

**MIDTERM REVIEW (MTR) OF THE  
FIFTH OPERATIONAL PHASE OF THE  
GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM IN COSTA RICA**

**FINAL REPORT**

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**August 2014**

## I. BASIC REPORT INFORMATION

### Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project

Fifth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Program in Costa Rica

### UNDP and GEF project ID#s.

GEF PIMS: 4560

UNDP PROJECT# 00079305

### Evaluation timeframe and date of evaluation report

The evaluation was carried out between June and August 2014. The field visit happened between June 6 and 27, 2014. The Initial Findings Report was sent on July 11, 2014 and comments were received until July 25<sup>th</sup>. The Draft Final Report Draft is dated August 10, 2014, and this Final Report & Audit Trail is dated August 26, 2014.

### Region and countries included in the project

The Project was implemented in Costa Rica, Central America, in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Region

### GEF Focal Area / Operational Programs

The GEF Focal Area of this project is Multi Focal, with action in the following Operational Programs: Biodiversity, Climate change and Land degradation.

### Implementing Partner and other project partners

The GEF Implementing Partner of the Project was UNDP with UNOPS as executing as executing agency. Other Project Partners include the organizations receiving the small grants and other national organizations (Governmental, academic and civil) participating in different steering and advising structures.

### Evaluation team members

The Midterm Review (MTR) was carried out by Alejandro C. Imbach.

### Acknowledgements

The evaluator would like to thank the members of the SGP National Coordination (Eduardo Mata and Paula Zúñiga), the UNDP Project Officer at the UNDP Country Office (Kifah Sasa), the SGP Global Coordinator for SGP Upgraded Programs (Nick Remple) and all persons from the community groups and the different organizations providing time for interviews and visits and valuable information, for their support to the evaluation process.

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### III. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACICAFOC</b>	Farmers and Indigenous Coordinating Association of Central America
<b>ACTUAR</b>	Costa Rican Community-based Rural Tourism Association
<b>APR</b>	Annual Project Report
<b>APR/PIR</b>	Annual Project Review/Project Implementation Review
<b>ASADA</b>	Community-based Associations for Water Administration
<b>ASIREA</b>	Association for the Sustainable Development of the Atlantic Region
<b>AyA</b>	National Water Utility (Water and Sewerage)
<b>BC</b>	Biological Corridor
<b>BCNP</b>	Biological Corridors National Program
<b>BD</b>	Biodiversity
<b>CADETI</b>	Advisory Commission on Land Degradation
<b>CBD</b>	Convention of Biological Diversity
<b>CBO</b>	Community-Based Organization
<b>CCF</b>	Country Cooperation Framework
<b>CCM</b>	Climate Change Mitigation
<b>CEPF</b>	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>CO2</b>	Carbon Dioxide
<b>COA</b>	Chart of Account (ATLAS)
<b>CONAI</b>	National Commission of Indigenous Affairs
<b>CONIFOR</b>	Costa Rican National Commission Against Wildfires
<b>CP</b>	Country Program
<b>CPAP</b>	Country Program Action Plan
<b>CPD</b>	Country Program Document Framework
<b>CPMT</b>	Central Program Management Team
<b>CPS</b>	Country Program Strategy
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>CRUSA</b>	Foundation for Development
<b>DARAO</b>	Department of Accreditation and Registry in Organic Agriculture
<b>EE</b>	Energy Efficiency
<b>EEG</b>	UNDP Energy and Environment Group
<b>ERC</b>	Evaluation Resource Center
<b>ESPP</b>	Environmental Services Payments Program
<b>FIDERPAC</b>	Integral Foundation for the Rural Development of the Central Pacific
<b>FONAFIFO</b>	National Forest Financing Fund
<b>FSP</b>	Full Size Project
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse Gases
<b>GoCR</b>	Government of Costa Rica
<b>Ha</b>	Hectare
<b>ICE</b>	Costa Rican Institute of Electricity
<b>ICT</b>	Costa Rican Institute of Tourism
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>INA</b>	National Learning Institute
<b>INBio</b>	National Institute for Biodiversity
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>ISV-CR</b>	International Student Volunteer-Costa Rica
<b>IUCN</b>	The World Conservation Union
<b>IW</b>	International Waters
<b>kWh</b>	Kilowatt-hour
<b>LAC</b>	Latin American and the Caribbean

<b>LD</b>	Land Degradation
<b>LFA</b>	Logical Framework Analysis
<b>LULUCF</b>	Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry
<b>MAG</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MINAET</b>	Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Telecommunications
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MNI</b>	Mesa Nacional Indígena
<b>MOA</b>	Memorandum of Agreement
<b>MSP</b>	Medium-Sized Project
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan on Land Degradation
<b>NBSAP</b>	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
<b>NCCS</b>	National Climate Change Strategy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government Organization
<b>NP</b>	National Park
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NSC</b>	National Steering Committee
<b>OP</b>	Operational Program
<b>PA</b>	Protected Area
<b>PAC</b>	Project Approval Committee
<b>PES</b>	Payments for Environmental Services
<b>PIF</b>	Project Identification Form
<b>PIR</b>	Project Implementation Review
<b>PMU</b>	Program Management Unit
<b>PO</b>	Purchase Order (ATLAS)
<b>PPR</b>	Project Progress Reports
<b>QPR</b>	Quarterly Project Review
<b>RCU</b>	Regional Coordination Unit for LAC
<b>RE</b>	Renewable Energy
<b>REQ</b>	Requisition (ATLAS)
<b>RR</b>	Resident Representative
<b>RTA</b>	Regional Technical Advisor
<b>SBAA</b>	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
<b>SINAC</b>	National System of Conservation Areas
<b>SGP</b>	GEF Small Grants Program
<b>SLM</b>	Sustainable Land Management
<b>SMART</b>	Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>SOPs</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>STA</b>	Senior Technical Advisor
<b>STAR</b>	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UCR</b>	University of Costa Rica
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNA</b>	National University (Universidad Nacional)
<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>UNDAF</b>	UN Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNED</b>	Distance Learning University
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UN-REDD</b>	United Nations Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Information Table

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE				
Project Title:	Fifth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Program in Costa Rica			
GEF Project ID:	PIMS 4560		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>At completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	00079305	GEF financing:	4,398,148.-	n.a.
Country:	Costa Rica	IA/EA own:	1,100,000.-	n.a.
Region:	LAC	Government:	638,400.-	n.a.
Focal Area:	MFA (Multifocal)	Other:	2,886,600.-	n.a.
Operational Program:	Biodiversity Climate Change Land Degradation	Total co-financing:	4,625,000.-	n.a.
Executing Agency:	UNOPS	Total Project Cost:	9,023,148.-	n.a.
Other Partners involved:		PRODOC Signature (date Project began):		July 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2011
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: June 30, 2015	Actual: June 30, 2015

### Project Description

The Costa Rica SGP Country Program was “upgraded” at the start of GEF OP5. “Upgrading” means that the Country Program is implemented as a GEF full-size project financed under the OP5 STAR allocation to Costa Rica.

The long-term project Objective is to secure global environmental benefits through community-based initiatives and actions that address habitat fragmentation and enhance ecological connectivity in twelve biological corridors linking eight Protected Areas and their buffer zones.

The project is achieving global environmental benefits by supporting community-based initiatives that will collectively contribute to overcome organizational and individual capacity barriers to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management in the production landscapes and to mitigate climate change. Four interrelated outcomes are pursued: (i) Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use mainstreamed into production landscapes in biological corridors and PA buffer zones; (ii) GHG emissions reduced and carbon stocks increased through community-based actions; (iii) Conservation of productive lands and restoration of degraded lands contributing to sustainability and improved local livelihoods; and (iv) Community-based organizations and their members with improved capacities and knowledge management for replication and up-scaling of best practices.

The project is executed by UNOPS as Implementing Partner using the existing Country Program mechanism of the GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) in Costa Rica, including grant approval by the

National Steering Committee and day-to-day management by the Country Program Team under the leadership of the Country Program Manager (National Coordinator). The project collaborates with a large number of partners including Governmental institutions, national and local NGOs and scientific institutions.

### Project Progress Summary

The Project is progressing very well, as shown in the Summary Table of Progress Towards Results below. There are several indicators and targets already achieved and all others are assessed as On-target considering the degree of progress and the commitments of the proposals still under implementation (106 of 120). Considering this level of advance it is expected that the SGP Costa Rica will achieve its results, indicators and targets successfully.

Project Strategy	Indicator	End-of-project Target	Achievement Rating
<b>OUTCOME 1</b>  Community-based actions mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes in biological corridors and PA buffer zones	Increased number of biological corridor management plans	At least 10 biological corridor management plans that include PA buffer zones developed	On-target
	Increased percentage of community-based initiatives that obtain certification with national or international standards	At least 50% of community sustainable livelihood initiatives supported by SGP obtain environmental certification	On-target
	Increased number of community conservation areas	5 new community protected areas increase by at least 2,000 ha community conservation areas in Costa Rica	Achieved
	Increased number of communities benefiting from Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)	10 additional communities in the project area receive PES	Achieved
	Increased number of families generating income from sustainable livelihood activities	200 families supported by SGP obtain income from sustainable livelihood activities	Achieved
<b>OUTCOME 2</b>  GHG emissions reduced and carbon stocks increased through community-based actions	Increased renewable energy capacity installed: - By SGP - From replication	Additional capacity at community level: <u>Biodigestors</u> : SGP 300, through replication 600; <u>Solar dryers</u> : SGP 4, through replication 16; <u>Micro-hydro</u> : SGP 6, through replication 20; <u>PV panels</u> : SGP 5, through replication 10	On-target in average
	Increased electricity and heat produced from renewable sources	8,054,600 kWh more produced from renewable sources	On-target
	Improved energy efficiency in rural productive activities - By SGP - From replication	40% reduction of energy consumption in 30 rural hostels: Energy efficient electric engines: SGP 50, through replication 100; CFL: SGP 500, through replication 1,500	On-target <b>One indicator not measured</b>
	Improved credit availability for RE and/or EE in rural areas	Credit availability and conditions to be determined for project geographic area at project inception	On-target
	Increased number of crews in the rural areas able to prevent and manage forest fires	30 additional crews trained, equipped, and active	On-target
	Increased number of communities trained and with seedlings to undertake reforestation in degraded areas or to increase biomass in agricultural lands	10 communities reforesting priority areas identified by biological corridors' management plans and planting trees in their agricultural lands	On-target



<p>OUTCOME 3</p> <p>Conservation of productive lands and restoration of degraded lands contribute to sustainability and improved local livelihoods</p>	Increased number of communities contributing to the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Desertification in the Jesus Maria Watershed	Plan adopted and under implementation by 8 communities within the watershed; 40 leaders in the 8 communities trained in techniques related to integrated watershed management; 12 representatives participating actively in the Watershed Management Commission	On-target in average
	Reduced degraded area in community lands in the Jesus Maria basin	29,500 ha in the Jesus Maria watershed managed for environmental sustainability	Achieved
	Increased sources of investment at local level for SLM	8 new communities in the Jesus Maria watershed receive PES; At least 50% of SLM community initiatives financed by SGP receive support from national government institutions for their continuity	On-target
	Increased family income resulting from SLM activities	15% increased income for families involved in sustainable production activities; 50% increased income for women participating in SLM activities; 75% increased income for indigenous communities participating in SLM activities	n.a. MTR agrees with the need to cancel or redefine this target.
<p>OUTCOME 4</p> <p>Community-based organizations and their members with improved capacities and knowledge management for replication and upscaling of best practices</p>	Increased community contributions to national policy and legislation related to project thematic priorities	At least 2 additional national policies and legislation related to project thematic priorities passed during FSP execution.	On-target
	Increased number of eligible projects demonstrating community understanding of global environmental issues and their local solutions	70% of projects are eligible after implementation of capacity development activities; 100 communities participating in SGP-funded projects able to articulate the relevance of their project goals and activities to related global environmental issues	On-target
	Rate of successful community projects	The rate of success of SGP-funded projects during GEF-5 remains 90% or higher	On-target
	Increased number of contributions from SGP Costa Rica to local and national publications and media, as well as to knowledge products of the Global SGP and UNDP	15 knowledge products published or quoted by the media during the lifetime of the project	On-target

Based on the above results and other information presented in the main text, the following Project Evaluation Rating Table was prepared.

Evaluation Rating Table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
<b>Project Strategy</b>	N/A	The Project strategy is sound. The Project Logical Framework LFA is well constructed and it is constantly used by the project (National Steering Committee and National Coordination). Identified Project LFA Indicators and Goals are too many and not adequate to SGP implementation mechanisms.
<b>Progress Towards Results</b>	Objective Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	The Achievement Rating is based on the Achievement of individual results below. In turn, those are based on the Summary Table of Progress Towards Results (previous section) and the fully detailed table in section 4.2 Progress Towards Results. Moreover, the MTR has not identified areas of concern or remaining barriers to achieve the results.
	Outcome 1 <i>Community-based actions mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes in biological corridors and PA buffer zones</i> Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the above Tables, the SGP has already achieved 3 indicators and targets of this Outcome, while the remaining 3 show considerable progress and are assessed as On-target.
	Outcome 2 Green-house gas emissions reduced and carbon stocks increased through community-based actions. Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the above Tables, the SGP has already achieved considerable progress in all indicators of this Outcome and all of them are assessed as On-target based on the commitments established in the pertinent proposals still under implementation.
	Outcome 3 <i>Conservation of productive lands and restoration of degraded lands contribute to sustainability and improved local livelihoods.</i> Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the Tables mentioned above, the SGP has already achieved 1 indicator and its targets of this Outcome, while the remaining ones show considerable progress and are assessed as On-target.
	Outcome 4 <i>Community-based organizations and their members with improved capacities and knowledge management for replication and up-scaling of best practices.</i> Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the Tables mentioned above, the SGP has already achieved considerable progress in all indicators of this Outcome and all of them are assessed as On-target based on the commitments established in the pertinent proposals still under implementation.
<b>Project Implementation &amp; Adaptive Management</b>	5 Satisfactory	According to the results shown in Section 4.3 (Management Arrangements) regarding Work planning, Finance and co-finance, Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, Stakeholder engagement, Reporting and Communications, all these areas are managed adequately and the MTR did not identify any major concern about them. There are some issues to be addressed during the rest of OP5 (GEF TT, completing the climate change M&E component, etc.) that prevented giving the maximum rating.
<b>Sustainability</b>	4 Likely	According to the results shown in Section 4.4 Sustainability, the MTR did not identify any major concern about them and all different sustainability areas (financial, socioeconomic, institutional and environmental) were assessed as Likely.

## Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons

### Conclusions

1. The current GEF full-size project for the SGP Costa Rica Country Program corresponding to the 5th Operational Phase of the GEF is relevant to the objectives with which it must maintain consistency (GEF and country).
2. The project is implementing the planned activities adequately. Reviewing the completed projects (14 of 120) and the progress of those still underway it is expected the SGP Costa Rica Country Program will achieve successfully its planned indicators and targets, probably exceeding many of them.
3. The project is operating within the historical average efficiency of SGP projects. Previous studies have shown that the SGP efficiency is good in relation to the general average of GEF-funded projects.
4. The level of co-financing already raised by the SGP surpasses the amount committed at project design in the PRODOC. The analysis of actual co-financing at the end of the terminated projects shows that the achieved co-financing is higher than the committed. Adding to this situation the fact that some co-financing commitment from other sources are not yet accounted for, it can be expected that the SGP Country Program will actually surpass the level of agreed co-financing at the end of the project by a fairly large proportion.
5. The sustainability of the SGP grant funded initiatives is good with the expected differences among lines and thematic areas. The MTR did not find reasons for concern regarding sustainability of the results.
6. The Costa Rica SGP Country Program has achieved, throughout its history and including this partially assessed phase, many impacts as evidenced in part by the sustainability of its results as stated in the previous paragraph. The impacts at the level of the regions where SGP works have multiplied and far exceed the initial investment and scope of their activities. In this regard, the project has worked as a real "incubator" of initiatives that were developed and have prospered beyond the original SGP support.
7. One interesting aspect to be noted, despite its relatively small financial implications, is the incursion of SGP into alternative sources of clean energy beyond the traditional and useful biodigestors. The work with photovoltaic solar panels and micro-hydropower initiatives are a fundamental step to be taken in rural areas and the efforts of the SGP Costa Rica in this area should be commended.
8. There are some aspects to be solved during the rest of OP5 (see Recommendations below) but none of them is cause for concern regarding the achievement of SGP results in OP5.
9. The different and numerous strengths and opportunities of the project should lead to the development of an attractive proposal for the GEF Operational Phase 6 and its eventual execution should continue and expand the actions and impacts achieved so far.

## Recommendations

1. To complete the current fifth operational phase of the SGP in Costa Rica it should maintain the current existing operational procedures and systems that have proven effective and efficient in achieving the proposed results. Overall, the SGP Costa Rica project is implemented very appropriately; therefore, the first recommendation is to keep up the good work.
2. To complete the development of the SGP Country Program M&E System using the same conceptual and operational approach already in place for the Biodiversity component of the project to develop the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the Climate change component. This task needs to be fulfilled during the current OP5.
3. A similar recommendation is related with the reporting on the GEF Tracking Tools. Despite the mentioned issues detailed at section 4.1 (under Results framework / logframe) it is recommended to the Country Program to make all possible efforts to fulfill its task of reporting on the GEF Tracking Tools.
4. To collect better information on gender issues. At the time of the MTR there are no indicators focused on these issues and the presentation of disaggregated information by gender mentioned in the PRODOC has not happened. Despite that, there is evidence emerging from the field visits about a significant level of gender integration, therefore what is missing are the tools to collect this information formally in order to provide the necessary evidence about these issues.
5. To identify a feasible way to strengthen the National Coordination team. The monitoring of field activities of the SGP Costa Rica is very good. Each project is visited at least three times during execution and also the groups are in regular contact by phone or email with the National Coordination resulting in a close relationship between the SGP Country Program and the beneficiaries. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation system is excellent but running it demands a lot of work. Maintaining this level of operations with 120 funded projects is simply too much for a small two-person Coordination team with a secretary. Currently the large workload for the staff implies the loss of many opportunities to impact on local, regional and national processes to which the SGP is invited to contribute and which cannot be addressed simply for lack of time. The identification of the most appropriate way to strengthen the National Coordination is a task to be undertaken jointly with the National Steering Committee; the MTR suggest to look into the experience of other Upgrading Country Programs in the system to find ideas about how to fulfill this need.
6. To expand the Terms of Reference of the National Steering Committee (NSC) to include dealing with key strategic management aspects that are currently in a situation of uncertainty due to the upgrading of SGP Costa Rica. The following proposed aspects, among other, to be included in the new TOR are:
  - Annual assessment of the National Coordination
  - Full Assessment of the National Coordination team at the end of each operating phase and decision on its continuation or renewal.
  - Periodic renewal of the members of the NSC following the existing modality at the beginning of each operational phase.
  - Monitoring the thematic and geographical scope of the SGP Country Program in Costa Rica
  - Monitoring and evaluation system and reporting
  - Monitoring SGP knowledge management processes (evaluations, systematization, guidelines, papers, website and others)

- Other topics to be presented to the National Steering Committee and considers as strategic by the NSC

In defining the tasks of strategic management mentioned above it is very important to keep them distinct and non-overlapping with UNOPS, UNDP Country Office and the SGP National Coordination functions. The MTR also recommends that the task of extending the terms of reference of the National Steering Committee should be coordinated by the UNDP-GEF Global Technical Advisor for SGP Upgrading Country Programs in order to ensure consistency across the group of SGP upgrading country programs .

7. To keep the concentration of activities in the area of land degradation in the Jesus Maria river basin at least until convincing evidence is generated about the achievement of significant impacts (or lack of them) in that territory. This process may provide valuable information about the usefulness of concentrating efforts in specific territories to achieve visible impacts.
8. To make all necessary efforts to develop a new project proposal for the next operational phase of the GEF that maximizes the chances of being incorporated into the national GEF portfolio preserving the “upgrading” nature of the Costa Rica SGP.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

This mid-term review (MTR) has the following purposes according to the new UNDP-GEF Midterm Review Terms of Reference:

1. To assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document,
2. To 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.
3. To review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.

### 2.2 Scope & Methodology

#### Scope

The MTR assessed the main key areas related to the above purposes as follows:

- a. Project Strategy
  - Project design
  - Results framework / Logframe
- b. Progress Towards Results
  - Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis
- c. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management
  - Management Arrangements
  - Work Planning
  - Finance and co-finance
  - Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy
  - Stakeholder Engagement
  - Reporting
  - Communications
- e. Sustainability
  - Financial risks to sustainability
  - Socio-economic risks to sustainability
  - Institutional Frameworks and Governance risks to sustainability
  - Environmental risks to sustainability

#### Methodology

Based on the evaluation purpose and scope, an evaluation matrix including evaluation questions, indicators, sources of information and methods to obtain information was developed and used to guide the evaluation. This matrix was included in the Evaluation Inception Report submitted to the different stakeholders before the beginning of the evaluation. This matrix is presented as Annex 2.

The evaluation process was carried out according to the following steps:

1. Reading and analysis of existing documentation (including those documents listed in the TOR and the UNDP guidelines for these evaluations, as well as websites and information available online and documents provided directly by the visited organizations and institutions). The list of documents analyzed is included as Annex 5.
2. Development of data collection instruments (questionnaires, interview guides and field visits, observation and other protocols.
3. Field visit to collect primary information through interviews, observations, field visits and meetings. The itinerary of this visit is included as Annex 4. The list of persons interviewed for this evaluation is included as Annex 5.
4. Preparation of an Initial Findings Report immediately after the field visit. This Report was distributed to the key stakeholders for verification of information accuracy.
5. Preparation of the Draft Final Report and distribution to users established for feedback and comments.
6. Reception of comments and feedback and preparation of the "audit trail"
7. Preparation and submission of the Final Report , including verification of the facts on the basis of comments on drafts , incorporating new materials and adjustments to the Draft Final Report

### 2.3 Structure of the evaluation report

The contents for the report were organized on the basis of the Table of Contents included in the new UNDP-GEF Midterm Review Terms of Reference to be used from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

This Table of Contents has some differences with the one originally included in the TOR but it was adopted aiming to comply with the new UNDP-GEF requirements in place since the mentioned date. The Table of Contents complies and is consistent with the original TOR and the guidelines established in the GEF-UNDP Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects guiding the mid-term reviews from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

### 3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Development context

Costa Rica (51,100 km<sup>2</sup> of land area and 589,000 km<sup>2</sup> of territorial sea) is considered one of the 20 most bio-diverse countries in the world. Its geographical position in the tropics, its two coasts and its mountain systems generate numerous and a wide variety of microclimates that explain this natural wealth in both species and ecosystems. More than 500,000 species found in this small country represent nearly 4% of the estimated total number of species worldwide despite covering just 0.03% of the world terrestrial area.

To protect this wealth of biodiversity of global importance, the country has allocated over 25% of its territory to be protected under different categories of Protected Areas. This effort is extended with the support of private initiatives that establish private reserves dedicated mainly to ecotourism and research.

For the last 10 years, Government and non-governmental organizations active in biodiversity conservation in Costa Rica, have been engaged in an ambitious two-phase program known as GRUAS I & II, to identify and define a national network of biological corridors to improve the ecological connectivity among national protected areas and between these and PA of neighboring countries. Through the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Project, the GEF was instrumental in helping establish the basis for the biological corridor system in Costa Rica. The studies under GRUAS were completed in 2009, at a very detailed geographical scale, with broad participation of national and local actors. GRUAS I & II were the basis for selecting the biological corridors and protected areas' buffer zones where SGP Costa Rica focuses its work concentrating its activities around eight Protected Areas and 12 biological corridors linking these areas

The areas selected for SGP's project interventions include the five largest undisturbed blocks of forest: rain forests, dry forests, páramo, mangrove and wetlands, where the most important Protected Areas of Costa Rica are found. These areas harbor species of endangered fauna, which are very good indicators of ecosystem health: the Ocelot (*Leopardus tigrinus* and *Leopardus pardalis*), Causel (*Leopardus wiedii*), *Puma yagouaroundi* (Leo Brenner), *Puma concolor*, Danta (*Tapirus bairdii*), Chanco de monte (*Tayassu tajacu*) and the Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*). The three Biosphere Reserves and the World Heritage Sites of the country are among the eight prioritized PAs.

There are a number of previous GEF initiatives that have contributed to advancing ecosystem conservation in these areas. The GEF "Ecomarket Project" allowed extending payment for ecosystem services (PES) to indigenous territories and communities in biological corridors. Other previous GEF initiatives are Conservation International's Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund activities in Costa Rica, and ACICAFOC, which supported integrated ecosystem management actions in Tortuguero, La Amistad, Osa, Corcovado and Chirripó National Parks. Prior GEF investment in Costa Rica's protected areas has been concentrated in La Amistad, Chirripó and Corcovado NP, specifically in infrastructure and equipment, and in the establishment of trust funds in Chirripó and Corcovado to finance conservation activities in buffer zones.

The contribution of Costa Rica to the total global GHG emissions is very low (less than 0.1%), however, the country made a commitment to become carbon-neutral by 2021. The country's decision to avoid net carbon emissions has led to the preparation of an integrated National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) for achieving a C-neutral economy by 2021, which will include actions on mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The mitigation strategy will have a three-pronged



approach: 1) GHG emissions reduction by sources; 2) capture and storage of CO<sub>2</sub>; and 3) carbon market development.

In socioeconomic terms Costa Rica is in the group of High Human Development (UNDP, HDI Report 2014) with excellent levels of education and health and adequate levels of production (GDP and GDP at PPP) and income distribution. In this last aspect, the country has reversed a long-term trend in recent years and its income inequality is growing slowly as reflected in its national Gini index.

### 3.2 Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted

As mentioned above, GRUAS I & II carried out an in-depth analysis of the current status of biodiversity and threats to each of the PA and biological corridors in Costa Rica. The main common threat is the existing fragmentation of ecosystems due to historic forest clearing to expand the agricultural frontier, to changes to monoculture crops of agricultural systems that maintained forest cover, commercial timber extraction, and other agricultural and land use practices that do not take into account biodiversity and carbon stocks. Although Costa Rica has been successful in halting deforestation nationally there are still areas where land use change and forest ecosystem degradation are happening. For example, pineapple monoculture has increased by 20,000 hectares between 2008 and 2010.

There is also concern for expanding mining operations in the northern part of the country. Forest fires are also an important cause of concern for several protected areas. Land degradation is a further driver of biodiversity loss in most biological corridors. Indeed, land degradation is affecting Diria, Paso de la Danta, Paso de las Lapas, San Juan-La Selva, Pájaro Campana and Colorado-Tortuguero biological corridors in various degrees. The Jesus Maria watershed located in the biological corridor of “Montes del Aguacate” is the most degraded watershed in the country. Climate change will exacerbate ecosystem degradation in areas where soil erosion and other land degradation processes are already present.

Despite Costa Rica’s strong commitment towards the protection and sustainable use of its natural base and its previous investments in biodiversity conservation, a number of barriers still need to be addressed to enable communities to contribute more effectively to address the threats:

- Lack of legislation regulating land use and activities in buffer zones. In the absence of these laws, local communities living around protected areas manage their farms and conduct other economic activities without due consideration of the effects these may have on ecosystems and species.
- Insufficient capacity at community level for land use planning in buffer zones and corridors. Even if communities are willing to mainstream biodiversity in their land use decisions, they do not have the information, tools and resources to undertake adequate land use planning. This is often compounded by weak institutional presence in these areas and, therefore, unavailability of technical assistance from government entities for many communities.
- Weak governance mechanisms for the implementation of biological corridor management plans. While community participation has been an important consideration in the BC management plans and communities are part of Local Councils for biological corridors, their enhanced participation in and contribution to the operation of the Councils is an essential ingredient for the successful implementation of the plans. Local leaders that represent communities in the Councils lack financial support and technical resources to reach out to the rest of the population within the corridors.

