana Nuno

Annex 6: Progress towards Results

Assessment Key:
Achieved
On target to be achieved
Not on target to be achieved
Unable to assess

Achievement Rating Scale:	Ratings assigned using the following 6-point scale: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Moderately Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory
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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
Objective: Safeguard globally significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement as well as enhancing protected area management and the sustainability of charcoal production					
Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries broken down by gender (individuals)	0	AT LEAST 1,000 (500 men, 500 women) / In the END 2,000 (1,000 men, 1,000 women) Environmental Guard 20; community watch 20; capacity building and direct involvement: 100 government technicians; 40 politicians, 60 technicians, 500 community members + charcoal producers; 17 academics/interns; 30+ eco-guides; 10 employment in Valudo; 20 tree planting; c. 1200 including co-beneficiaries through c. 30	Not reported in the PIR Approximately 86 people (53-H;-32M) (technicians and politicians) participated in the international conference on financing for biodiversity; training; 1 national internship and 2 international internships . 197 people selected to receive micro-grants (102-H;95-M); 10 people benefited from receiving 10 improved traditional ovens (6-H;4-M); 28 government technicians and NGOs received reinforcement of legislation (19-H;9-M). Total direct beneficiaries 1287, 735 men and 552 women . More details attached	Achieved	Reached the intended beneficiary target, disaggregated by gender

¹⁰ Information in this column is obtained from the 2023 project implementation review (PIR) and progress made between the date of the PIR report and the midterm review as reported by the PMU.

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
		household livelihoods and value chain micro-subsidies @ average household size of 4. Total estimate c. 2000.			
<p>Indicator 2: Number of indirect beneficiaries of the project broken down by gender (individuals)</p>	0	<p>IN THE MIDDLE: 11,000 (5,500 men, 5,500 women) [20 per cent of the project's target because the charcoal value chain is only just emerging]</p> <p>/</p> <p>At the END: 55,000 (27,500 men, 27,500 women) [half of the Prince's population of 10,000 + a quarter of ST's population of 200,000, benefiting from more sustainable and healthier coconut-based charcoal].</p>	<p>Not reported in the PIR</p> <p>As the coal value chain with Valudo is lagging, this indicator has not been achieved. However, important steps have been taken towards achieving this indicator. Namely: a public-private partnership agreement is being drawn up between the state and the consortium formed by the companies Valudo and EcoBlasa, the formation of a partnership between EcoBlasa and Valudo, advocacy with the government on the importance of this activity for the country. However, indirectly the project has reached:</p> <p>a) The entire population of approximately 10,000 people in Príncipe with the renewal of the UNESCO Biosphere status;</p> <p>b) Approximately 60 % of the population in the communities covered by the project indirectly through the information boards distributed in the communities; awareness-raising sessions, workshops on the importance of including gender-sensitive agriculture in conservation; workshops on identifying and selecting alternative business initiatives,</p> <p>c) Approximately 30% of the ST population of 210,000 made aware of the production of ecological charcoal and the importance of biodiversity through a television programme (on TVS) for 3 months.</p> <p>d) Number of households buying eco-charcoal - an estimated 30 households per month.</p>	<p>Not on target to be achieved</p>	<p>As the coal value chain with Valudo is lagging, this indicator has not been achieved. However, important steps have been taken towards achieving this indicator. Namely: a public-private partnership agreement is being drawn up between the state and the consortium formed by the companies Valudo and EcoBlasa, the formation of a partnership between EcoBlasa and Valudo, advocacy with the government on the importance of this activity for the country. However, indirectly the project has reached:</p> <p>a) The entire population of approximately 10,000 people in Príncipe with the renewal of the UNESCO Biosphere status;</p> <p>b) Approximately 60 % of the population in the communities covered by the project indirectly through the information boards distributed in the communities; awareness-raising sessions, workshops on the importance of including gender-sensitive agriculture in conservation; workshops on identifying and selecting alternative business initiatives,</p> <p>c) Approximately 30% of the ST population of 210,000 made aware of the production of ecological charcoal and the importance of biodiversity through a television programme (on TVS) for 3 months.</p> <p>d) Number of households buying eco-charcoal - an estimated 30 households per month. Total indirect beneficiaries 18142: 8704 men, 9021 women and 417 children. More details can be found in the indicator annex.</p>

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Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
			Total indirect beneficiaries 18142 : 8704 men, 9021 women and 417 children. More details can be found in the indicator annex.		
Indicator 3: GEF Core Indicator 4.1: Area of landscapes under management improved to benefit biodiversity	In the FIM [estimated at 50% of 10,913 ha of HCV in São Tomé (half not less than the loss avoided below) + 50% of the HCV areas to be identified in Príncipe (1,500 ha estimated before the studies, so 50%=750 ha; half not less than the loss avoided below)	MID: 2,000 há. / END: 6,207 ha	Not reported in the PIR *With Project's support, 21 High Conservation Value (HCV) areas were established by decree-law approved by the Government in May 2023. The National Management Plan for the National Park of Príncipe has also been prepared and validated in April 2023, yet it is still to be formally approved in a legal instrument.	On target to be achieved	With the project's activities on the island of São Tomé, the decree law approving the creation of 21 HCVs was approved and promulgated, officially defining these areas as "Special Reserves". The names of these 21 areas are: 1- Praia de Planças, 2-Ribeira Funda, 3-Costa Norte,4- Ponta Furada, 5- Caludina, 6- Morros de Bindá, 7- Contador, 8-Chamiço, 9-Zampalma, 10-Vila António, 11- Praia Grade, 12- Cão Pequeno, 13-Sarcinda, 14- Praia do Sul, 15- Jalé, 16 Cantagalo-17 Xixi, 18- Mussacavu-Willy, 19- Costa Sudoeste do Ilhéu das Rolas, 20-Pico Macuru, 21- Maria Fernandes, these areas total 12. 369 ha.
Indicator 4: GEF Core Indicator 4.4: - Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided	In the FIM [50% estimate of 10,913 ha of HCV in São Tomé (half not under better management above) + 50% of the HCV areas to be identified in Príncipe (1,500 ha estimated before the studies, so 50%=750 ha - half not under better management above). The aim is not to avoid total conversion, but to avoid the loss of HCV trigger status due to forest degradation through unsustainable selective logging and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources].	MID: 2,000 há. / END: 6,207 ha	Not reported in the PIR *With Project's support, 21 High Conservation Value (HCV) areas were established by decree-law approved by the Government in May 2023. The National Management Plan for the National Park of Príncipe has also been prepared and validated in April 2023, yet it is still to be formally approved in a legal instrument.	Achieved	With the project's activities on the island of São Tomé, the decree law approving the creation of 21 HCVs was approved and promulgated, officially defining these areas as "Special Reserves". The names of these 21 areas are: 1- Praia de Planças, 2-Ribeira Funda, 3-Costa Norte,4- Ponta Furada, 5- Caludina, 6- Morros de Bindá, 7- Contador, 8-Chamiço, 9-Zampalma, 10-Vila António, 11- Praia Grade, 12- Cão Pequeno, 13-Sarcinda, 14- Praia do Sul, 15- Jalé, 16 Cantagalo-17 Xixi, 18- Mussacavu-Willy, 19- Costa Sudoeste do Ilhéu das Rolas, 20-Pico Macuru, 21- Maria Fernandes, these areas total 12. 369 ha.
Indicator 5: Red List Index of endangered species of terrestrial birds, mammals, and amphibians (Official STP ODS Indicator)	Total species: 150, Critically Endangered Species (CR): 4 / 2.7%,	IN THE MIDDLE: Index maintained or improved.	Not being monitored and not reported in the PIR.	Not on target to being Achieved	This is not adequately monitored to report against the target. Accordingly, the target may or may not be on target to be achieved.

