**Management response to the Midterm Review**

**Sergipe Project/ BRAZIL**

**Project Title**: Sustainable Land Use Management in the Semiarid Region of Northeast Brazil (Sergipe)

Project PIMS #: 3066

GEF Project ID (PMIS) #: PROJECT ID: 92018

Midterm Review Mission Completion Date: Oct-Dez 2019

MTR Conclusion Date: February 28th 2020;

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**Context, background and findings**

1. The Sustainable Land Use Management Project in the Semi-Arid Region of Northeast Brazil (Sergipe) has the general objective of strengthening the governance structures of sustainable land management (SLM) to combat land degradation processes in the semiarid region of the state of Sergipe , in the northeast of Brazil. Strategic action at the national level, through the Ministry of the Environment and the National Commission to Combat Desertification, was expected to allow the dissemination of the SLM governance model from Sergipe to other states, thus facilitating replication throughout the Brazilian semiarid region.
2. The MTR aims to determine the progress being made to achieve the results and to identify the course correction, if necessary, assessing signs of success or failure of the project, considering its sustainability risks. The MTR also intended to evaluate the indications of success or failure of the project, in order to identify the necessary changes to be made to guide the Project and indicate the alternatives to achieve the intended results.
3. In addition, the final conclusions and recommendations will not only help in the adequacy of the Sergipe Project to ensure the best performance to be achieved until the end of its implementation, but, above all, maintain the purpose of the project, in line with its scope and prioritizing activities that improve the effectiveness of the project.
4. Regarding progress towards the project objective, there are a number of shortcomings in the achievement of the objective. Although some outputs have been achieved, several other outputs, expected processes and outcomes that make up and articulate the objective have not been met at the expected mid-point levels. Delays in delivery have had an impact on the achievement of the objective thus far. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
5. The Progress of the results showed deficiencies in the achievement of the objectives in terms of effectiveness and due to delays in terms of implementation and delivery.
6. The 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 moderately satisfactory implementation. The adaptive management components (privileging of some outputs in one component over others, change of field sites) thus far have had positive aspects but also a series of negative impacts.
7. As for Sustainability at the midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs will be sustained and carry on after project closure. The consolidation and upgrading of institutional frameworks that can strengthen sustainable land management frameworks to combat land degradation in North-eastern Brazil is the main explicit objective of this project, it is here where the Project faces the greatest challenges, thus far, in obtaining results and therefore in harnessing governance sustainability.
8. The Project has encountered a series of setbacks, among them the rapidly changing political context that Brazil has gone through in the last few years. Therefore, these changes have had, explicitly and tacitly, a great deal of impact upon implementation, upon ownership, and upon financing of project activities and its possible upscaling.
9. It cannot be denied that the demonstration aspect of the implemented practices has been highly positive. They are concrete practices that take an integrated ecological, productive and social approach. They are inexpensive in the long run and have very rapid tangible benefits for the communities and productive units which implement them. These are the main reasons why they are assimilable and are being replicated, duplicated, and upscaled by other projects and even by the communities on their own.
10. The remaining operational period for the Project can be decisive to adopt and implement policy, planning instruments and key strategies to generate a better framework to deal equitably with desertification in Northeast Brazil.
11. Recommendations presented here reflect suggested corrective actions for the implementation of the Project, proposals for future directions underlining main objectives as well as actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the Project. A first set of recommendations are linked to an extension request while the second set are more general recommendations for the Project’s remaining implementation period.