- Lack of information, skills and knowledge on agricultural production technologies that help maintain ecological connectivity, such as agro-forestry and organic agriculture.
- Absence of economic incentives for changing unsustainable community practices and /or lack of knowledge about incentive mechanisms such as payments for environmental services that exist in Costa Rica. Costa Rica is a pioneering country concerning incentive mechanisms to help maintain environmental services but, despite the positive track record, there are still many communities that have not been able to benefit from these financial incentives. While SGP's previous efforts to enable indigenous peoples to receive PES have been successful, coverage of significant number of indigenous communities has yet to be achieved.
- Low public awareness of the need to conserve critical areas to maintain ecosystem services.

Regarding climate change mitigation, of the total annual GHG emissions of the country (8,779 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year) the agriculture and livestock sector accounts for half of total emissions, that is, 4,603 million tons. In particular, slash-and-burn agriculture is still widespread in some regions of Costa Rica, including those targeted by this project. The use of fuelwood for meeting household energy needs as well as those of rural agro-processing enterprises represents another source of GHG emissions at community level. There are about 50,000 households located in buffer zones and biological corridors without access to the public electricity grid. Forest fires in the country are a significant contributor to GHG emissions and a threat to ecosystems. Such wild fires occur because of lack of fire management in slash-and-burn agriculture and as a result of other anthropogenic causes. Although in accordance with the Costa Rican National Commission Against Wildfires (CONIFOR) fire occurrence has been down to 13,900 hectares per year in the last three years from 32,500 hectares, it still represents an average emission per year of 1.9 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. Land use change from forest use to agricultural use, and from integrated agricultural systems to monoculture crops is affecting at least 25,000 hectares per year.

The following barriers have been identified by the SGP to address climate change mitigation at community level in rural areas:

- Weak access to information at community level on government policies and regulations on climate change;
- Absence of viable alternatives to unsustainable land use change for poor rural communities;
- Lack of access to clean and efficient rural energy technologies;
- Deficient access to credits for clean technology investment in rural areas. There are not enough lines of credit for it and / or the communities are unaware of the existence of the few ones available.
- Lack of skills and know-how to phase-out slash-and-burn practices in agriculture.
- Lack of equipment and financial and technical resources by many communities adjacent to PA to prevent and combat forest fires in a timely manner.

Finally, but not less important, regarding community barriers to adopt sustainable land management approaches, unsustainable agricultural production practices have made the Jesus Maria Basin (with an extension of 37,000 ha) one of the most degraded watersheds in the country according to the CADETI Advisory Commission on Land Degradation. Livestock and agricultural activities in areas with steep slopes and poor vegetation cover have led to its deterioration. The

watershed requires immediate changes in production systems and improved management of small-scale livestock activities to arrest soil erosion and further degradation, and to start recovering its soil productivity. To achieve this, the following barriers at the community level need to be overcome:

- Limited capacity of local communities to participate in watershed management bodies and for sustainable land management (SLM) policy advocacy at the local level.
- Lack of knowledge and skills to apply sustainable land management methods to their farms;
- Insufficient information on and difficulty to access technologies for soil and water conservation and to benefit from financial resources available for SLM in various government and non-government programs.

### 3.3 Project Description and Strategy

#### Project Description

A first key aspect that should be kept in mind when analyzing the SGP OP5 Project in Costa Rica is that this is an unusual GEF full-size project. A typical Project defines results to be achieved, inputs to be used to generate outputs to reach the results (all evidenced by indicators) and the required resources (funding and time) to perform the activities. The SGP Country Program does not work this way.

The SGP was created by GEF as a funding window to support projects from CBOs (community based organizations) and small and medium NGOs. It was established to balance the portfolio of full-size and medium-sized projects aimed at Governmental organizations and, to some extent, large NGOs (national and international).

Because of this origin, the SGP was established as a GEF corporate program, implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF partnership. This GEF-UNDP SGP has a centralized unit at UNDP Headquarters (CPMT) and from there the national SGPs (such as the former Costa Rica SGP) were coordinated and funded. The national SGPs, in turn, channeled small funds (usually in the range of US\$ 20,000-30,000.- in Costa Rica) to CBOs and NGOs in the form of small grants with specific requisites.

This initiative was highly successful as documented in different evaluations and it was renewed with each one of the different GEF OPs. Therefore, and given both its continuity and *modus operandi* these national SGPs became programmatic, in the sense of long-term interventions based on the demands from local communities and civil society.

The SGP success led to increased demand from the countries, quick program growth and the expected problems of managing a program in dozens of different countries with a limited budget. Therefore, at the end of OP4 there was a decision to “upgrade” or “graduate” the most successful and best established national SGPs to a different category. The chosen way to accommodate these new upgrading SGPs was to incorporate them as full-size Country Program projects within the GEF national portfolios starting with GEF OP5.

Therefore, at the end of OP5, these so called “projects” are evaluated in a similar way to the traditional GEF full-size projects. Obviously, it is necessary to briefly recall the SGP history to understand that this type of full-size projects has some very specific characteristics that should not be forgotten at evaluation time.

A key aspect to be considered is that SGP Country Programs Projects do not implement directly. They don't have staff, resources, equipment or mandate for direct implementation of activities leading to results and fulfillment of agreed indicators. These projects work by opening calls for proposals from CBOs and NGOs with a scope of areas of work based on the Project Document; therefore, the implementation of activities and achievements of results depends on the interest and willingness of other organizations to submit proposals within the defined scope of actions. If the organizations do not submit proposals the calls go unanswered and there are no actions made, money spent or results achieved.

Considering these aspects it is easy to understand that different aspects of the planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle are significantly affected by these conditions of operation and they need to be considered when assessing the different components and parts of the project cycle.

### Strategy

Addressing habitat fragmentation that is threatening the sustainability of the National Protected Areas System of Costa Rica requires full participation of farmer and indigenous communities inhabiting PA buffer zones and biological corridors to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use throughout the production landscape of the country.

A mosaic of land uses and community practices that provide sustainable livelihoods compatible with ecosystem conservation needs to be established at scale to trigger larger positive impacts and help restore ecological connectivity.

Meeting the C-Neutrality target in Costa Rica and arresting land degradation in priority areas, also require the full engagement of communities in the rural areas. This SGP project addresses biodiversity conservation and sustainable use at the landscape level, including land use, land use change and forestry, by continuing to apply an ecosystem focus when programming community interventions for sustainable land and resource use leading to global environmental benefits.

In the case of the land degradation component, there was an agreement to concentrate all the activities of this component in the Jesus Maria river watershed considered as the most degraded watershed of the country, according to the National Action Program against Land Degradation. This watershed unloads a large amount of sediments every year affecting the operation of the main harbor of Costa Rica on the Pacific Ocean (Caldera harbor). The expectation underlying this concentration of activities is that it may lead to visible impacts on this key watershed. It also means that this case is *de facto* functioning as a test case to assess whether or not the concentration of efforts leads to visible and effective changes.

## Objectives, outcomes and indicators

<b>Project Goal: To conserve critical ecosystems of Costa Rica and mitigate climate change by supporting the implementation of national policies on biodiversity conservation and carbon neutrality, while also contributing to communities' sustainable livelihoods.</b>		
<b>Project Objective:</b> Global environmental benefits secured through community-based initiatives and actions that address habitat fragmentation and enhance ecological connectivity in twelve biological corridors linking 8 Protected Areas and their buffer zones		
Indicator	Baseline	Targets End of Project
Increased area of sustainably managed production landscapes that integrate biodiversity conservation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 biological corridors</li> <li>Buffer zones of 8 PAs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32,000 ha under sustainable management by communities in the geographic areas of the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An additional 180,000 ha of community lands under sustainable management</li> </ul>
Reduced degraded areas in the Jesus Maria watershed and increased vegetation cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBD. Watershed baseline assessment under preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2,300 ha with reforestation and forest regeneration</li> <li>29,500 ha under sustainable management by CBOs that administer water in the river basin</li> </ul>
Reduced GHG emissions resulting from rural production activities, use of fuelwood, and from forest fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>254,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> e/year due to forest fires (equivalent to approx. 1,778.96 ha/year burnt)</li> <li>Other values for project area will be determined during inception phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> e avoided in four years through EE and RE activities (see table in Annex F attached)</li> <li>12,500 tCO<sub>2</sub> e/year mitigated (approx. 50,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> in 4 years) from avoided forest fires, equivalent to 87.5 ha of forest fires avoided/year (142.78 tCO<sub>2</sub> e/ha) See Annex F</li> </ul>
Carbon stocks increased through protection of forests and reforestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carbon stock values to be determined for project area at inception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83,237 tCO<sub>2</sub> e sequestered in 3 years through reforestation of 2,300 ha (12.06 tCO<sub>2</sub> e ha/year) and through the protection of 60,000 ha of native forests.</li> </ul>
Replication of successful initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 among communities in project areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 types of successful interventions (e.g., silviculture, organic agriculture, ecotourism, RE, etc.) replicated by at least 6 communities each within biological corridors and PA buffer zones</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-based actions mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes in biological corridors and PA buffer zones</li> </ul>		
Indicator	Baseline	Targets End of Project
Increased number of biological corridor management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 biological corridor management plan (Pajaro Campana BC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 10 biological corridor management plans that include PA buffer zones developed</li> </ul>
Increased percentage of community-based initiatives that obtain certification with national or international standards	10% currently achieve certification. The following certifications have been achieved by communities nationally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organic production certification: 14</li> <li>Tourism sustainability certificate by ICT: 4</li> <li>"Blue Flag" ecological certificate: 3</li> <li>Fair trade certification: 5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 50% of community sustainable livelihood initiatives supported by SGP obtain environmental certification</li> </ul>

Increased number of community conservation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no community conservation areas in the project geographic regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 new community protected areas increase by at least 2,000 ha community conservation areas in Costa Rica</li> </ul>
Increased number of communities benefiting from Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 communities supported by SGP currently receive PES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 additional communities in the project area receive PES</li> </ul>
Increased number of families generating income from sustainable livelihood activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>200 families supported by SGP obtain income from sustainable livelihood activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>800 additional families will generate income from sustainable production practices (eg., sustainable use of species for handcraft production, ecotourism, agroforestry, organic apiculture, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2:</b> GHG emissions reduced and carbon stocks increased through community-based actions		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Targets End of Project</b>
Increased renewable energy capacity installed: - By SGP - From replication	Existing capacity at community level in project area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodigestors: 300</li> <li>Solar dryers: 5</li> <li>Micro-hydro: 0</li> <li>PV panels: 10</li> </ul>	Additional capacity at community level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodigestors: SGP 300, through replication 600</li> <li>Solar dryers: SGP 4, through replication 16</li> <li>Micro-hydro: SGP 6, through replication 20</li> <li>PV panels: SGP 5, through replication 10</li> </ul>
Increased electricity and heat produced from renewable sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27,600 kWh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8,054,600 kWh more produced from renewable sources</li> </ul>
Improved energy efficiency in rural productive activities - By SGP - From replication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No rural community tourism venture (30 rural hostels) currently applies EE practices</li> <li>Efficient electric engines in project area: 0</li> <li>CFL: 0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% reduction of energy consumption in 30 rural hostels</li> <li>Energy efficient electric engines: SGP 50, through replication 100</li> <li>CFL: SGP 500, through replication 1,500</li> </ul>
Improved credit availability for RE and/or EE in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Credit availability and conditions to be determined for project geographic area at project inception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three financial institutions providing credit for RE and EE to communities in project area and a minimum of 5 credits approved during lifetime of project</li> </ul>
Increased number of crews in the rural areas able to prevent and manage forest fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 fire fighting crews trained and equipped</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 additional crews trained, equipped, and active</li> </ul>
Increased number of communities trained and with seedlings to undertake reforestation in degraded areas or to increase biomass in agricultural lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no communities undertaking reforestation in the project areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 communities reforesting priority areas identified by biological corridors' management plans and planting trees in their agricultural lands</li> </ul>

<b>Outcome 3:</b> Conservation of productive lands and restoration of degraded lands contribute to sustainability and improved local livelihoods		
Indicator	Baseline	Targets End of Project
Increased number of communities contributing to the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Desertification in the Jesus Maria Watershed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Plan has been developed but no communities in the project area are implementing actions identified in the Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan adopted and under implementation by 8 communities within the watershed</li> <li>40 leaders in the 8 communities trained in techniques related to integrated watershed management</li> <li>12 representatives participating actively in the Watershed Management Commission</li> </ul>
Reduced degraded area in community lands in the Jesus Maria basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBD. Watershed status assessment underway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>29,500 ha in the Jesus Maria watershed managed for environmental sustainability</li> </ul>
Increased sources of investment at local level for SLM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no investment in SLM in the project area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 new communities in the Jesus Maria watershed receive PES</li> <li>At least 50% of SLM community initiatives financed by SGP receive support from national government institutions for their continuity</li> </ul>
Increased family income resulting from SLM activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The average rural family income is \$300 monthly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% increased income for families involved in sustainable production activities</li> <li>50% increased income for women participating in SLM activities</li> <li>75% increased income for indigenous communities participating in SLM activities</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 4:</b> Community-based organizations and their members with improved capacities and knowledge management for replication and upscaling of best practices		
Indicator	Baseline	Targets End of Project
Increased community contributions to national policy and legislation related to project thematic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SGP-related groups are actively promoting 2 law proposals (Laws promoting Organic agri-culture and Rural Community Tourism) in Congress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 2 additional national policies and legislation related to project thematic priorities passed during FSP execution.</li> </ul>
Increased number of eligible projects demonstrating community understanding of global environmental issues and their local solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than 30% of projects received are eligible</li> <li>Most communities within the Jesus Maria watershed and BC lack understanding of global environmental issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70% of projects are eligible after implementation of capacity development activities</li> <li>100 communities participating in SGP-funded projects able to articulate the relevance of their project goals and activities to related global environmental issues</li> </ul>
Rate of successful community projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of SGP-funded projects achieve project objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The rate of success of SGP-funded projects during GEF-5 remains 90% or higher</li> </ul>
Increased number of contributions from SGP Costa Rica to local and national publications and media, as well as to knowledge products of the Global SGP and UNDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SGP results and activities are published, announced or quoted by the media at local and national levels at least twice a year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 knowledge products published or quoted by the media during the lifetime of the project</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Project Implementation Arrangements

The SGP in Costa Rica is executed by UNDP and implemented by UNOPS, through a small country program team.