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
	Endangered Species (EN): 9 / 6%, Vulnerable Endemic Species (VU): 5 / 3.3%, Near Threatened Species (NT): 12 / 8%, Least Concern Species (LC): 117 / 78%, Species with Insufficient Data (DA): 3 / 2%.	/	Total species: 1351, Critically Endangered Species (CR): 17 / 1.3%, Endangered Species (EN): 63 / 4.7%, Vulnerable Endemic Species (VU): 73 / 5.4%, Near Threatened Species (NT): 41 / 3%, Least Concern Species (LC): 1054 / 78%, Species with Insufficient Data (DA): 101 / 7.5%.		
Achievement rating, project objective:					Moderately satisfactory
Outcome 1.1: Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management					
Indicator 6: Scores obtained from the UNDP Capacity Developing Scorecard	CR1 – SCORE 0.42 CR2 – SCORE 0.48 CR3 – SCORE 0.31 CR4 – SCORE 0.45 CR5 – SCORE 0.12	+10% each / +10% each	The targets for each capacity (CR) were achieved and some even exceeded expectations. The next assessment is scheduled for June 2024. Significant improvements are expected in CR1 (Involvement capacities), especially with the updating of the basic environmental law, which will clarify the differentiated roles of each state body in terms of conservation.	Achieved	The target was met/ exceeded
Indicator 7: Emplacement of new streamlined and effective institutes for i) nature conservation and protected area management, and ii) environment and integrated land use planning and management	i) There are structures/teams for biodiversity management at DFB and for environment under DGA, yet there are problems with the legal frameworks and mandates and effectiveness; ii) there is no permanent dedicated structure or team for land use planning and management	Existing structures/teams under review with alternatives for strengthening under discussion, for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii) environment and land use planning and management. / New streamlined and effective institutes agreed and legally created for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii)	The institutional and legal framework for conservation is being reviewed with the revision and updating -sponsored by the project- of the Basic Environmental Law in force since 1999, which will update inter alia the responsibilities of national institutions on environmental conservation and will also allow for the creation of new institutes/agencies aimed at strengthening biodiversity conservation. It is expected that the updated legal text will be finalised by February 2024 and then sent to Congress for approval. Concurrently, the project - in close collaboration with civil society- continues to carry out advocacy with national authorities on the importance of the establishment of	Not on target to being achieved	The institutional and legal framework for conservation is being reviewed with the revision and updating - sponsored by the project - of the Basic Environmental Law in force since 1999, which will update, among other things, the responsibilities of national institutions in terms of environmental conservation and will also allow for the creation of new institutes/agencies aimed at strengthening biodiversity conservation. Due to changes in the organisation of the government structure, with the creation in January 2024 of a government ministry solely for the environment (Ministry of the Environment). The activity, which was expected to be finalised by February 2024 and then sent to Congress for approval, is currently facing some delays. However, a first workshop provided by the international law firm took place in São Tomé

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
		environment and land use planning and management.	a functional structure (either agency or institute) to take charge of biodiversity conservation and the effective management of protected areas, replacing existing weaknesses in the current institutional and legal framework.		on 1 March. At the same time, the project - in close collaboration with civil society - continues to advocate with national authorities on the importance of creating a functional structure (agency or institute) to take charge of biodiversity conservation and the effective management of protected areas, replacing the existing weaknesses in the current institutional and legal framework.
Outcome 1.2 Nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system agreed and emplaced					
Indicator 8: Environmental patrolling effort: # patrol days/yr & total patrol km/yr	Environmental Guard 20; mobilised on the ground in teams of 3; patrolling 3X/week in key areas of the PAs	400 patrol /yr. avg. (3 teams*3x/wk.) / 400 patrol /yr. avg. (3 teams*3x/wk.)	The acquisition of monitoring and surveillance equipment has been completed in early 2023 and it has been delivered to beneficiaries (Directorate of Forest and Biodiversity - DFB, Regional Secretary of Environment in Príncipe, General Directorate of Environment and Climate Action - DGAAC), with the goal of enhancing technical capacity to implement better and more frequent surveillance and monitoring of Protected Areas and of other significant areas for conservation. However, regarding the process of recruiting environmental/forest rangers, the project has been facing challenges with national stakeholders as there is a lack of consensus in the definition of institutional competences and where the new environmental/forest rangers would be based. In order to overcome these challenges, the project promoted a series of meetings between the institutions (DFB, Secretary of Environment of Príncipe, DGAAC and the environmental police- UPBA to establish a joint way forward. Upon the project's intervention, both DFB and UPAB are anticipated to submit their formal requests in August 2023 to the	On target to be achieved	Regarding the process of recruiting environmental/forest rangers, the project has faced challenges with the national stakeholders, since there is a lack of consensus on defining institutional competences and the location of the new environmental/forest rangers. To overcome these challenges, the project promoted a series of meetings between the institutions (DFB, the Prince's Department of the Environment, DGAAC and the environmental police - UPBA) to establish a joint path. In December 2023, with the intervention of the project, the institutions involved reached a consensus on the number of staff that would be part of each institution, which led to an increase in the number of guards to be hired, in this case 25 (and not 20 as established in the project plan). The ToR for hiring these same guards is currently being drawn up, and at the same time the payment methods and sustainability of the project are being discussed.