**Recommendations and Management response[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 1.**  1. An extension for the Project should be requested. Should an extension request be presented, it is the consideration of this review that it should be granted given the implementation delays that the Project experienced. In order to assure that this extension is used properly, this request should be seen as an opportunity for the Project (including all relevant stakeholders) to bring up to date and clear-out several implementing, planning and programming issues that hinder to some degree a successful implementation process. For this, it is recommended that this potential request should be accompanied or supported by the following actions.  a. A re-orientation of the project with the new authorities at the national, state, and local levels, in order to bring them up to date regarding the project and to generate buy in and align with the directives derived from the new federal administration, not only with the partners already established but with new partners if applicable.  b. A workshop for this relaunching is recommended so that partners can be brought up to date quite quickly and buy in generated at once.  c. Reformulate the Project’s log frame as far as possible in order to streamline. For instance, it is proposed to do away with proposed products and deliverables that already deemed as inapplicable and which are considered not to have potential effects or results at this time. Also, in line with this reconsider if any of these outputs need to be reformulated in order to be more feasible to implement in the period left.  d. Specify which of the products that would be dropped or realigned in a programmatic manner.  e. Generate a clear chronogram or road map of the activities, processes and products the project aims to obtain in its remaining period of implementation. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  The extension request for additional 12 months was sent to GEF/UNDP on December 2019 (the maximum time for extension allowed), which has been approved on April 2020. Therefore, the Project extension is being formalized through a Substantive Revision in compliance with Brazilian Agency Cooperation guidelines.  Based on the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation, and in accordance with the current guidelines of the Ministry of the Environment, UNDP and MMA has reactivate the Project’s Steering Committee composed by Sergipe State institutions in order to review the project's implementation strategy by adopting adaptive measures with synergistic and complementary actions in progress in close collaboration with the main partner institutions of the project, listed below:   * Regional Direction of Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources- IBAMA / SE; * Regional Direction of the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform of Sergipe - INCRA / SE; * Secretariat of State for Agriculture and Rural Development – SEAGRI, including its two structures institutions: Sergipe Agricultural Development Company – EMDAGRO and Sergipe Water Resources and Irrigation Company – Cohidro * Secretariat of State for Urban Development and Sustainability – SEDURBS, including its two structures institutions: State Environmental Administration – ADEMA and Special Superintendence of Water Resources and Environment - SERHMA   The new strategy emphasizes the following aspects: application of adaptive management seeking to enhance and replicate successful practices; creation of mechanisms of synergies and complementarity between the project and other ongoing projects in the Sergipe ASD, aiming to accelerate, enhance deliveries and spread good practices, taking advantage of the financing sources and credits already existing in the projects and programs portfolio of partner institutions .  Regarding the recommendation to review Project Log frame, it was not possible to do so because of time constraints as it need to go through a long discussion between partners and another submission for GEF approval, as there are specific GEF guidelines for changes in the logical framework, not highly encouraged. However, all outputs that seems not possible to be achieved are described periodically in PIRs. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking**[**[1]**](https://undp-my.sharepoint.com/personal/vania_trajano_undp_org/Documents/Management%20REsponse/PIMS%203066%20Brazil%20Sergipe%20MTR_management%20response%20(002).docx#_ftn1) | |
| **Comments** | **Status[[2]](#footnote-2)** |
| 1.1 Request the project extension to GEF/UNDP (additional 12 months with no-cost extension). | Nov-  Dec/2019 | MMA/UNDP CO | The Project Board (MMA / UNDP / ABC) held a Tripartite meeting defining the need to request a project extension. | Completed |
| 1.2 Analyze the extension request. | Dec 2019 -April/2020 | UNDP GEF | The extension request was approved by GEF/UNDP. | Completed |
| 1.3 Organize a field mission to Sergipe composed by MMA National Director MMA and UNDP Project Manager in order to reactive the dialogue with local institutions. | February/2020 | MMA/UNDP CO | The mission took place in Aracaju between 14th and 15th February. MMA Secretariat of International Relations has gone through changes and the resignation of the National Director right after the refereed mission. New Director was appointed on March 2020. | Completed |
| 1.4 Organize a workshop to re-launch the Project in Sergipe and reactivate the Steering Committee. | March 2020 | MMA/UNDP and Starring Committee members (Sergipe institutions) | Due to COVID pandemic, the workshop that was planned to take place in Aracaju on 25th to 27th March. Instead, a two-day workshop was taken virtually using Zoom platform with MMA, UNDP and local partners mentioned above. | Completed |
| 1.5 Review Implementation Strategy with the participation of Sergipe stakeholders and elaborate a clear chronogram of activities. | March – April 2020 | MMA/UNDP CO and Starring Committee members (Sergipe institutions) | A series of virtual meetings had been taken between MMA, UNDP CO and Sergipe stakeholders for 2020 and 2021 Annuals Workplans. | Completed |
| 1.6 Elaborate and approve Substantive Revision of the Project | April –  July 2020 | MMA, UNDP CO and ABC | Substantive Revision is being formalized by counterparties (ABC, MMA and UND). | In Progress |