UNDP provides overall program oversight and take responsibility for standard GEF project cycle management services beyond assistance and oversight of project design and negotiation, including project monitoring, periodic evaluations, troubleshooting, and reporting to the GEF.

The SGP Country Program in Costa Rica is guided by a National Steering Committee (NSC) integrated by governmental and non-governmental organizations with a non-governmental majority, a UNDP representative, representatives from different sectors and organizations and individuals with expertise in the GEF Focal Areas. The NSC is responsible for grant selection and approval and for determining the overall strategy of the SGP in the country. At the beginning of each GEF Operational Phase the sectors and organizations represented in the NSC are requested to present their representatives for the new OP; the organizations and sectors have the right to maintain or renew their representatives. The proposed members of the NSC are appointed formally by the UNDP Resident Representative.

The SGP Costa Rica also has a Technical Committee, which is unique to Costa Rica and whose members also work pro-bono. This Committee advises the National Coordination on SGP priority thematic issues or areas of intervention, such as organic agriculture or biological corridors.

The National Coordination (Country Team) is composed of a National Coordinator, a Program Assistant, and a Secretary recruited through competitive processes. The National Coordination is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program.

The SGP in Costa Rica works through Grants selected by the NSC from proposals submitted by CBOs and NGOs through calls for proposals in specific thematic and geographic areas relevant to the SGP.

The SGP cycle for grants begins with the organization of dissemination workshops in different parts of the prioritized territories (Protected Areas and Biological Corridors) and the dissemination of the thematic and geographic areas open for proposals. CBOs and NGOs submit project concepts at any time during the year and the NSC, on a quarterly basis, does a thorough analysis of the received concepts and approves those that are best aligned with requirements (many times providing extensive comments to the submitting organizations) and rejects those that are not considered adequate for the SGP purposes of the Operational Phase. The organizations whose concepts were approved develop their concepts in to proposals that are reviewed and commented by the National Coordination and the NSC, until the NSC considers they are satisfactory and approves them. At this stage the approved projects enters implementation and the National Coordination organizes an initial workshop and training to agree on a workplan and to train the organization members in the administrative work related to the implementation of the grant.

In the Costa Rica SGP the grants are usually on the order of US\$ 25,000.- and the funded activities should be completed usually in one year (sometimes 18 months) allowing for justified, no-cost extensions. During this period each project is visited at least once and the organization should submit regular reports that are reviewed (and returned with comments when necessary) by the National Coordination.

At the end of the Project the National Coordination makes a final visit and an external independent evaluation and audit are also performed by third parties (other organizations or consultants).



### 3.5 Project timing and milestones

The Costa Rica SGP Country Program began its Fifth Operational Phase (OP5) in July 2011 with the CEO Endorsement of the full-size project (FSP). The internal arrangements within UNDP and UNOPS (e.g. developing the Project Document) to accommodate the new upgrading Country Program took the rest of the year and a few months of 2012.

Meanwhile, the NSC started to receive, analyze and comment grant project concepts and requested the submitting organizations to develop the proposals as a strategy to make up for lost implementation time. The NSC decisions were based in the approved SGP FSP project.

Finally, the Costa Rica SGP project for OP5 was formally launched in May 2012 and immediately after that the approved grant projects began receiving the disbursed funds and the project began normal operation.

During 2012, 2013 and early 2014 all SGP OP5 funds were committed to 120 projects thanks to the established mechanisms of keeping open the reception of Project proposals and having the NCS reviewing them every 3-4 months opening the way for the complete formulation of the approved concepts and maintaining a very efficient management of the process.

### 3.6 Main stakeholders summary list

Institution/stakeholder	Role/type of coordination
Ministry of the Environment (MINAE) - National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC), Biological Corridors National Program	This is the office, within SINAC, responsible for implementation of the Biological Corridors System, where SGP funded activities are located. SGP grant activities are coordinated with them. The Biological Corridors National Program also provides co-financing and technical assistance to SGP grantees.
MINAE - CADETI-Advisory Commission on Land Degradation	This organization is the national focal point for Land Degradation, and is the organization with which SGP coordinates actions on sustainable land management.
National Biodiversity Institute (INBio)	INBio is a key national biodiversity research and policy institution and it also implements projects. It is an SGP partner, providing co-financing, technical assistance and applied research support to grantees. INBio also works on climate change issues, in particular on ecosystems-based adaptation.
State Universities: University of Costa Rica, National University, and Distance Learning University	These organizations are key SGP partners as they carry out research on SGP-related subjects and locations throughout the country. They are also active in providing training at the local level on subjects relevant to SGP and its grantees.
Costa Rica Organic Production Movement (MAOCO)	SGP and MAOCO have a very well established partnership jointly funding many community-based initiatives related to organic production, pesticides use reduction, land conservation, etc.
National Network of Biological Corridors	This is a network of organizations (Governmental, NGOs, CBO, etc.) active on different aspects of conservation and sustainable use of resources in the officially designated biological corridors of the country. It is basically a coordination structure, but different joint initiatives, co-financing, technical assistance and training actions are implemented by SGP with this Network partners.
National Commission of Indigenous Affairs (CONAI) and National Indigenous Board (Mesa Nacional Indígena)	CONAI and MNI are members of the SGP NSC, and are responsible for carrying out the technical analysis of project proposals to be implemented in indigenous territories. SGP actions with indigenous development associations are coordinated with CONAI.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Project Strategy

#### Project Design

Conceptually, the project is well designed. The focus of the project was well defined both thematically and geographically based obviously on the experience gathered by the SGP in its previous Operational Phases.

With more than 300 field projects implemented before OP5, the SGP in Costa Rica has a wealth of experience about the potentials and constraints for action of the different community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organization (NGOs) partnering with the GEF-SGP at the local level for different actions.

At the same time the SGP design for OP5 in Costa Rica faced the challenge of its “upgrading”. This “upgrading” process meant evolving from an operation centrally coordinated and supervised by the SGP-CPMT in UNDP HQ and receiving annual budgets through CPMT to become a GEF full-size project, with a 4-year implementation period and pre-assigned funds for the entire period based on a budget coming from the Costa Rica GEF STAR allocation. The change also implied reducing the CPMT supervision function to a broad one of general coordination and projection of the GEF corporate image and presence at the global level e.g. at CoPs of the different Conventions, etc.

Supported by this experience and the described new operational frame as a GEF full-size project providing a 4-year planning and implementation horizon, the MTR finds that the project is achieving a good articulation of biodiversity and climate change activities and goals across its prioritized territories (eight Protected Areas and twelve Biological Corridors).

Probably the most difficult part of the project design is how to define indicators, baselines and goals at the end of the project based on an implementation model that is not based on direct implementation by a project team with its own staff, equipment and resources (as the usual GEF full-size project). Instead, the SGP is based on proposals submitted by independent organizations responding to public calls guided by a number of specific themes and aspects to be implemented on prioritized territories.

This difficult aspect seems to have been well addressed by the Costa Rica SGP Country Program because the achieved partial results and a few final ones from early OP5 projects seem to be relatively well on target (see next section 4.2 for a detailed analysis of this subject).

The design of the project took longer than expected because of the need to develop new planning guidelines for the SGP “upgrading country programs” as explained at the beginning of this section. As a consequence, the reception of proposals between OP4 and OP5 was closed for a period much longer than expected creating frustration among partners and disrupting some relationships that later required additional efforts to recuperate and maintain.

Finally, but not less important, the SGP project is well aligned with global and national priorities. Costa Rica, as signatory of the Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification Conventions is an eligible country for GEF funding in these areas.

All three areas configure significant action areas for Government and civil society organizations as presented in the pertinent National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the National Climate Change Strategy and the National Action Plan to combat Land Degradation. The SGP outcomes and

indicators are well aligned with these strategies in their respective issues. Moreover, the SGP has the relevant national organizations in these areas (National Program of Biological Corridors, the Climate Change Direction at the Ministry of Environment (MINAE) and the National Land Degradation Commission (CADETI) as partners and members of either the NSC or the SGP Technical Committee.

The project is also highly consistent with the 2008-2012 UNDAF (active at the time of project design) in the following outcomes: capacity building of local actors for a sustainable, inclusive and equitable development; promotion of effective participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies; development of analytical skills in social organizations for an informed and sustained public participation; changes in economic and socio-cultural practices in priority groups, in favor of environmental sustainability; and creation and strengthening of social networks that work under the principles of solidarity and respect for human rights.

The SGP OP5 is also fully consistent with three of the main strategic lines of action of UNDP Costa Rica's Country Program Document Framework (CPD): (i) Reducing poverty, inequality and social exclusion, (ii) Environment, energy and risk management, and (iii) Gender equality and equity. SGP supports community-based activities that simultaneously help reduce poverty, promote sustainable use of natural resources and, in general, improve environmental management, which includes energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy and reduction of risks caused by poor management of land and natural resources, such as mudslides in deforested areas.

In terms of gender issues, the PRODOC does not have specific indicators for gender, but it is stated that some Outcome 1 indicators will be presented disaggregated by gender.

Summarizing, from the MTR perspective there are no major or significant concerns about the design of this project.

### Results Framework/Logframe

The Project logframe is technically sound. Its different components are well defined and articulated and a clear logic can be easily identified across the different vertical layers (Project Objective, Outcome, Outputs) and horizontal components (Objective/Outcomes, Indicators, Baseline situation, End of Project Target, Source of verification and Assumptions).

This clear logical structure is not completely consistent with the SGP implementation mechanism, particularly at the level of the indicators and targets of the Project Objectives that are linked to the GEF Tracking Tools for Biodiversity. In other words, the logframe structure is well suited for a traditional GEF full-size project whose implementation mechanism is based on a substantial project team, equipment and funding allowing for the direct implementation of activities by the project with some consultancies and subcontracts to cover either specialized areas or topics beyond project capacities. The implementing structure of the SGP is quite different as the implementation is done by third parties that submit proposals developed on the basis of these parties' interests and capacities, oriented by general guidelines defining key aspects to be addressed by the proposals. This implementing mechanism means that the SGP only has partial control over what is proposed by the CBOs and NGOs and also that it may simply not receive proposals for different areas supposed to be covered because the organizations have no interest in them.

The most visible consequence of the described divergence is a structure of logframe indicators (mostly at Project Objective level) far more detailed than necessary, complicated and difficult to monitor at the Project level. The SGP Costa Rica logframe has indicators with baseline and targets to be achieved through the implementation of 120 different grant projects each one targeting small parts of different indicators and, eventually, other additional products not linked to specific indicators but requiring tracking as part of grant agreement. Therefore, this logframe implies monitoring both Outcome indicators directly linked to grant project products and Project Objective indicators linked to GEF Tracking Tools, all across 120 grant projects.

Therefore, while the Project logframe design was well achieved, the implementation and particularly the monitoring and evaluation tasks were difficult and heavy. A new project M&E system was designed for the Outcomes of the Biodiversity component and was successfully implemented despite being a demanding effort. The Climate Change Outcomes component of the M&E system is still under design and it is expected to be completed during the current OP5 (see Section 4.3.4 Project M&E for more details).

Finally, the design and operation of this new and large M&E system to track all indicators across all funded projects got in the way of reporting on the GEF Tracking Tools and the Project was unable, up to the MTR date, to fulfill its commitments towards filing out these tools.

The decision to prioritize the Outcomes M&E over the GEF TT was taken by the National Coordination in discussion with other upgrading SGPs and the UNDP-GEF Global Advisor. It is expected that this delay will be addressed before the end of the current OP5 phase.

Summarizing, the logframe design was theoretically good but not well adapted to the SGP implementation mechanism at the level of the GEF TT. Therefore, it needs to be redesigned and simplified for the next OP6 taking into consideration the particular implementation mode of the SGP. This aspect is a major concern emerging from the MTR.

The completion of the GEF Tracking Tools for OP5 is another aspect of concern of the MTR and it is expected that the Project will fulfill this task before the end of the current OP5 but a failure to satisfy this expectation may happen.

## 4.2 Progress Towards Results

### Progress towards outcomes analysis

The analysis of progress towards outcomes based on the results of the project M&E System regarding partial progress achieved by projects under implementation, the field visits to a dozen funded projects and the information of the completed projects (14 of 120) demonstrate that the project is going very well and that the agreed products and results will be achieved as planned by the end of the OP5.

The following table shows progress by outcome and indicators as reported by the M&E System at the time of the MTR. It also includes the pertinent MTR ratings and its justification. The fulfilling of the Project Objective indicators will be measured by aggregation at the end of OP5; therefore this information is not included in the following table. It is also necessary to remember the issue raised before about the delay to report on the GEF Tracking Tools during OP5.

It is relevant to highlight that, despite what was indicated in the PRODOC, up to now there is no disaggregation of information or indicators by gender.