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
<p>Indicator 9: % of reported cases of environmental infractions leading to due legal prosecutions</p>	<p>0</p> <p>Until now, no legal charges have been brought against offences; increase this for at least the biggest offences; facilitate the follow-up between the observation of the offence and legal intervention</p>	<p>20%</p> <p>/</p> <p>40%</p>	<p>IP -and to the project- to receive support for technical and human resources. This support aims to augment their patrolling capacities, which are currently very limited. By doing so, the project will be able to provide its assistance, contributing significantly to the enhancement of law enforcement within the Protected Areas. The implementation of these plans will start in Q4 2023.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning that the 10 motorbikes delivered by the Project in 2022 have already strengthened the capacity of the patrols. The experience with the Guardians of Obô (a voluntary group trained by Birdlife, which is part of the co-financing of the project) has been received with some resistance by national authorities, whom consider this a partial threat to their institutional competencies.</p>		
			<p>There is no established nor clear modus operandi on what to do when environmental infractions are registered, either by DFB and/or by UPAB. As reported by UPAB in March 2023, none of the cases brought up by them has advanced to legal prosecutions. Awareness on environmental law is also extremely limited among institutions and population in general. DFB reported to the project that during the current PIR timeframe, 79 illegal logging materials and 3 chainsaws were seized on the field. Yet, also according to DFB, the seized goods were returned after payment of a fine set by the DFB, according to the seriousness of the offence.</p> <p>The project, through the revision and updating of the Basic environment Law, aims to strengthen the legal</p>	<p>Not on target to be achieved</p>	<p>There is no established or clear modus operandi on what to do when environmental offences are recorded, either by the DFB or the UPAB. As reported by the UPAB in March 2023, none of the cases it has raised have progressed to legal proceedings. Awareness of environmental legislation is also extremely limited among institutions and the general population. The DFB informed the project that during the current PIR period, 79 illegal logging materials and 3 chainsaws were seized on the land. However, according to the DFB, the seized goods were returned after payment of a fine set by the DFB according to the seriousness of the offence.</p> <p>The project, by revising and updating the Basic Environmental Law, aims to strengthen the legal framework to overcome these constraints. In addition, the project has also prioritized capacity building for judges in environmental law for the second and third quarters of 2024</p>

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
			framework to overcome these constraints. In addition, the project has also prioritized capacity building for judges on environmental law for Q3 and Q4 2023.		after the basic environmental law has been updated.
Achievement rating, Outcome 1:					Satisfactory
Outcome 2.1: Protection of the two existing PAs and adjacent HCV forest areas enhanced					
Indicator 10: GEF Core Indicator 2: METT Scores for Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé and Parque Natural do Príncipe	PNOST Score 35 PNP Score 46	PNOST Score 42 PNP Score 53 Based on a full detailed analysis of the anticipated end state for each METT criterion, including after considering other parallel interventions / PNOST Score 57 (range 57-72) PNP Score 68 (68-72) Based on a full detailed analysis of the anticipated end state for each METT criterion, including after considering other parallel interventions	The mid-term targets were met for both the PNOST and the PNP. These evaluations were carried out by a multidisciplinary and organisational team, which will be called upon again to carry out the same evaluation before the next PIR. It is worth mentioning that with Project's support, 21 High Conservation Value (HCV) areas were established by decree-law approved by the Government in May 2023. The National Management Plan for the National Park of Principe has also been prepared and validated in April 2023, yet it is still to be formally approved in a legal instrument.	Achieved	The score is justified by the fact that the targets set were exceeded
Achievement rating, Outcome 2.1:					Moderately Satisfactory
Outcome 2.2: Finance for biodiversity conservation and PA management increased					
Indicator 11: Status of Conservation Trust Fund for STP	CTF does not exist. (A CTF does not currently exist but would bring an	CTF legally established in a European Country following CFA best practices	The project, under the direct supervision of Birdlife (leading NGO acting as RPA), has signed and started implementation, on May 23, of a	Achieved	The project, under the direct supervision of Birdlife (leading NGO acting as RPA), has signed and started implementation, on May 23, of a contract with an international consultancy

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
	additional source of funding from international donors to STP; potential to attract sponsors, benefactors and larger donations)		contract with an international consultancy company, Rio Impact, for the period 2023-25 with the goal of the establishment and operationalization of a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) in São Tomé and Príncipe, the first of its kind. The project also is actively building awareness on the CTF having presented its concept to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Planning, Finance and Blue Economy, the Minister of Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment, the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Rural Development, and the Prime Minister. An induction workshop on the CTF was held on 21 June 2023, with the attendance of 45 entities representing 22 institutions; the action plan for the creation and operationalization of the fund was also presented and validated. The Sustainable Finance Plan has also been presented to high level authorities and policy makers and its main results discussed. In parallel, the project is working closely with the Minister of Finance to set up an inter-ministerial committee to oversee the creation and implementation of the sustainable financing mechanisms proposed in the Sustainable Finance Plan for Protected Areas and Biodiversity in São Tomé and Príncipe. This will ensure individual, institutional, and political engagement at national scale with the integration of all actors involved in the conservation and management of PAs and biodiversity in our country.		company, Rio Impact, for the period 2023-25 with the goal of the establishment and operationalization of a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) in São Tomé and Príncipe, the first of its kind. The project also is actively building awareness on the CTF having presented its concept to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Planning, Finance and Blue Economy, the Minister of Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment, the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Rural Development, and the Prime Minister. An induction workshop on the CTF was held on 21 June 2023, with the attendance of 45 entities representing 22 institutions; the action plan for the creation and operationalization of the fund was also presented and validated. The Sustainable Finance Plan has also been presented to high level authorities and policy makers and its main results discussed. In parallel, the project closely with the Minister of Finance set up an inter-ministerial committee to oversee the creation and implementation of the sustainable financing mechanisms proposed in the Sustainable Finance Plan for Protected Areas and Biodiversity in São Tomé and Príncipe. This will ensure individual, institutional, and political engagement at national scale with the integration of all actors involved in the conservation and management of PAs and biodiversity in our country. This committee has already been set up and will hold its first meeting at the end of March. In addition, an analysis of the national legal system for establishing this fund has been carried out, as well as drafting the statute of the institution that will manage the fund. In line with this, the fund's operational scenario has been devised and will be proposed for validation by the inter-ministerial committee in April.
Indicator 12: Financing made available for biodiversity and protected areas from sources	USD 5000/yr. non-grant income from tourism, 0	USD 10,000/yr. non-grant income from tourism, 0	A study carried out by the Directorate of Tourism and Hospitality states that in the year 2022, despite being a year	On target to be achieved	Although the CTF is not legally established, significant steps have been taken. It is