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 2.**  2. The Project needs to have an effective institutionalization within the MMA as soon as possible. For this, there should be a formal nomination of the national technical project director, with clear statements of his/her duties, responsibilities, and recognizing the institutional roles of national government in this Project. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  Institutionalization has already been carried out by the Ministry of the Environment with the appointment of the national director of the Project and maintenance of the technical team. The Sergipe project is under the responsibility of the MMA's Secretariat for International Relations (SRI), along with other projects related to combating desertification. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 2.1 Nominate a National Director of the Project in MMA | Jan. - Mar/2020 | MMA | The most recent National Director of the Project was designated on March 16th. | Completed |

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| **Midterm Review Recommendations 3. and 04**  Reactivate all the mechanisms that provide direction to the project (such as the Project Board, Project Advisory Committee, Regional Technical Commission) in close consideration with all relevant actors including national government. In order to carry out the direction of the Project in the concluding stages, and in order to accelerate implementation, the following steps for the mechanisms that provide Project direction are recommended: a. start to meet and deliberate regularly in order to provide managerial and technical guidance for the Project as a whole; b. provide technical inputs to the Project; c. provide guidance as to how the outputs are or should be leading to the expected outcomes, d. guide coordination between national and state-level activities in Sergipe; e. generate a time frame (and provide guidance in meeting this time frame) for the diverse activities and products which should be implemented in the remaining Project operation period.  4. Reinstate dialogue between and among the main Project partners at all levels, not only with the formal committees as above but also through different activities where dialogue and information sharing can take place within the participating institutions. Include other partners, especially those that due to the restructuring of national government are now relevant or that have absorbed functions that were formerly within the MMA’s domain (for example, the national Ministry of Agriculture) as well as streamline partnerships where necessary. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  Due to the changes in the structure of the federal public administration, the project had its activities suspended, until the reallocation of the desertification project team was defined in SRI. In November 2019, the Tripartite meeting (MMA / UNDP / ABC) was held, in which MMA presented an overview of the project's execution, including the preliminary results of the mid-term evaluation. After the agreement between the Project Board members to request the project extension, the Project coordination has been taking several actions to implement all recommendations detailed above.  The routine of coordination and technical supervision of the project through the National Directorate within the scope of MMA, in close partnership with UNDP was reestablished. As described in Management Response for Recommendation 01, the Project Advisory Committee was reactivated on March 2020, and several meetings are being taken with all stakeholders. Moreover, a WhatsApp Group has been created for the daily monitoring of activities, gathering 18 participants from MMA, UNDP, IBAMA-SE, INCRA-SE, SEAGRI, SERMAH, COHIDRO, EMDAGRO and ADEMA. Coordination meetings between MMA and UNDP technical teams are also being taken periodically. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 3.1 Hold a Tripartite Meeting to evaluate the progress of the Project, the initial recommendations of the MTR and guide the continuity with the request for extension of the MMA term. | Nov./2019 | MMA/UNDP CO/ABC | Tripartite guidelines were incorporated into the project's resumption planning. | Completed |
| 3.2 Reactivate Project Advisory Committee (as described on Key Actions 1.3; 1.4 and 1.5) | Jan – June 2020 | MMA / UNDP / partner institutions / Sergipe | No comments | Completed |
| 3.3. Maintain periodically coordination meetings between UNDP and MMA Technical Teams, and with members of local institutions in Sergipe. | Jan 2020 – June 2021 | MMA and UNDP CO, partner institutions / Sergipe | This should be constant until the end of the project. | Partially Completed |