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (30 June 2013)	End-of-project Target	Mid-term Level (30 June 2014)	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
OUTCOME 1 Community-based actions mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes in biological corridors and PA buffer zones	Increased number of biological corridor management plans	1 biological corridor management plan (Pajaro Campana BC)	12 Biological Management Plans are in the process of elaboration and implementation: Pájaro Camana BC, Alexander Skutch BC, Paso de la Danta BC, Premontano Chirripo Saavegre BC, Paso de las Lapas BC, San Juan la Selva, Volcanica Central-Talamanca, among others.	At least 10 biological corridor management plans that include PA buffer zones developed	12 Biological Corridors Management Plans are in the process of elaboration and implementation. 5 Biological Corridors Management Plans have been finished: Ruta los Malekus, Pájaro Camana BC, Alexander Skutch BC, Paso de la Danta BC, Bosque del Agua.  7 Biological Corridors Management Plans are due in June 2015: Premontano Chirripo Saavegre BC, Paso de las Lapas BC, San Juan la Selva, Volcanica Central-Talamanca, Cerros de Jesus, Cerros de la Carpintera and Río Navarro-Río Sombrero.	On-target	50% of plans completed and more than necessary to achieve target on its way on time.
	Increased percentage of community-based initiatives that obtain certification with national or international standards	10% currently achieve certification. The following certifications have been achieved by communities nationally: Organic production certification: 14; Tourism sustainability certificate by ICT: 4; "Blue Flag" ecological certification: 3; Fair trade certification: 5	25 projects so far have achieved an environmental certification related to their productive activities: responsible fishery, tourism sustainable certificate (CST), Blue Flag ecological certification, Fair trade certification and Organic Agriculture certification.  At least 250 agricultural producers are in the process of changing their production practices to organic (Abrojo, Asobrunka, Asociación Guanacasteca, ADITICA, ASOMOB, ASOPROLA, ASOMOAS, Bijagual, Coto Brus, CJM).	At least 50% of community sustainable livelihood initiatives supported by SGP obtain environmental certification	52 projects so far have achieved an environmental certification related to their productive activities: responsible fishery, tourism sustainable certificate (CST), Blue Flag ecological certification, Fair trade certification and Organic Agriculture certification.  At least 300 agricultural producers are in the process of changing their production practices to organic (Abrojo, Asobrunka, Asociación Guanacasteca, ADITICA, ASOMOB, ASOPROLA, ASOMOAS, Bijagual, Coto Brus, CJM).	On-target	Number of certified projects already duplicated.  Number of producers already in process have already surpass target by 20%
	Increased number of community conservation areas	There are no community conservation areas in the project geographic regions	16 communities have increased inland and marine protected areas coverage, on 39,063 ha.	5 new community protected areas increase by at least 2,000 ha community conservation areas in Costa Rica	At least 19 communities have increased inland and marine protected areas coverage, on 40,454 ha. Target has been surpassed.	Achieved	Area targets and number of initiatives widely surpassed

	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (30 June 2013)	End-of-project Target	Mid-term Level (30 June 2014)	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
	Increased number of communities benefiting from Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)	20 communities supported by SGP currently receive PES	12 additional communities in the project area have received PES.	10 additional communities in the project area receive PES	17 additional communities in the project area have received PES. Target has been surpassed.	Achieved	Target number of new communities receiving PES already surpassed by 70%
	Increased number of families generating income from sustainable livelihood activities	200 families supported by SGP obtain income from sustainable livelihood activities	2,417 families generate income from sustainable production practices promoted by SGP projects (e.g. sustainable use of species for handcraft production, ecotourism, agroforestry, organic apiculture, fisheries, organic agriculture, etc.).	200 families supported by SGP obtain income from sustainable livelihood activities	3,122 additional families will generate income from sustainable production practices (eg., sustainable use of species for handcraft production, ecotourism, agroforestry, organic apiculture, etc.) Target has been surpassed.	Achieved	Target number of additional families generating income from sustainable production widely surpassed already
OUTCOME 2 GHG emissions reduced and carbon stocks increased through community-based actions	Increased renewable energy capacity installed: - By SGP - From replication	Existing capacity at community level in project area: Biodigestors: 300; Solar dryers: 5; Micro-hydro: 0; PV panels: 10	Additional capacity at community level: Biodigestors: SGP 106, through replication 80 Solar dryers: SGP 4, through replication 2 (Asomobi, Cedral); Micro-hydro: SGP 7, through replication 0; PV panels: SGP 100, through replication 20 approx.	Additional capacity at community level: Biodigestors: SGP 300, through replication 600; Solar dryers: SGP 4, through replication 16; Micro-hydro: SGP 6, through replication 20; PV panels: SGP 5, through replication 10	Additional capacity at community level: Biodigestors: SGP 134, through replication 80 Solar dryers: SGP 14, through replication 2 (Asomobi, Cedral); Micro-hydro: SGP 6, through replication 0; PV panels: SGP 102, through replication 20 approx. Replication will be more accurately measured towards the end of the project.	On-target in average	Biodigestors: good progress, target probably will not be achieved. Solar dryers: SGP target already surpassed Micro hydro: SGP on target PV panels: all targets already surpassed Replication will be more accurately measured towards the end of the project.

	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (30 June 2013)	End-of-project Target	Mid-term Level (30 June 2014)	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
	Increased electricity and heat produced from renewable sources	7,600 kWh	There are 18 projects under implementation contributing to this target but the measurements have not been made (CAC Coto Brus, CJM, ASOMOAS, Actuar, Fundarbol, ACEM, Calle Mora y Bajo Chirripo)	8,054,600 kWh more produced from renewable sources	There are 18 projects under implementation contributing to this target but the measurements have not been made (CAC Coto Brus, CJM, ASOMOAS, Actuar, Fundarbol, ACEM, Calle Mora y Bajo Chirripo)	On-target	The number of projects under implementation is large enough. Actual measurement of energy not measured yet.
	Improved energy efficiency in rural productive activities - By SGP - From replication	No rural community tourism venture (30 rural hostels) currently applies EE practices:  Efficient electric engines in project area: 0; CFL: 0	20 rural hostels use PV panels to reduce energy consumption (2 projects: ACTUAR NEOTROPICA)	40% reduction of energy consumption in 30 rural hostels: Energy efficient electric engines: SGP 50, through replication 100; CFL: SGP 500, through replication 1,500	20 rural hostels use PV panels to reduce energy consumption (2 projects: ACTUAR NEOTROPICA) measurement of energy consumption has not been estimated.	On-target <b>One indicator not measured</b>	66% of target in hostels already achieved. More efficient electric engines in progress, no actual number of new engines available
	Improved credit availability for RE and/or EE in rural areas	Credit availability and conditions to be determined for project geographic area at project inception	At a national level we have not established coordination yet with any financial institutions providing credit for RE and EE, however three projects have started their own credit systems to promote RE and EE (Actuar, ACEM, and ASIREA)	Credit availability and conditions to be determined for project geographic area at project inception	At a national level we have not established coordination yet with any financial institutions providing credit for RE and EE, however three projects have started their own credit systems to promote RE and EE (Actuar, ACEM, and ASIREA)	On-target	National financial institutions still not committed.  Three non-financial organizations began their own credit systems
	Increased number of crews in the rural areas able to prevent and manage forest fires	10 fire-fighting crews trained and equipped	22 additional firefighting brigades trained, equipped and active	30 additional crews trained, equipped, and active	25 additional firefighting brigades trained, equipped and active and one strategic project has been approved to strengthen the National Commission for Forest Fire Prevention	On-target	25 fire brigades already active from a total target of 30 brigades

	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (30 June 2013)	End-of-project Target	Mid-term Level (30 June 2014)	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
	Increased number of communities trained and with seedlings to undertake reforestation in degraded areas or to increase biomass in agricultural lands	There are no communities undertaking reforestation in the project areas	No data available yet	10 communities reforesting priority areas identified by biological corridors' management plans and planting trees in their agricultural lands	10 priority areas for reforestation have been identified in Biological Corridors: Asada Santiago, Fundación Conservacionista Costarricense, ACCT, Kabacol-ska-Dikol, Asada la Florida, Fudebiol, Asobrunka, COBAS, Bribipa kaneblo y ACBTC for a total 155.000 trees.	On-target	Priority areas and organizations already identified and committed. Planting seasonal activities on its way at the MTR time.
<b>OUTCOME 3</b> Conservation of productive lands and restoration of degraded lands contribute to sustainability and improved local livelihoods	Increased number of communities contributing to the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Desertification in the Jesus Maria Watershed	The National Plan has been developed but no communities in the project area are implementing actions identified in the Plan	8 communities within the watershed have started the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Desertification, 6 rural community water committees (ASADA) are implementing watershed management activities.  The Watershed Management Commission is expected to be created towards the end of the project. Negotiations with private sector organizations have started, to integrate them into the Commission (INCOOP)	Plan adopted and under implementation by 8 communities within the watershed;  40 leaders in the 8 communities trained in techniques related to integrated watershed management;  12 representatives participating actively in the Watershed Management Commission	9 communities within the watershed have started the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Desertification, 7 rural community water committees (ASADA) are implementing watershed management activities.  The Watershed Management Commission is expected to be created towards the end of the project. Negotiations with private sector organizations have started, to integrate them into the Commission (INCOOP, AVOPAC)	On-target in average	More communities than target already working.  Leaders training not accounted yet.  Watershed Management Commission planned for last year of SGP.
	Reduced degraded area in community lands in the Jesus Maria basin	TBD. Watershed status assessment underway	37,829 ha in the Jesus Maria watershed managed for environmental sustainability.	29,500 ha in the Jesus Maria watershed managed for environmental sustainability	37,829 ha in the Jesus Maria watershed managed for environmental sustainability. Target has been surpassed.	Achieved	Target number of hectares under management already surpassed



	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (30 June 2013)	End-of-project Target	Mid-term Level (30 June 2014)	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
	Increased sources of investment at local level for SLM	There is no investment in SLM in the project area	3 communities in the JM watershed have received PES, and 8 more are starting the process to receive it.  All SLM community initiatives financed by SGP are receiving support from national government institutions for the implementation of their initiatives through the regional agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) and the Ministry of Environment (MINAE-SINAC).	8 new communities in the Jesus Maria watershed receive PES;  At least 50% of SLM community initiatives financed by SGP receive support from national government institutions for their continuity	3 communities in the JM watershed have received PES, and 8 more are starting the process to receive it.  All SLM community initiatives financed by SGP are receiving support from national government institutions for the implementation of their initiatives through the regional agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) and the Ministry of Environment (MINAE-SINAC).	On-target	Number of communities receiving PES on its way to surpass target.  Target number of communities receiving support from Government already achieved.
	Increased family income resulting from SLM activities	The average rural family income is \$300 monthly	This target needs to be revised. The process to measure this target credibly is too expensive and would require a significant investment.	15% increased income for families involved in sustainable production activities; 50% increased income for women participating in SLM activities; 75% increased income for indigenous communities participating in SLM activities	This target needs to be revised. The process to measure this target credibly is too expensive and would require a significant investment.	n.a.	MTR agrees with the need to cancel or redefine this target.

	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (30 June 2013)	End-of-project Target	Mid-term Level (30 June 2014)	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
<p>OUTCOME 4</p> <p>Community-based organizations and their members with improved capacities and knowledge management for replication and upscaling of best practices</p>	Increased community contributions to national policy and legislation related to project thematic priorities	SGP-related groups are actively promoting 2 law proposals (Laws promoting Organic agri-culture and Rural Community Tourism) in Congress	No progress reported on this target	At least 2 additional national policies and legislation related to project thematic priorities passed during FSP execution.	Two political incidence process are carried out by CONIFOR, the Proposal of the Law on Control and Prevention of Forest Fire, and CANTURURAL, the Regulation of the Law on RCT.	On-target	Two policies in process as targeted. No legislation passed yet but expected to happen during last year of SGP implementation
	Increased number of eligible projects demonstrating community understanding of global environmental issues and their local solutions	Less than 30% of projects received are eligible; Most communities within the Jesus Maria watershed and BC lack understanding of global environmental issues	98 projects have participated in capacity development activities and recognize the relevance of their project goals and activities related to global environmental issues	70% of projects are eligible after implementation of capacity development activities;  100 communities participating in SGP-funded projects able to articulate the relevance of their project goals and activities to related global environmental issues	118 projects have participated in capacity development activities and recognize the relevance of their project goals and activities related to global environmental issues	On-target	While it seems that the targets are already achieved there are some mismatches between the targets and the achievements (e.g. it is not clarified how many communities have presented the 118 projects or there is no information about the % of projects eligibility)
	Rate of successful community projects	90% of SGP-funded projects achieve project objectives	No data available yet.	The rate of success of SGP-funded projects during GEF-5 remains 90% or higher	Delays and low risks on the implementation of 5 projects (Mulurbi, Fenopea, Ecogamatillo, Bajo Chirripó y Abrojo Montezuma) make up to 4% of total projects and 3% of grants allocated.	On-target	96% of project success already achieved but there still 106 active projects to be finished during the last SGP year
	Increased number of contributions from SGP Costa Rica to local and national publications and media, as well as to knowledge products of the Global SGP and UNDP	SGP results and activities are published, announced or quoted by the media at local and national levels at least twice a year	40 knowledge products planned. Some of them are in the process of elaboration and publication. Target has been surpassed.	15 knowledge products published or quoted by the media during the lifetime of the project	62 knowledge products planned. Some of them are in the process of elaboration and publication..	On-target	The number of planned products is much higher than the target.  The goal is about products published (not just planned), therefore it seems to be on-target but not achieved yet.

### Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

Based on the information from the table in the previous section it is fairly evident that the project is well positioned to achieve its results at the planned date for the end of the project next June 2015.

Comments related to the number of indicators and goals and its mismatch with the particular SGP implementation processes will not affect the achievement of the OP5 project objectives; it is something to keep in mind when developing the new proposal for OP6.

Similarly, the delay in reporting on the GEF Tracking Tools will not affect the achievement of the project objectives; it is a task to be completed before the end of the current phase.

Summarizing, the MTR did not identify significant remaining barriers constraining the achievement of the project results and objectives at the end of the current phase.

## 4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

### Management Arrangements

During this OP5, and with the SGP operating as a “upgrading” program, management arrangements and procedures worked well, according to all interviewed parties.

The coordination with the UNDP CO was good; the UNDP Program Officer is a member of the NSC and participates in most of the meetings and tasks and maintains a good idea of project activities, potential, problems, etc.

The Costa Rica SGP is well recognized and respected within UNDP CO and there is a good working relationship with different units and projects. This situation is helped by the fact that the SGP National Coordination team is hosted by the UNDP CO.

The NSC meets regularly, and more frequently at the time of review of submitted proposals. It contributes to the overall management of the SGP by reviewing periodically the progress towards results and indicators and making decisions about adjustments in funding priorities based on the M&E system results. The NSC and the Technical Committee also provide different and good communication channels with other governmental, academic and civil organizations active in the SGP fields of interest.

Despite the good and harmonious operation of the SGP Costa Rica as an upgrading country program during OP5, a basic vacuum remains in terms of strategic management and decision making about the SGP itself. During the previous Operational Phases, as a regular SGP participant in the SGP Global Program, the Costa Rica SGP reported directly to the SGP CPMT (Central Program Management Team) at the SGP central office at UNDP HQ in New York.

With the “upgrading”, this reporting line was replaced by a coordination line and no reporting line was established. Therefore, there are no operational problems when everything goes well, but there are not clear supervision mechanisms for when they don't.