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beyond traditional external grants to governments or NGOs, and capitalisation of STP CTF endowment fund	other sources, 0 CTF endowment capital (Currently there is around 500 US dollars/year of non-tourism income, 0 from other sources and 0 capital from the CTF endowment; the aim is therefore to increase non-tourism income through better communication, better access to the parks; launching a CTF (indicator 11) to attract international benefactors and increase the funding available to the PAs.)	other sources, 0 CTF endowment capital / USD 50,000/yr non-grant income from tourism and related concessions, and USD 2 million launch capital attracted into the CTF endowment capital or sinking fund with resulting income distributed to biodiversity conservation interventions in STP	with a significant growth compared to 2021 (+73%, equivalent to 26,257 tourists) tourist entries fell short of the pre-pandemic results (34,918 tourists). Yet, there is still limited enforcement of entry fees at the National Park in Sao Tome. Most tourists do not pay any fee, and when they do, the funds do not necessarily enter the state coffers. In Principe, entry fees are indeed paid yet total amount collected during the PIR timeframe is limited. Anecdotal evidence estimates this amount to less than \$5000 per year in Principe. Currently, the CTF and the capitalisation of its endowment fund seems the most promising way forward.		therefore estimated that this indicator will be achieved by the end of the project.
Achievement rating, Outcome 2.2:					Satisfactory
Outcome 3.1 Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated					
Indicator 13: Native fast-growing charcoal-making trees planted and surviving across the forest landscape.	Approx. 25 ha restored so far by DFB under different pilot actions = between 2,500-25,000 trees for low (100/ha) and high (1000/ha) planting density estimates; Príncipe plans to reforest 5,000 trees/year but is far from achieving this goal	10 per day/pax * 8 pax * 2 teams * 100 days/yr. =16,000/yr. in the mid-term year, with at least 60% surviving / 10 per day/pax * 8 pax * 2 teams * 100 days/yr. =16,000/yr. in the mid-term year, with at least 60% surviving	Target communities involved in planting activities; 100 young plants brought in by the project for planting; tree nursery in place in target communities to facilitate planting;	Not on target to be achieved	In 2023 following the onset of the rainy season, 9,019 fast-growing tree seedlings were planted on the two islands in co-operation with the DFB/Regional Secretariat. This year, based on the reforestation plan presented by the Forestry and Biodiversity Directorate and the Regional Forestry Department, it is estimated that X number of seedlings will be planted, 4,000 of which in the RAP and

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
<p>Indicator 14: Number of improved charcoal kilns effectively in use</p>	<p>0 improved charcoal kilns (Project proposes to bring 2 improved kilns and 50 improved traditional kilns to target communities; community reception of kiln and training for use; PPP Valudo)</p>	<p>1 semi-industrial improved kiln (ST) producing coconut-based charcoal and 10 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation. / 2 semi-industrial kilns (1 ST, 1 Príncipe) producing coconut-based charcoal and 40 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation</p>	<p>Due to the change of authorities, following general elections in September 2022, the process of purchasing improved charcoal kilns had to be restarted from zero. Yet important progress has been achieved in Q2 2023: -By developing the coconut-based charcoal value chain, the project intends to significantly reduce the production of charcoal, while also improving the charcoal producers' overall health, as smoke inhaling is severely damaging. Upon encouragement by UNDP and the project, an MOU was signed between the only coconut based charcoal producer in the Country, EcoBlasa (small scale company), and Valudo -the country's biggest coconut-product manufacturing and trading company to strengthen collaboration in the setup of green, coconut-based charcoal value chain, hence answering initial concerns by authorities on Valudo's potential monopoly. The project's goal to support an enhanced offer of green charcoal was presented by UNDP's RR to the Minister of Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment in April 2023 and several conversations were held with the new Director General of Environment and Climate Action. The Minister informed the project that Government will provide a final response on the way forward for the purchase of the kiln by August 2023. Regarding the production of improved traditional wood-based charcoal kilns, the project hired a consultant in June 2023 to develop prototypes and, once approved, support their construction in traditional charcoal communities. The</p>	<p>Not on target to be achieved</p>	<p>Currently, a national consultant hired through the project is structuring a public-private partnership, which will include the obligations and rights of all the parties involved, as well as the business plan surrounding this kiln, the social responsibilities. This document is expected to be completed and approved by the end of April 2024 at the latest. Regarding the production of the improved traditional wood-based charcoal kilns, the project hired a consultant in June 2023 to develop prototypes. They have already been produced and the prototypes approved by the authorities, tested together with charcoal burners in a pilot community. The tests were a success, and 10 improved traditional drum-based kilns were produced and delivered to the charcoal burners (6 men and 4 women). This score is because the 10 traditional kilns expected have been produced, and significant steps have been taken towards acquiring the semi-industrial kiln. It is therefore estimated that the targets will be achieved by the end of the project.</p>

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			work was carried out by the consultant in the community of Praia das Conchas Roça, where 10 residents (6 men and 4 women) were trained in how to use the improved kiln. We are currently awaiting approval from the DGAAC for the delivery of the first 10 kilns, after which we will move on to the construction of the other 40.		
Achievement rating, Outcome 3.1:					Unsatisfactory
Outcome 3.2: Prevalence of traditional high-impact charcoal-making livelihoods reduced in favour of more sustainable options					
<p>Indicator 15: Number of fully dedicated professional traditional charcoal-makers harvesting unsustainably</p>	Currently 500 in ST, 50 in Príncipe	MID: 400 ST, 40 Prince / END: 300 ST, 30 Príncipe	<p>In relation to traditional charcoal producers, the project -under the leadership of the two gender and community facilitators (one per island) -has been actively engaging charcoal communities through various capacity building and sensitisation sessions on gender, sustainable charcoal production, health care in traditional charcoal production, having already reached a total of 826 participants, 353 women (42.7% of participants) and 473 men (57.3% of participants). In addition, through the sustainable charcoal platform, two meetings were held, one in São Tomé on 29 July 2022 and the other on the island of Príncipe on 30 August 2022, as tools for mobilising partners and community leaders.</p> <p>Awareness-raising activities continue in the charcoal communities to sensitise producers to other alternative activities. However, the work carried out in the communities has shown that there are many more producers on both the island of ST and Príncipe. Another relevant aspect is that the reduction in the number of charcoal</p>	Not on target to be achieved	This score is since this activity is very late, and the targets have not been met. Nevertheless, with the efforts made, it is estimated that the targets will be reached by the end of the project.