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| **Midterm Review recommendations 5. and 6.**  5. Accelerate implementation of Outcome 1 outputs (and those in Outcome 2 which were left behind) regaining the vision with which the Project was planned. That is, that the Project’s objective is to strengthen the policy/institutional framework and governance structure for combating desertification in an equitable manner and that the demonstration activities need to nourish policy and become sustainable and replicable though their insertion and uptake in the institutional framework at all relevant levels.  6. In order to accelerate implementation link with other partners that can reconnect with other similar projects and programs in the region that can aid in accelerating implementation and can support in expanding results to other areas (partnering with other agencies, other similar projects, with different consortia, etc.). Also, for instance, designing viable municipal action plans or replacing them by other instruments that might impel implementation (such as actions to be implemented by municipal consortia). Considerate, as appropriate, decentralized territorial implementation of different practices within governmental strategies to combat desertification. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  The project team fully agrees with the recommendation to accelerate the implementation of Result 1, as well as deliveries that were not possible to accomplish related to Result 2.  After a prior evaluation of the methodology that was applied so far for the elaboration of the Municipal Program of Action to combat desertification (which was not effective), two actions will be taken in parallel: (i) the review of Sergipe State Action Program (*PAE/SE*) and (ii) the elaboration of an intermunicipal Action Program for several municipalities (*PAMs*).  In what concerns the Output 2, the reviewed implementation strategy is to expand and spread the adoption of good practices of SLM in ASD Sergipe through the linkage and cooperation with ongoing initiatives taken by state institutions, such as the State Program of Good Practices, Community Forest Management Plans and Demonstrative Units of Management and Soil Conservation of rural properties (as recommended by SERMMAH); and Palma / Gliricídia Consortium Project and Agroecological Cotton Project (as recommended by SEAGRI). | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 5.1 Carry out project planning with the participation of partners, defining the new implementation strategy. | Feb -Mar/2020 | MMA / UNDP CO/ partner institutions / Sergipe | As described in the previous sections. | Completed |
| 5.2 Elaboration of workplan excluding products considered inapplicable and indicating the means of monitoring progress with additional indicators. | Mar-Apr/2020 | MMA/UNDP CO | As described in the previous sections. | Completed |
| 5.3 Hire a regional project analyst to support the project’s implementation according the workplan planned in collaboration of Sergipe partner institutions. | Ju/2020-  Jun/2021 | MMA/UNDP CO | TOR is being elaborated | Pending |
| 5.4 Set up an inter-municipal consortium to combat desertification of *the Alto Sertão de Sergipe* (ASS), linked to *PAE/SE* and operated by the Intermunicipal plan in accordance with the National Policy to Combat Desertification (Law 13.153 / 2015). | Jan-2021 -Jun/2021 | MMA, UNDP CO  Sergipe State Government -SEDURBS / SERHMA. | Due to municipal elections predicted for October 2020, MMA has decided to execute this activity after the new government in place, in order to avoid disruptions. | Pending |
| 6.1 Identify, strengthen and formalize new partnerships in order to achieve the project's objectives. | Jan–Sept/ 2020 | MMA/UNDP CO | COHIDRO is one of the new partners identified so far to expand the regions benefited from the project. Moreover, during the implementation of activities, the regional technical analyst to be hired will be responsible for identifying new partnerships locally. | Partially Completed. |