The obvious solution is to create a strategic management function to address these issues and the evaluation's opinion is that this new function of SGP strategic management should be incorporated into the TOR of the National Steering Committee (see Conclusions and Recommendations for more details on this). The justification for this recommendation is that it is the governing structure of the SGP at country level, all stakeholders are represented on the NSC and it is a structure that already exists formally and is widely recognized.

On a different issue, the workload of the National Coordination Team is very demanding because of the large number of active projects (at times up to 120 in OP5) and the growing administrative load (reports, audits, M&E System, etc.). The team has incorporated a secretary on a temporary basis with the idea of making this position permanent; this idea seems appropriate considering what was said before.

Currently all the project supervision work is done by the National Coordination and this task does not leave enough time to attend the different demands that other organizations and processes (national and local) put on the SGP. The Costa Rica SGP has been active for 20 years and it is a highly regarded and prestigious actor in the national conservation and sustainable development community and its experiences are highly regarded and valued; this situation explains the growing demands for the SGP Country Program involvement in other processes. Unfortunately, under the current management approach there is no time available to meet those demands, and this situation translates in loss of opportunities for involvement in policies, procedures and projects that can benefit significantly from the SGP experience.

This is an aspect of concern for the MTR and effective solutions should be developed to solve this constraint; most probably similar situations happened or are happening in other upgrading SGP Country Programs around the world and the Costa Rica Country Program could (and should) look for these different experiences to get useful ideas to develop its own solution to this issue.

### Work planning

Work planning does not present major problems. The SGP develops and follows an Annual Workplan that is used to develop monthly workplans.

All approved project proposals are based on the SGP logframe results and indicators, and there is a clear and visible connection between the project logframe and the proposals. As said before, monitoring and evaluation becomes demanding because each small project targets different indicators and goals, multiplying the tracking of results and their aggregation across different projects.

Reviewing the NSC meeting reports, the comments on project proposals, the project reports and the final project reports and audits it is clear that the SGP logframe is widely used to keep the project on the right track.

The MTR finds that work planning is well conducted and there are no MTR concerns in this regard.

## Finance and co-finance

The project management costs have remained at similar levels to previous stages. Some previous studies indicate that the efficiency of SGP is comparable or better than the average of GEF projects, therefore there is no much more to comment on this.

Some observations from government officers mentioned the need to reduce overhead costs allocated to the project implementing and executing agencies to ensure that a greater proportion of funds reach the final beneficiaries. There were no comments regarding the costs of SGP project coordination. This is an issue that exceeds the reach of the MTR but it is noted here for the benefit of other reviews and evaluations.

In terms of co-financing, the key component in this area is the co-financing contribution from the organizations submitting and implementing projects. According to the reports from organizations that have completed their projects (14 out of 120), they were able to mobilize more resources than had been committed in the initial document. SGP Costa Rica requires at least a level of co-financing equal to the amount received from the GEF (1:1 ratio). This co-financing can be provided in cash or in kind, at the discretion of the applicant organization.

This combination of low financing and co-financing (the SGP grants in Costa Rica average US\$ 25,000) has been a very important factor to encourage small local groups, usually from more remote areas and integrated by more marginalized groups (women, youth, indigenous) to submit proposals to SGP. When these proposals are approved and the SGP process of training and monitoring takes place, these groups quickly learn to use the proceeds from SGP to attract co-financing from other groups ranging from government organizations to local businesses and residents, either in cash or in kind. This process makes the cash co-financing at the end of the project much higher than originally committed. The following table illustrates this with data from some completed projects of the current OP5.

ORGANIZATION	THEME	Initially Committed co-financing*	Final co-financing In-kind	Final co-financing Cash	Final co-financing TOTAL	Ratio Final vs Initial
Fundación Madre Verde	Biological Corridors	20.500.-	138.471.-	2.000.-	140.471.-	6.85
ASADA Santiago de Palmares	Integrated Management of water resources	21.000.-	9.665.-	80.219.-	89.884.-	4.28
ASADA EL Pavón de Los Chiles	Integrated Management of water resources	20.000.-	47.880.-	930.-	48.810.-	2.44
Ecology Project International - EPI	Fire management & Conservation Volunteers	20.000.-	11.802.-	35.000.-	46.802.-	2.34
Federación de Gobiernos Locales Costarricenses Fronterizos con Nicaragua	Biological Corridors	20.000.-	0.-	104.091.-	104.091.-	5,20
Programa Restauración de Tortugas Marinas- PRETOMA	Sustainable production	22.830.-	46.400.-	62.530.-	108.930	4.77

\* The co-financing committed at the submission of the proposal is equal to the GEF-SGP funding (1:1 ratio)

The overall co-financing situation of the Costa Rica SGP is summarized below.

#	Sources of Co-Funding	Name of Co-Financier (source)	Type of Cofinancing	Amount at design (USD)	Disbursed / committed until June 2014 (USD)	Notes
1	National Government	CADETI. Land Degradation Committee	In Kind	638,400.-	n.a.	No final accounting yet
3	GEF Agency	UNDP	In Kind	100,000.-	60,000.-	Estimated
4	GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	1,000,000.-	280,000.-	Satoyama Initiative negotiated by UNDP
5	CSO	Grantees	In Kind	1,600,000.-	3.968.531.-	Committed in Project proposals to SGP + Final figures from terminated projects (14 of 120)
6	CSO	Grantees	Cash	1,000,000.-	1.140.584.-	
7	Private sector	Not specified	In Kind	100,000.-	n.a.	No final accounting yet
8	Bilateral aid agencies	Not specified	Cash	125,000.-	n.a.	No final accounting yet
9	Others	Not specified	In Kind	61,600.-	n.a.	No final accounting yet
<b>Total:</b>				<b>4,625,000.-</b>	<b>5,449,115.-</b>	

From this table it becomes evident that the Costa Rica SGP Country Program is well positioned towards surpassing its co-financing targets. Some contributions have not been fully accounted for yet because most projects are still under implementation. Moreover, considering how grantees co-financing is evolving towards figures much higher than committed at project proposals, it is reasonable to expect that co-financing at the end of the project will be higher than these current figures.

#### Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

The monitoring and evaluation of the Costa Rica SGP Country Program is very good for the components already in place (biodiversity and land degradation) and very promising in the still missing component (climate change).

The already operational components (biodiversity and land degradation) are well conceptualized and they are in use since the early stages of the OP5. This system is really excellent and has become a very important tool for decision-making for the NSC (National Steering Committee) and to supply information to other organizations such as the UNDP Country Office, various departments of the Ministry of Environment and other organizations.

The climate change monitoring component is already designed in concept, but still in the process of operational design. There were some delays in hiring the computer design consultants for this task due to minor mismatches in the consultant-hiring process. It is expected that this component will be fully operational and able to provide informing results by the end of OP5.

The M&E Budget is well presented in the SGP ProDoc with adequate detail in both activities and budget. Budgets seem appropriate for the different tasks and they are spent without obstacles, as evidenced by the different reports, interviews and field visits.

The Project M&E does not present any area of concern for the MTR, aside from the need to fulfill the commitment of completing the climate change component during OP5.

### Stakeholder engagement

The SGP in Costa Rica has formed well established and long-standing relationships with national and community level initiatives and partners (public and private sector), and has continued seeking synergies during OP5.

Local communities located in the buffer zones of the selected Protected Areas and biological corridors are the most important SGP partners, including indigenous territories (it is worthy of consideration that in previous phases the SGP has worked in all of the 24 indigenous territories).

Despite the lack of specific information about gender, it is necessary to highlight that the evidence collected during the field visits shows that different women groups are supported by the SGP in different activities and places and that women are active and usually (though not always) occupy relevant positions in the implementation of the SGP supported projects. This is an issue that SGP needs to start paying more formal attention to in terms of reporting, to be able to provide strong evidence supporting the levels of gender integration seen in the field.

Based on the evidence provided by the field visits and interviews it becomes clear that there is a close communication between the Country Program Team and the local partners. The frequent visits by the coordinator and the easy access to the entire team by phone, cellphone and email have contributed to develop an active and fluid relationship between the project and the local organizations providing a strong base for a better engagement of the stakeholders in all project activities.

Additionally, SGP maintains close cooperation with other national organizations (governmental as well as civil) as previously explained through their participation in the NSC and the Technical Committee. It is also necessary to highlight that the SGP participates actively in some processes led by other organizations such as:

- Comité Coordinador de la Red Nacional de Corredores Biológicos (Coordination Committee of the National Network of Biological Corridors)
- Comité MAB-UNESCO (MAB-UNESCO Committee)
- Directorio del Bosque Modelo Reventazón (Reventazon Model Forest Directorate)
- Comisión GEF-Costa Rica (GEF-Costa Rica Commission)
- Comisión del Pez León (Lion Fish Commission)

Summarizing, there are no significant MTR concerns regarding stakeholder engagement with the Costa Rica SGP.

### Reporting

Reporting works smoothly in general, particularly regarding the reporting from the National Coordination to the National Steering Committee. Besides the regular meetings usually attended by all representatives, there is a significant flow of information through email and other digital means.

NSC members feel well informed and updated about project progress and well consulted by the National Coordination regarding critical issues. At the same time, the National Coordination perception is that the NSC provides good support to the project and a good space to address project problems, analyze new ideas, etc.

GEF reporting is well performed in general. During OP5 PIR documents for 2012 were completed on schedule in 2013, and PIR documentation for 2013 is almost ready for submission at the time of this MTR in 2014.

There is a significant delay in reporting using the GEF Tracking Tools due to the intensive work demanded by the design and operation of the SGP M&E System as presented before. This situation will return to its regular status before the end of OP5.

### Communications

As presented above in the section on stakeholder engagement, SGP communications with stakeholders and partners are excellent. No other comments are needed about this.

In terms of public communications the situation is very good, mainly due to its excellent Website. The project website (<http://www.pequenasdonacionescr.org>) is attractive and has lots of information for those visiting it for the first time as well for others looking for specific information. An important aspect to highlight is that more than a hundred documents and some videos that present an important part of the SGP experience -including a significant number of documents of analysis of experiences (a quarter of the posts)- are available in the section of documents and publications. Interim and final project evaluations (almost another 25%), both essential for the management of lessons learned are also included. This wealth of experience and lessons is one of the greatest legacies of the Costa Rica SGP (in addition to its concrete field results) and the fact that they are easily accessible to the public is a strength to highlight and maintain.

As informed before, there is a high demand for SGP experience and presence in several initiatives, processes and projects at national and local levels that the SGP cannot meet at this time because of the time constraints of the workplan of the National Coordination. There are significant missed opportunities for all SGP, UNDP and GEF to influence key conservation and sustainable development processes in the country and this is something that needs to be solved. This point was already raised at the pertinent section before (Management arrangements).

## 4.4 Sustainability

### Financial risks to sustainability

The financial risks for the sustainability of the actions funded in OP5 do not seem important. In other words, the invested resources are there in the hands of the local organizations and well incorporated into their actions. Because of the co-financing procedures, the different operating networks and the learning process that participating in the SGP process means for the local



organizations it is reasonable to expect that a large majority of the products and results of the funded projects will remain in place, as products from previous SGP phases can be seen today.

Moving into a more detailed assessment, the first thing that becomes evident is that there are some lines of work that can be considered already as sustainable and autonomous from the SGP. This does not necessarily mean that the SGP should remove itself from these lines, but it means that they will be able to continue their development in the event of a disruption of SGP Country Program operations. The lines of work that can be considered in this situation include rural tourism, organic agriculture and the work with the local water management bodies (ASADAs, or Rural Water Supply Management Associations).

Other lines are implemented in coordination with Governmental organizations, and it is expected that the latter guarantee the continuity of these lines. This is the case for SGP supported work on fire control and management of biological corridors and buffer zones of protected areas.

Last but not least, there are some lines of work that still may depend to some degree on the continued action of the SGP Country Program, particularly for their expansion, such as sustainable agriculture and the introduction of alternative energy sources in rural areas. The mentioned expansion of these lines may be an aspect to consider for the SGP actions in OP6, particularly those related with energy considering that Costa Rica is in a process to transform its energy matrix and the contributions of SGP in rural areas have potential for significant impacts.

#### *Socio-economic risks to sustainability*

Socio-economic risks are not very important because of the way in which SGP is implemented. SGP activities are not decided by the project, they are decided, designed, justified and implemented by the local groups committing their own resources to the activities they propose.

As a consequence, what is perceived in the field visits and interviews with the local groups is that they are entirely committed to the success and continuity of the undertaken efforts.

Similarly, the engagement of national organizations, local governments, projects, universities and other stakeholders in the field projects also contribute to create an enabling environment protecting the initiatives from the usual socio-economic problems.

Additionally the SGP contributes to this enabling environment by promoting and encouraging the different groups to come together and exchange experiences. These exchanges takes place both locally among different projects active in the same area, or thematically through the different networks linked or supported by the Country Program. These groups are related to activities such as the organic agriculture movement, the rural tourism networks or others. In the field visits and interviews it is a common feature for the new groups to mention how they were supported by experienced colleagues in terms of contacts, advice and even technical support. This experience provides additional evidence of the strength and value of this enabling environment locally promoted by the SGP.

### *Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability*

An important aspect for the sustainability of the initiatives funded by SGP Costa Rica is the way in which technical and legal assistance and even additional funding to support local groups are provided. In this aspect, the SGP Costa Rica has followed the path to instruct, guide and encourage groups to obtain and manage the support they need by addressing directly the various and multiple national (public and private) organizations that fulfill this task for community initiatives in Costa Rica.

Obviously this path has been possible because there are many such organizations in the country. However, the selection of this path by the SGP Country Program should be noted as a positive and more sustainable alternative than hiring organizations to provide technical support and training that is common in other projects in the country.

The strategy followed by the SGP Costa Rica in this issue is important because it ensures that the groups may continue to manage support and collaboration of different types even if SGP Costa Rica does not have the expected continuity or decides not to repeat projects supporting these organizations.