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			<p>burners is dependent on at least two other activities, namely the installation of the semi-industrial furnace and the creation of new jobs for these charcoal burners and the financing of alternative economic initiatives in the communities. Because these two activities have been delayed, the targets for this indicator have not been met.</p>	<p>Not target to be achieved</p>	
<p>Indicator 16: Percentage of family income based on newly adopted sustainable livelihood activities in priority target communities</p>	<p>Currently 0%; charcoal producers and users adopt improved charcoal production techniques; alternative charcoal production increases; charcoal market prices are favourable to local trade</p>	<p>A MID: At least 30 per cent in directly targeted households; at least 10 per cent overall in targeted communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/</p> <p>In the END: At least 60 per cent in directly targeted households; at least 20 per</p>	<p>Validation of the information obtained for each of the beneficiary families was carried out in the field in targeted charcoal producing communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific definition of support for each family was defined according to the type of investment identified by beneficiaries. <p>Once the selection of alternative sustainable livelihoods was completed, the budgeting of 119 mostly small support interventions to foster alternative livelihoods was carried out.</p>		<p>Although the selected businesses have not received the funds, significant steps have been taken. It is therefore estimated that this indicator will be achieved by the end of the project.</p>

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
		cent overall in targeted communities	The purchase of materials and equipment, referred to as the micro-grants, was delayed due to a holdup in extending the Responsible Party Agreement between UNDP and the NGO Consortium. The purchase of this equipment is currently awaiting the transfer of funds to the NGOs. However, a new partnership has been formed between the consortium and REINA (Business Incubator), which will carry out the preparation and operationalisation of the selected business plans.		
Achievement rating, Outcome 3.2:					Moderately Satisfactory
Outcome 4.1 M&E, knowledge management and gender work fully and successfully implemented					
Indicator 17: % of female members i) in platforms and decision-making forums emplaced by the project, and ii) amongst staff recruited by and for the project	Platforms and forums will be specifically created in a way that favours the participation of women; the employment of women in the implementation programme will be favoured;	AT MID: i) At least 30 per cent; ii) At least 50 per cent (especially in community work, but also beyond) / In the END: i) At least 30 per cent; ii) At least 50 per cent (especially in community work, but also beyond)	After the recruitment of the gender experts in São Tomé and in Príncipe, under their leadership, an activity plan was developed according to the gender action plan and the gender strategy. In this activity plan, 14 community awareness-raising sessions were held on the following topics: gender-based violence and women's empowerment, mediation and peaceful conflict resolution, community life and the importance of others, the impact of charcoal production on women's and children's health, and biodiversity conservation as everyone's responsibility. In these sessions, a total of 826 participants were reached, 353 women equivalent to 42.7%, and 473 men equivalent to 57.3% of the participants. In addition, internal training sessions were also held with the team, on the theme of gender and the importance of taking into account the principles of equity and equality. A gender expert	Achieved	Approximately 43 per cent of female members participated in decision-making platforms and forums set up by the project (in particular, in community work). 50 per cent of the staff recruited for the project are women. This indicator is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
			<p>was also hired as part of the project team to energise the activities in Príncipe.</p> <p>A workshop was held on 16/11/2022, with the partners of the project institutions, NGOs, members of the communities, in which the different perceptions of the participants on the subject could be discussed.</p> <p>Last but not least, with the support of the project, the Ministry of Women's Rights (ministry created after the last elections) was able to produce and disseminate an article on the importance of women in biodiversity conservation.</p>		
<p>Indicator 18: % of 52 sub-indicator targets in the Gender Action Plan achieved</p>	<p>Gender becomes transversal to most of the project's activities</p>	<p>IN THE MIDDLE: 40%</p> <p>/</p> <p>At the END: 80%</p>	<p>Project has so far achieved 16 (30.77%) of the 52 indicators.</p>	<p>Not on target to be achieved</p>	<p>Project has so far achieved 16 (30.77%) of the 52 indicators.</p>
<p>Indicator 19: Quality of the PIR completed annually by national project staff</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>AT MIDDLE: PIRs are completed reliably but with great support from international project staff and UNDP CO</p> <p>/</p> <p>AT END: RIRs are completed reliably by national project staff</p>	<p>The project team received training by the CTA on the PIR. The current PIR has indeed been prepared by the national team, with the CTA only acting on quality control and assurance.</p>	<p>Not on target to be achieved</p>	<p>With the departure of the CTA, as well as the M&E specialist at the time of writing, there is some doubt that the PIRs will be completed in a satisfactory manner unless an M&E specialist with appropriate experience is hired</p>

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Indicator	Baseline	Midterm/ End of Project target	2024 Level (self-reported) ¹⁰	Midterm Assessment	MTR Assessment Justification
Achievement rating, Outcome 4.1:					Moderately Satisfactory