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 7**  7. Impel and support appropriation of URAD’s strategy by extension services, through training seeking to generate multipliers and include communities as much as possible, even those communities who were left aside during pilot site reorganising. Activities that can have a multiplying effect (such as training of trainers, incorporation of the findings | | | | |
| **Management response:**  The project team agrees with the recommendation. In order to implement good practices, MMA, together with UNDP and partners in Sergipe, started the process of identifying points of convergence between projects in progress in the State and the best practices that should be promoted and replicated during the period of execution / extension of the project, improving the lessons learned from the URADs. To this end, training and other multiplier training initiatives will be carried out in the process of implementing good practices, giving priority to local extension workers and the beneficiary public of the communities. The proposal is to enable the scaling of good practices, expanding the coverage area in ASD-Sergipe; including directing efforts to benefit communities originally selected by the project with the implementation of good practice initiatives. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 7.1 Identification of points of convergence between the Project and ongoing actions implemented by partner institutions in Sergipe. | March - July2020 | MMA/UNDP/ Partners institutions | This action is consolidated in the new project implementation strategy. | Partially Completed |
| 7.2 Train multipliers during the implementation of good practices in conjunction with partner institutions. | Sept/2020 - Mai 2021 | MMA/UNDP/ Partners SERHMA, SEAGRI, Emdagro). | Activity to be planned with the partners. The training will be carried out during the project extension period. | Pending |

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 8.**  8. Renew work on sustained financing mechanisms (such as the fine reconversion schemes, lines of support by financial institutions, etc.) for the uptake, replication and upscaling of the Project’s achieved results. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  The project team agrees with the recommendation. In this implementation phase, efforts will be made to strengthen cooperation with partner institutions, establishing synergies with ongoing local and regional initiatives. In this sense, the identification and management to capture and apply sources of financing in good practices, will be intensified, registered and properly monitored. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 8.1 Recognition of the roles and responsibilities of each partner institution, considering their roles and potential for acting in a cooperative and synergistic manner within the scope of the project. | March/- July2020 | MMA/UNDP / Partners | Elaboration of the project activities plan / 2020-21 aggregating initiatives of mutual interest and already identifying financing and sustainability mechanisms. | Partially Completed |
| 8.2 Constant monitoring and support for fundraising and sustainability actions. | Aug/2020 – Mai/2021 | MMA / UNDP/ Partners (INCRA -SE, IBAMA – SE) | Action initiated in the strategic planning process. | Partially Completed |

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 9.**  9. Ascertain and verify that an integrated gender dimension is incorporated in all plans, instruments, capacity-building activities and policies that are adopted at all levels (not only in local demonstrations, but also in state-wide and national levels). Establish that this gender dimension is integral and not attend only to household issues focus to matters related to production, for instance, or equal access to productive resources and equal access to goods, services and markets. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  Recommendation accepted. Thus, an effort will be made to incorporate the integrated gender dimension across all activities to be developed in the current phase of the project. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 9.1 Consider the recommendation in the project planning and implementation process. | Jun 2020 –  June 2021 | MMA/UNDP C | To be discussed with local partner. | Pending |

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 10 , 11 and 12.**  10. Document and capture the achievements through the generation of documents and knowledge management products that depict the implementation of pilot experiences, what they have achieved, what the benefits, impact, effects and efficiency of these pilot experiences have been, as well as the lessons learned. Generate different types of materials catering to the different users (technical, for beneficiaries, etc.). Generate user friendly tools and publications where practitioners, communities and beneficiaries can easily assimilate and use (such as specific tool kits).  11. Start generating knowledge management mechanisms to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise that is being created throughout the Project and sharing best practices and lessons learned. Use knowledge management-oriented products internally to exchange information among and between the Project practitioners as well as externally with other actors (donors, media, etc.).  12. Seek repositories of the information generated by the project (for example the maps and other materials) that is widely available, decentralized, with open access, seeking ways that these repositories are maintained and open after project conclusion. | | | | |
| **Management response:**  The project team agrees with this recommendation, being in line with the expectations of project coordination and partners for the current project implementation cycle. | | | | |
| **Key action(s)** | **Time frame** | **Responsible unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 10.1 Hire a specialized consultant to build the appropriate project monitoring and gather information for sharing best practices and lessons learned. | Jun 2020 – Jun2021 | MMA/UNDP CO | TOR is being elaborated | Pending |
| * 1. Improve communication and knowledge management, including the production of informative material. | Jun 2020 – Jun2021 | MMA/UNDP CO | It’s predicted a communications company hiring to produce informative materials in the Workplan. | Pending |

1. If the MTR is uploaded to the ERC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)