### *Environmental risks to sustainability*

The most evident risk to the environmental sustainability of SGP actions is a long-term one: climate change. This is a relevant risk because of its scale and because it has the potential to affect the core component of the SGP (and GEF) approach: biodiversity conservation in protected areas, biological corridors and buffer zones. Everybody expects that the work in environmental connectivity carried out by GEF, SGP and many other agencies and organizations will be enough to reduce the risks that climate change poses for biodiversity conservation, but nobody knows for sure. Therefore, and despite the uncertainty, doing what is being done is still the best no-regrets bet.

Other short-term risks as deforestation, forest fires, environmental degradation (soil, water, etc.) can be significant in very specific parts of the country or to some very specific SGP-supported projects, but they do not imply a generalized risk for the entire set of project activities.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

1. The current GEF full-size project for the SGP Costa Rica Country Program corresponding to the 5th Operational Phase of the GEF is relevant to the objectives with which it must maintain consistency (GEF and country).
2. The project is implementing the planned activities adequately. Reviewing the completed projects (14 of 120) and the progress of those still underway it is expected the SGP Costa Rica Country Program will achieve successfully its planned indicators and targets, probably exceeding many of them.
3. The project is operating within the historical average efficiency of SGP projects. Previous studies have shown that the SGP efficiency is good in relation to the general average of GEF-funded projects.
4. The level of co-financing already raised by the SGP surpasses the amount committed at project design in the PRODOC. The analysis of actual co-financing at the end of the terminated projects shows that the achieved co-financing is higher than the committed. Adding to this situation the fact that some co-financing commitment from other sources are not yet accounted for, it can be expected that the SGP Country Program will actually surpass the level of agreed co-financing at the end of the project by a fairly large proportion.
5. The sustainability of the SGP grant funded initiatives is good with the expected differences among lines and thematic areas. The MTR did not find reasons for concern regarding sustainability of the results.
6. The Costa Rica SGP Country Program has achieved, throughout its history and including this partially assessed phase, many impacts as evidenced in part by the sustainability of its results as stated in the previous paragraph. The impacts at the level of the regions where SGP works have multiplied and far exceed the initial investment and scope of their activities. In this regard, the project has worked as a real "incubator" of initiatives that were developed and have prospered beyond the original SGP support.
7. One interesting aspect to be noted, despite its relatively small financial implications, is the incursion of SGP into alternative sources of clean energy beyond the traditional and useful biogas. The work with photovoltaic solar panels and micro-hydropower initiatives are a fundamental step to be taken in rural areas and the efforts of the SGP Costa Rica in this area should be commended.
8. There are some aspects to be solved during the rest of OP5 (see Recommendations below) but none of them is cause for concern regarding the achievement of SGP results in OP5.
9. The different and numerous strengths and opportunities of the project should lead to the development of an attractive proposal for the GEF Operational Phase 6 and its eventual execution should continue and expand the actions and impacts achieved so far.

## 5.2 Recommendations

1. To complete the current fifth operational phase of the SGP in Costa Rica it should maintain the current existing operational procedures and systems that have proven effective and efficient in achieving the proposed results. Overall, the SGP Costa Rica project is implemented very appropriately; therefore, the first recommendation is to keep up the good work.
2. To complete the development of the SGP Country Program M&E System using the same conceptual and operational approach already in place for the Biodiversity component of the project to develop the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the Climate change component. This task needs to be fulfilled during the current OP5.
3. A similar recommendation is related with the reporting on the GEF Tracking Tools. Despite the mentioned issues detailed at section 4.1 (under Results framework / logframe) it is recommended to the Country Program to make all possible efforts to fulfill its task of reporting on the GEF Tracking Tools.
4. To collect better information on gender issues. At the time of the MTR there are no indicators focused on these issues and the presentation of disaggregated information by gender mentioned in the PRODOC has not happened. Despite that, there is evidence emerging from the field visits about a significant level of gender integration, therefore what is missing are the tools to collect this information formally in order to provide the necessary evidence about these issues.
5. To identify a feasible way to strengthen the National Coordination team. The monitoring of field activities of the SGP Costa Rica is very good. Each project is visited at least three times during execution and also the groups are in regular contact by phone or email with the National Coordination resulting in a close relationship between the SGP Country Program and the beneficiaries. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation system is excellent but running it demands a lot of work. Maintaining this level of operations with 120 funded projects is simply too much for a small two-person Coordination team with a secretary. Currently the large workload for the staff implies the loss of many opportunities to impact on local, regional and national processes to which the SGP is invited to contribute and which cannot be addressed simply for lack of time. The identification of the most appropriate way to strengthen the National Coordination is a task to be undertaken jointly with the National Steering Committee; the MTR suggest to look into the experience of other Upgrading Country Programs in the system to find ideas about how to fulfill this need.
6. To expand the Terms of Reference of the National Steering Committee (NSC) to include dealing with key strategic management aspects that are currently in a situation of uncertainty due to the upgrading of SGP Costa Rica. The following proposed aspects, among other, to be included in the new TOR are:
  - Annual assessment of the National Coordination
  - Full Assessment of the National Coordination team at the end of each operating phase and decision on its continuation or renewal.
  - Periodic renewal of the members of the NSC following the existing modality at the beginning of each operational phase.
  - Monitoring the thematic and geographical scope of the SGP Country Program in Costa Rica
  - Monitoring and evaluation system and reporting
  - Monitoring SGP knowledge management processes (evaluations, systematization, guidelines, papers, website and others)

- Other topics to be presented to the National Steering Committee and considers as strategic by the NSC

In defining the tasks of strategic management mentioned above it is very important to keep them distinct and non-overlapping with UNOPS, UNDP Country Office and the SGP National Coordination functions. The MTR also recommends that the task of extending the terms of reference of the National Steering Committee should be coordinated by the UNDP-GEF Global Technical Advisor for SGP Upgrading Country Programs in order to ensure consistency across the group of SGP upgrading country programs .

7. To keep the concentration of activities in the area of land degradation in the Jesus Maria river basin at least until convincing evidence is generated about the achievement of significant impacts (or lack of them) in that territory. This process may provide valuable information about the usefulness of concentrating efforts in specific territories to achieve visible impacts.
8. To make all necessary efforts to develop a new project proposal for the next operational phase of the GEF that maximizes the chances of being incorporated into the national GEF portfolio preserving the “upgrading” nature of the Costa Rica SGP.

*Costa Rica, August 26, 2014*

## **ANNEXES**

## ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Terms of Reference

#### *Evaluations of the GEF-financed Full-Size Projects for the Fifth Phase of the GEF Small Grants Program in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya and México*

The five projects listed here were approved in GEF OP5 as upgrading country Program projects financed by the GEF. Upgrading SGP Country Program projects are products of the policy approved by GEF Council at the November Council of 2008. Under this policy, countries were encouraged to finance their SGP Country Programs with a higher amount from their STAR allocations. The average GEF financing per upgrading country Program is USD 4.6 million.

Upgrading Country Programs follow SGP Operational Guidelines, in particular in regard to the composition of the National Steering Committee and the role of the National Coordinator. The four-year standard Country Program Strategies have been substituted by UNDP-GEF Project Documents in which a logical framework delineates the expected outputs and outcomes to be produced as a consequence of a focused grant making scheme. In the case of the five UCPs listed here, UNOPS remains the executing agency.

The evaluations of the five projects consist of one Terminal Evaluation (Mexico) and four Midterm Reviews (Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Kenya). UNDP-GEF supplies standard TORs for Terminal Evaluations (page 2-13) and Midterm Reviews (page 14-25), which can be found below. The project evaluations will require assessment, against the outcomes and outputs of each project, of the impacts achieved or in progress, identification of lessons learned, identification of bottlenecks and obstacles to further implementation and development of the Country Programs for the future. The evaluator will produce an individual written assessment report for each project, as well as an overall synthetic, comparative report across all projects which will identify trends and patterns in design and implementation as input to SGP Program analysis overall.

## UNDP-GEF Midterm Review Terms of Reference Template

*Note: This template MTR ToR fits the formatting requirements of the UNDP Procurement website.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the *full or medium*-sized project titled *Project Title* (PIMS#) implemented through the *Executing Agency*, which is to be undertaken in *year*. The project started on the *project document signature date* and is in its *third* year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated following the completion of the second Annual Project Review/ Project Implementation Report (APR/PIR). 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*.

### 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to: *(provide a brief introduction to the project including project goal, objective and key outcomes, its location, timeframe the justification for the project, total budget and planned co-financing. Briefly describe the institutional arrangements of the project and any other relevant partners and stakeholders).*

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THIS MTR

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document (ProDoc), and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to achieve results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, its risks to sustainability and the project's preparation of a strategy for when UNDP-GEF project support ends (if they have one and if they don't, then assist them in preparing one at the midterm).

### 4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR 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 Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including APR/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, other project files, 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 Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach<sup>1</sup> ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.<sup>2</sup> Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to *(list)*; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to *(location)*, including the following project sites *(list)*.

The final MTR report should 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.

<sup>1</sup> For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 3, pg. 93.



## 5. DETAILED SCOPE OF MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for requirements on ratings. No overall rating is required.

### 5.1 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, taken into account during project design processes?
- 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.

### 5.2 Project Results

#### Progress Towards Results:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using 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 "High risk of not being achieved" (red).
- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

### 5.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

#### Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been solved.

- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project document logical/results framework as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start. Ensure any revisions meet UNDP-GEF requirements and assess the impact of the revised approach on project management.

#### 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 allowed for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Are project teams meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

#### Monitoring 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?

#### Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

#### Communications:

- 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 long-term investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express to the public the project progress and intended impact (is there a project website or a weekly e-bulletin, 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.

#### 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 project Implementing Partners and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by UNDP and recommend areas for improvement.

### **5.4 Long-term Sustainability**

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, APR/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why. Give particular attention to critical risks.
- Assess overall risk management to sustainability factors of the project in terms of risks to motivations, capacity, and resources. Does the project have sustainability benchmarks built into the project cycle?
- *Financial 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-political 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 are 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 and Governance 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 Sustainability*: Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes? The MTR should assess whether certain activities will pose a threat to the sustainability of the project outcomes.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

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 will make recommendations by outcomes, as well as on Project Implementation and on Long-Term Sustainability/ Risk Mitigation strategy; they will make at least 5 key recommendations, and no more than 15 recommendations total.

## 7. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be (# of weeks) starting (date) according to the tentative MTR timeframe as follows:

DATE	ACTIVITY
(dates)	Desk review - 2 days
(date)	MTR Inception Workshop - 1 day
(dates)	Validation of MTR Inception Report - 1 day
(dates)	Stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits - 6-8 days, depending on number and distances
(dates)	Mission wrap-up & presentation of initial findings 3 days
(dates)	Preparing draft report 5 days
(dates)	Incorporating audit trail on draft report/Finalization of final report (off-site) 2

	<i>days</i>
<i>(dates)</i>	Preparation & Issue of Management Response
<i>(dates)</i>	Comments/ Feedback on the Management Response
<i>(date)</i>	Expected date of full MTR completion

Options for field trips should be provided in the Inception Report.

## 8. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

- **MTR Inception Report:** MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review
  - Timing: No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission
  - Responsibilities: MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit
- **Presentation:** Initial Findings
  - Timing: End of MTR mission
  - Responsibilities: MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
- **Draft Final Report:** Full report (as template in Annex B) with annexes
  - Timing: Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission
  - Responsibilities: Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFP
- **Final Report:** Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comment have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report
  - Timing: Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft
  - Responsibilities: Sent to the Commissioning Unit
- **Comments on the Management Response:** Review the Management Response to the Final MTR report and provide comments
  - Timing: Within 1 week of receiving the Management Response
  - Responsibilities: Sent to the Commissioning Unit

## 9. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP-GEF GLECRDS under the responsibility of the UNDP-GEF global manager for the SGP Upgrading Country Programs.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. 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.

## 10. 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 team expert, usually from the country of the project. 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:

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to *(fill in GEF Focal Area)*;
- Experience working with the GEF or GEF-evaluations;
- Experience working in *(region of project)*;
- Work experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years;

- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and *(fill in GEF Focal Area)*; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Excellent communication skills;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

## **11. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Upon approval of final version of the Midterm Review report by the Commissioning Unit and the UNDP-GEF RTA/team, 80% of the payment will be disbursed. Upon receipt of comments/ feedback on the Management Response, the remaining 20% of the payment will be disbursed.