Annex 7: Suggested Modifications to Project Results Framework

	Objective and Outcome Indicators	Baseline	End of Project Target	Comments
<p>Objective: Safeguard globally significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement as well as enhancing protected area management and the sustainability of charcoal production</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1:</u> # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)</p>	0	<p>2,000 (1,000 men, 1,000 women)</p> <p>[Guarda Ambiental 20; Community surveillance 20; capacity-building and direct engagement: 100 govt technicians; 40 politicians, 60 technicians, 500 community members + charcoal makers; 17 academics/interns; 30+ eco-guides; 10 Valudo employment; 20 tree planting; c. 1200 incl. co-beneficiaries through c. 30 household livelihood and value chain micro-grants @ avg. household size of 4. Total estimate c. 2000.]</p>	
	<p><u>Indicator 2:</u> # indirect project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)</p>	0	<p>55,000 (27,500 men, 27,500 women)</p> <p>[half of population of Príncipe of 10,000 + quarter of population on ST of 200,000 benefitting from more sustainable and healthier coconut-based charcoal]</p>	Consider reformulating the criteria for indirect project beneficiaries with another metric that does not depend on the success of Component 3
	<p><u>Indicator 3 - GEF Core Indicator 4.1:</u> Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity</p>	0 ha	<p>6,207 ha</p> <p>[estimated to 50% of 10,913 ha of HCV in São Tomé (the half not under avoided loss below) + 50% of the HCV areas to be identified on Príncipe (1,500 ha estimated before studies, so 50%=750 ha; the half not under avoided loss below)]</p>	Reclassification of High Conservation Value Forest
	<p><u>Indicator 4 - GEF Core Indicator 4.4:</u> – Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided</p>	0 ha	<p>6,207</p> <p>[estimated to 50% of 10,913 ha of HCV in São Tomé (the half not under better management above) + 50% of the HCV areas to be identified on Príncipe (1,500 ha estimated before studies, so 50%=750 ha; the half not under better management above; the objective is not</p>	Reclassification of High Conservation Value Forest

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			to avoid wholesale conversion but to avoid HCV trigger status loss from forest degradation by unsustainable selective logging and natural resource exploitation].	
	<u>Indicator 5:</u> Red List Index of endangered species of birds, mammals and terrestrial amphibians (STP Official SDG Indicator)	Total species: 150, Critically endangered species (CR): 4 / 2.7%, Endangered species (EN): 9 / 6%, Vulnerable endemic species (VU): 5 / 3.3%, Near threatened species (NT): 12 / 8%, Species of little concern (LC): 117 / 78%, Species with insufficient data (DA): 3 / 2%.	Index maintained or improved	Have to start monitoring this indicator or change it
Component 1	Enhancing capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land management and environmental law enforcement			
Outcome 1.1 Individual capacities and systemic frameworks enhanced for biodiversity and integrated land management	<u>Indicator 6:</u> Scores obtained from the UNDP Capacity Developing Scorecard	CR1 – SCORE 0.42 CR2 – SCORE 0.48 CR3 – SCORE 0.31 CR4 – SCORE 0.45 CR5 – SCORE 0.12	+30% each	Remains as is
	<u>Indicator 7:</u> Emplacement of new streamlined and effective institutes for i) nature conservation and protected area management, and ii) environment and integrated land use planning and management	i) There are structures/teams for biodiversity management at DFB and for environment under DGA, yet there are problems with the legal frameworks and mandates and effectiveness; ii) there is no permanent dedicated structure or team for land use	New streamlined and effective institutes agreed and legally created for i) nature conservation and protected areas; ii) environment and land use planning and management	Remove indicator and disaggregate outputs

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		planning and management		
Outputs to achieve Outcome 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Output 1.1 Frameworks on biodiversity conservation, land-use planning and charcoal strengthened and streamlined. – Output 1.2.1.2 Environmental sustainability and biodiversity considerations mainstreamed in land-use planning and investments. – Output 1.5 Key environmental CSOs and CBOs strengthened 			
Outcome 1.2 Nationally adapted environmental law enforcement system agreed and emplaced	Indicator 8: Environmental patrolling effort: # patrol days/yr. & total patrol km/yr.	0 in 2019	400 patrol /yr. avg. (3 teams*3x/wk.)	Revise to more modest goal and remove reference to distance covered
	Indicator 9: % of reported cases of environmental infractions leading to due legal prosecutions	0	40%	There is no way to enforce the legal prosecutions. Consider revising
Outputs to achieve Outcome 1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Output 1.3 Framework and delivery system for integrated environmental surveillance and enforcement emplaced. – Output 1.4 Capacity developed on environmental law surveillance and enforcement 			
Component 2	Management, monitoring and financing of PAs and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas			
Outcome 2.1 Protection of the two existing PAs and adjacent HCV forest areas enhanced	Indicator 10: GEF Core Indicators 2: METT Scores for Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé and Parque Natural do Príncipe	PPOST Score 35 PNP Score 46	PPOST Score 57 (range 57-72) PNP Score 68 (68-72) Based on a full detailed analysis of the anticipated end state for each METT criterion, including after considering other parallel interventions	Remains as is
Outputs to achieve Outcome 2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Output 2.1 Management effectiveness of protected areas and adjacent High Conservation Value areas enhanced. – Output 2.2 Capacity developed on biodiversity, zoology/botany, ecosystem services, conservation and PA management. – Output 2.3 New technologies, systems and tools for information-based biodiversity and PA management emplaced 			
Outcome 2.2 Finance for biodiversity conservation and PA management increased	Indicator 11: Status of Conservation Trust Fund for STP	CTF does not exist	CTF legally established in a European Country following CFA best practices	Remains as is
	Indicator 12: Financing made available for biodiversity and protected areas from sources beyond traditional external grants to governments or NGOs, and capitalisation of STP CTF endowment fund	USD 5000/yr non-grant income from tourism, 0 other sources, 0 CTF endowment capital	USD 50,000/yr non-grant income from tourism and related concessions, and USD 2 million launch capital attracted into the CTF endowment capital or sinking fund with resulting income distributed to biodiversity conservation interventions in STP	Remains as is but prioritize analysing and operationalizing potential of eco-tourism related income

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Outputs to achieve Outcome 2.2	– Output 2.4 Proven structures and tools to capture and distribute new finance for the national system of protected areas and biodiversity created			
Component 3	Reducing forest degradation and ecosystem services loss from unsustainable charcoal-making			
Outcome 3.1 Forest degradation from charcoal making reduced and compensated	Indicator 13: Native fast-growing charcoal-making trees planted and surviving across the forest landscape.	Approx. 25 ha. restored so far by DFB under different pilot actions = between 2,500-25,000 trees for low (100/ha) and high (1000/ha) planting density estimates; Príncipe plans to reforest 5,000 trees/year but is far from achieving this goal	Effort maintained throughout final years for a total of 4*16,000/yr. = 64,000 planted by project end, with at least 60% surviving	Remains as is
	Indicator 14: Number of improved charcoal kilns effectively in use	0 improved charcoal kilns	2 semi-industrial kilns (1 ST, 1 Príncipe) producing coconut-based charcoal and 40 improved traditional wood-based kilns in operation	Change to 1 semi-industrial kiln. Make a decision regarding its purchase collectively at the next PSC.
Outputs to achieve Outcome 3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Output 3.1 Charcoal supply and value chain analysis prepared to identify further options for reducing wood-based charcoal extraction drivers. – Output 3.2 More sustainable charcoal kilns and charcoal sources mobilised. – Output 3.3 Awareness raised, and capacity developed on more sustainable charcoal production and alternatives. – Output 3.4 Fast-growing native charcoal tree species planted in degraded forests and shade plantations 			
Outcome 3.2 Prevalence of traditional high-impact charcoal-making livelihoods reduced in favour of more sustainable options	Indicator 15: Number of fully dedicated professional traditional charcoal-makers harvesting unsustainably	500 ST, 50 Príncipe	300 ST, 30 Príncipe	Revise the baseline. Change the target to reflect new livelihoods and to gather long-term data on charcoal making livelihoods
	Indicator 16: Share of household incomes based on newly adopted sustainable livelihood activities in targeted priority communities	0%	At least 60% in directly targeted households; at least 20% overall in targeted communities	Remains as is
Outputs to achieve Outcome 3.2	– Output 3.5 Community stakeholders consulted, and sustainable livelihoods introduced and adopted			

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Component 4	M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender			
Outcome 4.1 M&E, knowledge management and gender work fully and successfully implemented	<u>Indicator 17</u> : % of female members i) in platforms and decision-making forums emplaced by the project, and ii) amongst staff recruited by and for the project	0	i) At least 30%; ii) At least 50% (esp. in enforcement, community work but also beyond)	Revise the first target.
	<u>Indicator 18</u> : % of 52 sub-indicator targets in Gender Action Plan met	0	80%	Revise to 50%
	<u>Indicator 19</u> : Quality of PIR completed annually by national project staff	N/A	PIRs are completed reliably by national project staff	Remains as is
Outputs to achieve Outcome 4.1	– Output 4.2 Gender strategy and action plan operationalised to guide project implementation, monitoring, and reporting. – Output 4.1: M&E and knowledge management plans implemented			

Annex 8: GEF Core Indicators at Baseline with GEF PA Management Effectiveness Tacking Tool (METT Scorecard)

Annex 9: Co-financing Table

Annexed in a separate file

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Annex 10: Rating Scales

Ratings for progress towards results:

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (U)	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

Ratings for project implementation and adaptive management:

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for sustainability (one overall rating):

Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key Outcomes on track to be achieved by the project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some Outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on Outcomes at the Midterm Review
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key Outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project Outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 11: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Agreement Form

Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people’s right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people’s right to provide information in confidence and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact during the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders’ dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/ or oral presentation of study limitations, findings, and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.
8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.
9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated

MTR Consultant Agreement Form
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System
Name of Consultant: Sohinee Mazumdar
I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.
Signed in Calgary, AB, Canada on April 24 th , 2024,
Sohinee Mazumdar
MTR Consultant

Annex 12: MTR Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the *full-sized* UNDP-supported GEF-financed project titled **Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management** (PIMS#5881) implemented through the Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works, Natural Resources and Environment / General Directorate for Environment and Climate Action, which is to be undertaken in 2023. The project started on the *16th of February 2021* and is in its *third* year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* (https://erc.undp.org/pdf/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20EN_2014.pdf).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The terrestrial biodiversity and forest ecosystems of São Tomé and Príncipe are under pressure from various threats, especially conversion for infrastructure and agricultural developments and forest degradation from unsustainable exploitation. There is one protected area on each island, however, management is weak due to limited staffing, capacity and financing. The buffer zones are poorly defined, and land and resource use unsustainable. This is compounded by weak legal and institutional frameworks and the absence of land-use planning and environmental law enforcement. There are no attempts to reduce the impacts from charcoal-making, and there are few livelihood options for communities to reduce unsustainable activities. The project aims to “Safeguard globally significant terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystems services by strengthening national capacities and frameworks for biodiversity and natural resource management, integrated land use planning and environmental law enforcement as well as enhancing protected area management and the sustainability of charcoal production” through the implementation of four project components: 1) Enhancing systems and enforcement for biodiversity conservation and integrated landscape and natural resource management; 2) Management, monitoring and financing of PAs and adjacent key biodiversity and forest areas; 3) Reducing forest degradation and ecosystem loss from unsustainable charcoal-making; and 4) M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender.

The project is to last 66 months, until August 2026.

GEF project financing is \$4,262,559 with a further co-financing, grant and in kind, of \$6,204,000.

The project is implemented by the Directorate of Environment and Climate Action (Implementing Partner – IP) at the Ministry of Infrastructure, Natural Resources and the Environment, with operational and technical support by UNDP through the Assisted NIM modality. The initiative has also one Responsible Party, Birdlife, which leads an NGO consortium made up of three NGOs: Birdlife, Oikos and Fundação Príncipe. The Responsible Party executes directly approximately 30% of the budget. In May 2022, the IP also selected the Secretariat for Environment & Sustainable Development at the Regional Government of Príncipe as Responsible Party yet until now the latter has not directly executed any financial resources, due to its limited institutional capacities. The Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development has also a key role in the project for co-delivering several Output packages related to the charcoal/forest management interface (2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5), and ensure that the project’s activities are well coordinated with its own activities including especially those of the GEF-6 DFB/FAO/TRI Forest Landscape Restoration Project that it leads on.

3. MTR PURPOSE

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project’s strategy and its risks to sustainability.

The MTR’s outcome will be validated and distributed with project stakeholders, primarily the IP and UNDP, to adjust project implementation strategy, enhance national ownership and assess results sustainability. It is a key pillar of the project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and is going to be developed during the period August- November 2023, roughly halfway through project implementation.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP), the Project Document, project reports including annual PIRs, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review. The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach¹¹ ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), the Nature, Climate and Energy (NCE) Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to

- Directorate General for Environment and Climate Action
- Secretary for Environment and Sustainable Development at the Regional Government of Príncipe.
- Directorate for Forests and Biodiversity.
- BirdLife International São Tomé & Príncipe
- UNDP São Tomé and Príncipe
- OIKOS
- Fundação Príncipe

. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to *both islands of São Tomé and Príncipe*, including a visit to charcoal-producing communities engaged in the project.

The specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the MTR team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the MTR purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The MTR team must use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the MTR report.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the MTR must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders, and the MTR team.