## ANNEX 2. EVALUATIVE MATRIX

Evaluation question	Indicators	Sources	Methodology *
<b>PROJECT STRATEGY: How appropriate is the strategy and project design?</b>			
• How appropriate was the design of the project?	• Correspondence between the problems addressed by the project and underlying assumptions	• Project Documents • SGP Staff	• DR + I
	• Correspondence between project strategy and most effective route to achieving goals	• Project Documents • SGP Staff	• DR + I
	• Evidence of incorporating lessons from other projects in the design	• Project Documents • SGP Staff	• DR + I
	• Evidence of project alignment with national goals and priorities	• UNDP Documents • National Planning Documents • Project Documents	• DR + I
	• Evidence of ownership of the project by national organizations	• Governmental staff	• I
	• Evidence of incorporation of perspectives of local, partners and other stakeholders in the project design	• Local stakeholders • Governmental staff • Representatives of organizations	• I
• How appropriate is the Project results framework / logframe?	• Adequacy of the Project Goals and Indicators (SMART) to its strategy	• PRODOC & Reports • SGP Staff	• DR + I • Evaluator's criteria
	• Degree of clarity, practicality and feasibility of the Project objectives and results to the situation and time available	• PRODOC & Reports	• DR • Evaluator's criteria
	• Evidence of effects not considered to be included in the results framework and monitored regularly	• PRODOC & Reports • Local stakeholders • Governmental staff • Representatives of organizations	• DR + I + DO • Evaluator's criteria
	• Extent to which aspects of gender equity and other of similar amplitude in terms of development are effectively monitored.	• PRODOC & Reports • SGP Staff	• DR + I • Evaluator's criteria

PROJECT RESULTS: What is the degree of project progress towards expected results?			
• ¿What are the achievements of the project until MTR?	• Proposed Objectives and Results	• PRODOC	• DR + I
	• Achieved Objectives and Results	• PRODOC & Reports • Partners and participants • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO
	• Degree of correspondence between progress and proposed in the GEF Tracking Tools for the Project Thematic area	• PRODOC & Reports • GEF Tracking Tools • SGP Staff	• DR + I + DO • Evaluator's criteria
	• List of topics and areas in which the project can expand the benefits in terms of achievements	• PRODOC & Reports • Local stakeholders • Governmental staff • Representatives of organizations	• DR + I + DO • Evaluator's criteria
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT: How appropriate was the implementation of the project so far and to what extent was necessary to implement adaptive management?			
• How appropriate is operational planning?	• List of startup and project implementation delays and measures to address them	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Extent to which operational planning is guided by results	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Degree of use of the results matrix and adjustments made to it since the beginning of the Project	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
• How adequate has been finance and co-finance management?	• Efficiency in the management of project financial resources	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Changes in the allocation of project funds and relevance and degree of ownership	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Degree of ownership of the financial controls of the project (including planning and reporting) and its flow of funds (to and from the project)	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Degree to which the co-financing is provided and its level of strategic use	• SGP Project Information • Co-financing information	• DR + I

• How adequate is the monitoring of the project?	• Monitoring system in place	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Participation and inclusion of partners in monitoring	• SGP Project Information • Partners information	• DR + I
	• Alignment with other (national GEF) systems	• SGP Project Information • Other systems information	• DR + I
	• Degree of adequacy of funding for monitoring	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
• How suitable are the reports of the project?	• Level of Reporting of Project adjustments to the Project Committee	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Level of documentation and dissemination of project settings to the partners.	• SGP Project Information • Partners information	• DR + I
• How suitable are project communications?	• Degree of regularity, effectiveness and inclusiveness of Project communication efforts	• SGP Project Information • Partners information	• DR + I
	• Adequacy of public communications of Project activities and achievements	• SGP Project Information • Partners information	• DR + I + DO
• How suitable are the management arrangements of the project?	• Overall effectiveness of the project management (responsibilities, lines of supervision, decision making)	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Quality of project implementation	• SGP Project Information	• DR + I
	• Quality of support provided by UNDP	• SGP Project Information • UNDP information	• DR + I



LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY: To what extent there are financial, institutional, socio-economic and / or environmental risks to the project results long term sustainability?				
	• • How suitable are the project's strategies to address the different types of risks to the sustainability of project results?	• • Degree of relevance of the risks identified in the PRODOC, APR / PIR and ATLAS.	• SGP Project Information • Partners and participants perceptions • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO
		• General Degree of risk factors of sustainability in terms of motivation, capacity and resources.	• SGP Project Information • Partners and participants perceptions • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO
		• List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of financial sustainability.	• SGP Project Information • Partners and participants perceptions • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO
		• List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of socio-political sustainability.	• SGP Project Information • Partners and participants perceptions • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO
		• List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of institutional and / or governance sustainability.	• SGP Project Information • Partners and participants perceptions • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO
		• List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of environmental sustainability.	• SGP Project Information • Partners and participants perceptions • Field Visits	• DR + I + DO

\* Methodology:

DR. Documents Review

I. Interviews

DO. Direct Observation

### ANNEX 3. MTR RATINGS AND RATINGS SCALE

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
<b>Project Strategy</b>	N/A	The Project strategy is sound. The Project LFA is well constructed and it is constantly used by the project (National Steering Committee and National Coordination). Identified Project LFA Indicators and Goals are too many and not adequate to SGP implementation mechanisms.
<b>Progress Towards Results</b>	Objective Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	The Achievement Rating is based on the Achievement of individual results below. In turn, those are based on the Summary Table of Progress Towards Results (previous section) and the fully detailed table in section 4.2 Progress Towards Results. Moreover, the MTR has not identified areas of concern or remaining barriers to achieve the results.
	Outcome 1 <i>Community-based actions mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes in biological corridors and PA buffer zones</i> Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the Tables mentioned above, the SGP has already achieved 3 indicators and targets of this Outcome, while the remaining 3 show considerable progress and are assessed as On-target.
	Outcome 2 Green-house gas emissions reduced and carbon stocks increased through community-based actions. Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the Tables mentioned above, the SGP achieved already considerable progress in all indicators of this Outcome and all of them are assessed as On-target based on the commitments established in the pertinent proposals still under implementation.
	Outcome 3 <i>Conservation of productive lands and restoration of degraded lands contribute to sustainability and improved local livelihoods.</i> Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the Tables mentioned above, the SGP has already achieved 1 indicator and its targets of this Outcome, while the remaining ones show considerable progress and are assessed as On-target.
	Outcome 4 <i>Community-based organizations and their members with improved capacities and knowledge management for replication and up-scaling of best practices.</i> Achievement Rating: 6 Highly satisfactory	According to the Tables mentioned above, the SGP achieved already considerable progress in all indicators of this Outcome and all of them are assessed as On-target based on the commitments established in the pertinent proposals still under implementation.
<b>Project Implementation &amp; Adaptive Management</b>	5 Satisfactory	According to the results shown in Section 4.3 (Management Arrangements) regarding Work planning, Finance and co-finance, Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, Stakeholder engagement, Reporting and Communications, all these areas are managed adequately and the MTR did not identify any major concern about them. There are some issues to be addressed during the rest of OP5 (GEF TT, completing the climate change M&E component, etc.) that prevented giving the maximum rating.

<b>Sustainability</b>	4 Likely	According to the results shown in Section 4.4 Sustainability, the MTR did not identify any major concern about them and all different sustainability areas (financial, socioeconomic, institutional and environmental) were assessed as Likely.
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## MTR RATING SCALES

<b>Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)</b>		
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 (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

<b>Ratings for Project Implementation &amp; Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)</b>		
6	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”.
5	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.
4	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.
3	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.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

<b>Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)</b>		
4	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
3	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
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

## ANEXO 4. 4. MTR MISSION ITINERARY

The field visit was completed in a few different segments between May 19 and June 27, 2014, because the MTR evaluator lives in Costa Rica. The itinerary was agreed with the SGP National Coordination with the support of the UNDP Country Office.

May / 19	
Afternoon	Initial meeting with the SGP National Coordination Team (Eduardo Mata and Paula Zúñiga)
June / 6	
Full day	<p>Visit to the Jesús María river watershed, area where the SGP land degradation projects are concentrated.</p> <p>Visits and interviews to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asociación de Desarrollo Integral (Integrated Development Association)</li> <li>• ASADA (Rural Aqueduct Association)</li> <li>• MAG San Mateo (San Mateo Office of the Ministry of Agriculture)</li> <li>• Producers of cheese, milk, cattle and coffee</li> <li>• Soil Conservation Team from the Palmares office of the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment.</li> </ul>
June / 9	
Afternoon	<p>Travel to the southern zone of Costa Rica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to the Asociación Ecológica Playa Hermosa community and projects</li> <li>• Night in Palmar Norte</li> </ul>
June / 10	
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to the Asociación Femenina Agua Caliente (ASOFAC) and their projects</li> </ul>
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to the Centro Agrícola Cantonal Coto Brus 2 and their projects</li> <li>• Night in Bioley (ecotourism cottage managed by ASOPROLA)</li> </ul>
June / 11	
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Asociación de Productores La Amistad (ASOPROLA) and their projects</li> <li>• Visit to Asociación de Mujeres Organizadas de Bioley (ASOMOBI) and their projects</li> </ul>
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to ASOBRUNCA (Reserva Indígena Boruca) and their projects</li> <li>• Visit to Asociación de Mujeres Mano de Tigre (Reserva Indígena Térraba) and their projects</li> <li>• Night in Reserva Indígena Salitre (ecotourism cottage managed by Bribri Pa Kaneblo)</li> </ul>

June / 12	
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Bribri Pa Kaneblo and their projects</li> </ul>
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Asociación de Turismo ENA (ATURENA) and their projects</li> <li>• Visit to Asociación Ecoturística Cuenca San Rafael (ASECUSAR) and their projects</li> <li>• Visit to Fundación para el Desarrollo Biológico de Las Quebradas (FUNDEBIOL) and their projects</li> <li>• Night in Las Quebradas (ecotourism cottage managed by FUNDEBIOL)</li> </ul>
June / 13	
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to the micro-hydropower Project (BYMSA) in El Mora de Pedregoso de San Isidro</li> <li>• Visit to Colegio Ambientalista Isaías Retana and their projects</li> </ul>
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return from San Isidro de Perez Zeledón</li> </ul>
June / 19	
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to the UNDP Country Office in Costa Rica</li> <li>• Interview with the UNDP Program Officer for SGP</li> <li>• Interviews with members of the SGP National Steering Committee</li> </ul>
June / 27	
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview with the Coordinator of the National Program of Biological Corridors. Ministry of the Environment.</li> <li>• Final Meeting with the Costa Rica SGP National Coordination Team.</li> </ul>

## ANEXO 5. LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

The list of persons and its organizations interviewed by the MTR includes:

### Community Organizations and persons

Jesús María River Watershed

- Jorge L. Conejo (Asociación de Desarrollo Integral, ADI y ASADA (Aqueduct Association)
- Giovanni Jiménez (Asociación de Desarrollo Integral, ADI)
- Rogelio Salas (farmer)
- Armando Salas (cheese and milk producer)
- José Jiménez (coffee producer)
- Bolívar Salas (coffee producer)

ASOFAC (Aguacaliente Women Association). Aguacaliente, Pittier, Coto Brus

- Floribeth Villegas
- Daniela Barrantes
- Marta Villegas
- Marta Solórzano
- Ana Cecilia Chávez
- Karen Chavarría
- Doris Alvarez

Centro Agrícola Cantonal de Coto Brus 2 (Coto Brus Agricultural Center)

- Antonio Gonzalez Batista

ASOPROLA (La Amistad Producer Association). Altamira, Buenos Aires

- Luis Enrique Monge

ASOMOBI (Bioley Women Association). Bioley, Buenos Aires

- Laura Quirós M.

ASOBRUNCA. Boruca Indigenous Reserve, Buenos Aires

- Rafael Rojas
- Demetrio Lázaro

ASOCIACION DE MUJERES MANO DE TIGRE (Women Association). Térraba Indigenous Reserve, Buenos Aires

- Elides Rivera Navas

ASOCIACION BRIBRI PA KANEBLO. Salitre Indigenous Reserve, Buenos Aires

- Guillermo Elizondo
- Zacarías Elizondo Figueroa
- Rigoberto Ortiz Calderón

ASOCIACION DE TURISMO ENA (ATURENA). Ena Tourism Association. San Jerónimo, Pérez Zeledón

- Alexis Quirós Solís

ASOCIACION ECOTURISTICA CUENCA SAN RAFAEL (ASECUSAR). San Rafael Ecotourism Association. San Rafael, Pérez Zeledón

- Eduardo Blanco Estrada
- José Cascante
- Dagoberto Jiménez
- Jorge Castillo

FUNDACION DESARROLLO BIOLÓGICO LAS QUEBRADAS (FUNDEBIOL). Las Quebradas, Pérez Zeledón

- Gilbert Fallas

ESCUELA CALLE MORA. Calle Mora School. Pedregoso, Pérez Zeledón

- Arturo Bermúdez. BYMSA (energía solar y micro-hidroeléctrica)

COLEGIO AMBIENTALISTA ISAIAS RETANA. Isaías Retana Environmental High School. Pedregoso, Pérez Zeledón

- Marvin Rosales
- Cinthia Agüero

### **Governmental Institutions**

1. Mario Coto, National Program of Biological Corridors
2. Luis Diego Román, National Commission for Forest Fires
3. Carlos Barboza G, Ministry of Agriculture, San Mateo
4. Donald Vazquez (Ministry of Environment, Palmares)
5. Vidal Arias (Ministry of Agriculture, Palmares)
6. Manfred Vega (Ministry of Agriculture, Palmares)
7. Bernardo Calvo (National Training Institute, Coto Brus)

### **UNDP Country Office**

1. Kifah Sasa, Program Officer, Environment and Risk Management Program, UNDP CO

### **SGP National Coordination**

1. Eduardo Mata Montero
2. Paula Zúñiga

### **SGP National Steering Committee**

1. Vilma Obando, Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (National Biodiversity Institute), INBIO, President of the National Steering Committee
2. Florangel Villegas V., Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (National Distance University) UNED
3. Saskia Rodríguez, Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy), MIDEPLAN

### **UNDP-GEF, Green Low Emissions Climate Resilient Strategies**

1. Nick Remple, UNDP Global Technical Advisor for SGP Upgrading Country Programs

## **ANNEX 6. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

1. Costa Rica SGP Project Document (PRODOC)
2. 2013 Project Implementation Report (PIR)
3. Marco de Cooperación de las Naciones Unidas para el desarrollo en Costa Rica (UNDAF) 2008 - 2012
4. UNDP Country Program Document Costa Rica (CPD) 2010-2014
5. National Steering Committee Meeting Acts (several)
6. SGP Quarterly Project Reports (several)
7. SGP National Coordinator Reports (several)
8. SGP Project M&E Reports (several)
9. Project Proposals submitted to and approved by the SGP (several)
10. Project Progress Reports (several)
11. UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects
12. UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results
13. GEF Evaluation Office. The ROtI Handbook: Towards enhancing the Impacts of Environmental Projects
14. UNEG. UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation
15. PPD Comité Directivo Nacional. Sin fecha. Términos de Referencia del Comité Directivo Nacional actualizados para la OP5
16. Comisión Asesora sobre Degradación de Tierras (CADETI). 2004. Programa de Acción Nacional de lucha contra la degradación de tierras
17. PPD/PNUD. 2014. Facilitación del proceso evaluación de línea base y elaboración de una estrategia de paisaje del programa país COMDEKS de la Iniciativa Satoyama en la cuenca del río Jesús María. Informe Final.



## ANNEX 7. UNEG CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EVALUATORS/MIDTERM REVIEW CONSULTANTS

### Evaluators/Consultants:

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 in the course of 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.

### MTR Consultant Agreement Form


Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: Alejandro Carlos IMBACH

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): n.a.

**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**

Signed at Turrialba, Costa Rica (Place) on May 30, 2014 (Date)

Signature: 

**ANNEX 8. MTR REPORT CLEARANCE FORM**

<b>Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:</b>	
<b>Commissioning Unit</b>	
Name: _____	
Signature: _____	Date: _____
<b>UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor</b>	
Name: _____	
Signature: _____	Date: _____