The final MTR report must describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team (composed of an international consultant, as per this TOR, and a national consultant, to be hired separately by UNDP São Tomé and Príncipe) will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, considered during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
 - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

¹¹ For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “Not on target to be achieved” (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator ¹²	Baseline Level ¹³	Level in 1 st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ¹⁴	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ¹⁵	Achievement Rating ¹⁶	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool/Core Indicators at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?

¹² Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards.

¹³ Populate with data from the Project Document

¹⁴ If available

¹⁵ Colour code this column only.

¹⁶ Use the 6-point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

Midterm Review Report, 2023-2024

Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

- Examine the use of the project’s results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US\$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US\$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
		TOTAL			

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team) which categorizes each co-financing amount as ‘investment mobilized’ or ‘recurrent expenditures. (This template will be annexed as a separate file.)

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women’s participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project’s most current SESP, and those risks’ ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
 - The project’s overall safeguards risk categorization.
 - The identified types of risks¹⁷ (in the SESP).
 - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP).
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project’s social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those

¹⁷ Risks are to be labelled with both the UNDP SES Principles and Standards, and the GEF’s “types of risks and potential impacts”: Climate Change and Disaster; Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups; Disability Inclusion; Adverse Gender-Related impact, including Gender-based Violence and Sexual Exploitation; Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources; Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; Cultural Heritage; Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention; Labour and Working Conditions; Community Health, Safety and Security.

measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

A given project should be assessed against the version of UNDP's safeguards policy that was in effect at the time of the project's approval.

Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications & Knowledge Management:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.
- List knowledge activities/products developed (based on knowledge management approach approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

iv. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes?)

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for “Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management”

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 30 working days over a time period of 12 weeks, and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETION DATE
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report (MTR Inception Report due no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission)	5 days	November 29 2023
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits	8 days	December 10 th – 20 th
Presentation of initial findings- last day of the MTR mission	1 day	December 20 th
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	12 days	January 12 th 2024
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	4 days	February 28 th 2024

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management

2	Presentation	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	Draft MTR Report	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	Final Report*	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

*The final MTR report must be in English. The Commissioning Unit will arrange for a translation of the report into Portuguese.

8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project’s MTR is the UNDP Country Office in São Tomé and Príncipe.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants (an international consultant, as per this TOR and separately, a national consultant, to be hired in the Country by UNDP São Tomé and Príncipe) and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

9. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of *two independent consultants* will conduct the MTR - *one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one national team expert, based in São Tomé and Príncipe.*

The national consultant will be hired separately by UNDP São Tomé and Príncipe.

The team leader will *be responsible for the overall design and writing of the MTR report and for leading the technical component of the evaluation.* The team expert will *facilitate interaction and liaise with local stakeholders and assist the team leader in the mission agenda setting and in the logistics of the mission as appropriate.*

The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project’s related activities.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas:

International Consultant

Education

- A master’s degree in environmental science, *ecology, conservation biology*, or other closely related field – *5 points*

Experience

- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies; *5 points*
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; *5 points.*
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to *the GEF Focal Area of Biodiversity*; *5 points.*
- Experience in evaluating projects; *10 points.*
- Experience working in *Africa*; *5 points.*
- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years; *8 points.*
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and *Biodiversity*, experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis. *3 points*
- Excellent communication skills; *2 points*
- Demonstrable analytical skills; *2 points*
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset. *10 points*

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English. *5 points*
- *Fluency in Portuguese would be a significant plus. 5 points*

Total 70 points

10. ETHICS

The MTR team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This MTR will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’. The MTR team must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure

compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The MTR team must also ensure security of collected information before and after the MTR and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information, knowledge and data gathered in the MTR process must also be solely used for the MTR and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

11. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- 20% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR Inception Report and approval by the Commissioning Unit
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the draft MTR report to the Commissioning Unit
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR report and approval by the Commissioning Unit and RTA (via signatures on the TE Report Clearance Form) and delivery of completed TE Audit Trail

Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%¹⁸:

- The final MTR report includes all requirements outlined in the MTR TOR and is in accordance with the MTR guidance.
- The final MTR report is clearly written, logically organized, and is specific for this project (i.e. text has not been cut & pasted from other MTR reports).
- The Audit Trail includes responses to and justification for each comment listed.

12. APPLICATION PROCESS¹⁹

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

- a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](#)²⁰ provided by UNDP;
- b) **CV** and a **Personal History Form** ([P11 form](#)²¹);
- c) **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
- d) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the [Letter of Confirmation of Interest template](#). If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

All application materials should be submitted by email indicating the following reference “Consultant for Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management Midterm Review” at the following address ONLY: procurement.st@undp.org by August 18th 2023 . Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal: Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP’s General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team

(The Commissioning Unit is responsible for compiling these documents prior to the recruitment of the MTR team so that they are available to the team immediately after contract signature.)

1. PIF
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. UNDP Project Document
4. UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)
5. Project Inception Report
6. All Project Implementation Reports (PIR’s)

¹⁸The Commissioning Unit is obligated to issue payments to the MTR team as soon as the terms under the ToR are fulfilled. If there is an ongoing discussion regarding the quality and completeness of the final deliverables that cannot be resolved between the Commissioning Unit and the MTR team, the Regional M&E Advisor and Vertical Fund Directorate will be consulted. If needed, the Commissioning Unit’s senior management, Procurement Services Unit and Legal Support Office will be notified as well so that a decision can be made about whether or not to withhold payment of any amounts that may be due to the evaluator(s), suspend or terminate the contract and/or remove the individual contractor from any applicable rosters. See the UNDP Individual Contract Policy for further details:

https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PSU_Individual%20Contract_Individual%20Contract%20Policy.docx&action=default

¹⁹ Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP: <https://popp.undp.org/SitePages/POPPRoot.aspx>

²⁰ <https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/psu/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx>

²¹ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc

Midterm Review Report, 2023-2024

Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management (Sao Tomé and Príncipe)

UNDP PIMS ID: 5881; GEF Project ID: 10007

- 7. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
- 8. Audit reports.
- 9. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools/Core Indicators at CEO endorsement and midterm, *Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT)*, *UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard*,
- 10. Oversight mission reports.
- 11. All monitoring reports prepared by the project.
- 12. Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team

The following documents will also be available:

- 13. Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
- 14. UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
- 15. Minutes of the Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management Board Meetings and other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
- 16. Project site location maps
- 17. Any additional documents, as relevant.

Annex 13: Signed MTR final report clearance form

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
Commissioning Unit	
Name:	
Signature:	Date:
UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Name:	
Signature:	Date: