

**Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project
“Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth’s Most
Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity”
GEF ID 5201
(Oct 2015- Jun 2019)**



Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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Page 27: School activities in the Mehuin area, Chile. Montserrat Lara.

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"Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity"

GEF ID 5201

Oct 2015- Jun 2019

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Acknowledgements

This Terminal Evaluation was prepared for UNEP by Téa Garcia-Huidobro, as an independent consultant.

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The evaluation consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the current project, formulation of a next phase and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

Brief consultant biography

Téa García-Huidobro, a biochemist, began her professional life as a researcher in molecular and cell biology. After obtaining a Masters in Environmental Technology (Imperial College, London, 1999), she worked for the Government of Chile on sustainable natural resource management and has dedicated herself to environmental issues, in particular biodiversity, ever since. In her time with the Chilean Government, she focused on public policies, regulations and tools for biodiversity conservation and institutional capacity development. She then joined the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Panama to manage a portfolio of Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded projects, for Latin American and Caribbean countries and globally. After this, she became the Regional Programme Coordinator for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), where she continued to drive the conservation and sustainable development agenda from IUCN's Regional Office in Costa Rica. In 2017, she became an international consultant, specialising in project drafting, reporting, compilation analyses and independent evaluations. After a period at IUCN headquarters in Switzerland, as Special Advisor to the Acting Director General, she returned to consulting and is now undertaking external evaluations for UNEP's Evaluation Office. Her current home-base is Costa Rica.

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About the Evaluation

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Brief Description: This report is a Terminal Evaluation of a UNEP/GEF project "Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity" implemented between Oct 2015 and June 2019. The project's overall goal was revised through this evaluation process, to become: "preventing species extinctions at priority sites identified through the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE)". The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Key words: Alliance for Zero Extinction; Aichi Target 12; National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans; Species Conservation; Threatened Species; Protected Area Management; Management Effectiveness; Restoration; Ecosystem Management; Sustainable Livelihoods; International Finance Institutions; Safeguard Policies.¹

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¹ This data is used to aid the internet search of this report on the Evaluation Office of UNEP Website

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AZE	Alliance for Zero Extinction
ABC	American Bird Conservancy
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties (to the CBD)
EA	Expected Accomplishments (from UNEP's Mid-Term Strategy)
EO	Evaluation Office (UNEP)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GSC	Global Steering Committee
IBAT	Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFIs	International Financial Institutions (including Multilateral Development Banks)
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool for Protected Areas (GEF)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PMT	Project Management Team
PoWPA	Programme of Work for Protected Areas
Prodoc	Project Document (UNEP)
RECH	Chilean Herpetology Network Association
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (CBD)
SCBD	Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOC	Theory of Change
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Project identification table

Table 1: Project Identification Table

GEF Project ID:	5201		
Implementing Agency:	UNEP	Executing Agency:	BirdLife International
Relevant SDG(s) and indicator(s):		SDG 15 (Life on Land)	
GEF Core Indicator Targets (identify these for projects approved prior to GEF-7)		n/a to GEF-5 projects. Uses METT from GEF-5 BD-1	
Sub-programme:	Ecosystem Management	Expected Accomplishments (EA):	EA(a) "Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased" EA(c) "Services and benefits derived from ecosystems are integrated with development planning and accounting, and the implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem related multilateral agreements"
UNEP approval date:	15 May 2015	Programme of Work (2014 – 2017) Output(s):	EA(a) - Outputs 1 and 5. EA(c) – Outputs 2 and 5. Refer to section 2.3 for details
GEF approval date:	22 July 2015	Project type:	MSP (Medium-size Project)
GEF Operational Programme #:	GEF-5	Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity
		GEF Strategic Priority:	BD1, BD2
Expected start date:	September 2015	Actual start date:	10 October 2015
Planned completion date:	30 Sept 2018	Actual operational completion date:	30 June 2019
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 6,719,984	Actual total expenditures reported as of 30.06.19	USD 7,650,850 (GEF + co-finance)
GEF grant allocation:	USD 1,922,813	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 31.07.19:	USD 1,877,813 + USD 38,860 MTR+TE = USD 1,916,673
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 77,187	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	n/a
Expected Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 4,797,171	Secured Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 5,734,177
Date of first disbursement:	25 February 2016	Planned date of financial closure:	April 2022
No. of formal project revisions:	2	Date of project revisions:	January 2019 and June 2019
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	2	Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	June 2019
Mid-term Review (planned date):	Sept 2017	Mid-term Review (actual date):	May 2019
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	April 2020	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	July 2021
Coverage - Countries:	Brazil, Chile and Madagascar	Coverage - Region(s):	Global

Dates of previous project phases:	n/a	Status of future project phases:	GEF-7 proposal recently approved
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Executive summary

Project background

1. The medium-sized project "Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity" was executed in Brazil, Chile, Madagascar and globally between October 2015 and June 2019, and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was the GEF Implementing Agency, and BirdLife International the main Executing Agency, closely supported by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) as the AZE Secretariat and national executing partners in each project country.

2. The AZE works to prevent species extinctions by homing in on key sites that are the last remaining refuges of one or more Endangered or Critically Endangered species. This project was the first GEF-funded effort that sought to integrate AZE as a distinct priority in national conservation policies and planning, such as those stemming from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and in the safeguard standards, and ultimately, investment decisions, of international finance institutions. The project also aimed to improve the conservation status of AZE species and their habitats at five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar.

This evaluation

3. This Terminal Evaluation was carried out between July 2021 and March 2022, and entailed desk-top analyses and virtual interviews, without country visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main target audiences for the evaluation are UNEP itself, BirdLife International and ABC as the main executing partners, and the project's three national partners (as beneficiaries with a role in project delivery) and government counterparts (key staff such as GEF Focal Points). This evaluation takes into account the recent approval of a further UNEP-GEF global AZE project, with ABC, BirdLife and the same partners in Chile and Madagascar, plus new partners in Colombia and Dominican Republic. This new project is due to begin execution in the first semester of 2022, so the findings and recommendations from this evaluation can inform the project's inception period.

Key findings & Conclusions

4. Based on the evaluation findings, the project overall demonstrated a "**Satisfactory**" performance. A table of ratings against all evaluation criteria is presented at the end of the Conclusions section (chapter VI section A: paragraph 251, Table 11). The project scored very well in its **Strategic Relevance** (Highly Satisfactory) and **Design Quality** (Satisfactory), showing full alignment with UNEP strategies, GEF-5 priorities, global and national priorities, and complementarity and integration with ongoing and prior interventions that allowed for efficiency gains and greater coherency.

5. The project exceeded expectations in terms of results achieved, obtaining a Highly Satisfactory score for its **Effectiveness**. The majority of expected Outputs and Outcomes were delivered, both at the site-level where AZE habitat conservation was improved, and in policy mainstreaming through which AZE was incorporated into government policies and key documents, as well as the safeguard policies of major financial institutions. From a total of 24 Outcome Indicator targets, 33% were met, 29% came close and 25% were exceeded. All project results remain relevant and available today, and are recognised as valuable for guiding conservation action and planning, as well as investment decisions, and for motivating community involvement in species conservation.

6. The project achieved upscaling and additional unplanned results that significantly raise its impact or likelihood of impact. In Brazil, where AZE was already part of the country's biodiversity strategy, two **federal decrees** (Ordinances) were enacted for AZE site protection, the first in the world. Globally, the project successfully positioned AZE conservation through **CBD mechanisms**, giving visibility and political validity to the protection of these sites as a means for 196 Parties to meet their CBD targets. By targeting **finance institutions with a multiplying effect**, namely the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, the project was able to introduce AZE into performance standards that are followed by all Equator Principles Financial Institutions (now tallying at 128) and others aimed at other sectors, such as wind energy and mining companies. The prospects, therefore, of this project helping to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE (Project Goal) and contributing to the achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 globally through public and private sector actions (Intended Impact) are very high.

7. The project also demonstrated strong performance in terms of **Efficiency (Satisfactory)** and **Sustainability (Satisfactory)**. A key factor that raised the project's efficiency was its strategic integration with ongoing initiatives and ability to capitalise on prior efforts and workstreams, both in the global arena, nationally and at the site-level. The project made sure to work through and with existing structures, processes and programmes to ensure coherency, confer "value-for-money" to its interventions and achieve maximum results with limited GEF resources. This was especially true in Brazil and Madagascar, where ABC and BirdLife had a long history of working with the respective national partners at the selected sites. It was also the case in the work to influence the policies and decisions of financial institutions and the CBD, for which BirdLife and ABC had identified appropriate entry points and could capitalise on existing partnerships. This approach led to sustainability gains and generated lasting results that will carry forward beyond the project. Indeed, the sustainability of project results was found to be high at the global level, and varied widely between project countries, where it was highest in Brazil, closely followed by Madagascar, and **moderate in Chile**.

8. A number of factors were found to contribute positively to the project's overall performance. One such factor was **Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation (Satisfactory)**. The project has numerous examples of participation and cooperation occurring at the community level, across national networks and in the global arena. This factor evidently enriched the project's actions and reach; a good degree of **behaviour change** can be attributed to the project's strong emphasis on stakeholder participation and collaboration, and on communications and outreach.

9. **Communications and Public Awareness (Highly Satisfactory)** was a critical factor that was built into the project's design, given that several Outputs were intended to be communicated and useful for public awareness-raising, education, policy mainstreaming and implementation, and AZE site management. This factor contributed positively to Output availability and visibility, and was particularly relevant for the uptake of AZE into the national biodiversity strategies of non-project countries, and for enhancing the understanding of AZE across a growing number of finance institutions, as this was achieved solely on the basis of advocacy, policy influencing and outreach activities. Education programmes were also hugely successful in raising the awareness of local communities of otherwise unknown AZE species and their habitats.

10. Another factor was **Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity (Satisfactory)**. The project's site-level work involved **marginalised** communities in Madagascar and **indigenous** groups in Chile, and had tacit social objectives that entailed building trust with community members and a gender-sensitive bottom-up approach to landscape management. Though not measured through sex-disaggregated data or by degree of vulnerability or marginalisation, the project promoted the conscientious involvement of **women** in reforestation activities and running agroforestry (cacao) nurseries in Brazil; craftwork in Chile and Madagascar as a livelihood option; and mobilizing communities in Chile through school activities, to learn about protecting a uniquely local AZE frog. In addition, women had a prominent role in project management teams at the global and national levels.

11. Performance areas that could have benefited from further attention relate to **Project Management and Supervision (Moderately Satisfactory)**, **Monitoring and Reporting (Satisfactory)**, and **Preparation and Readiness (Moderately Unsatisfactory)**, which to some extent, are interlinked. Certain gaps and inconsistencies were observed in monitoring and reporting (e.g. in the use of GEF Tracking Tools) which point to uneven knowledge of reporting requirements across project partners and the lack of a comprehensive induction from UNEP. In some cases, the evidence base to support attribution of results was weak. Project management and oversight were impacted by a change of UNEP Task Manager in the project's inception period; by a recruitment gap between Global Project Managers in 2017; by the sparse functioning of the project's various Steering Committees; and thirdly, by a delay in the Mid-Term Review, which took place in the project's final semester. These factors combined with low preparation and readiness in Chile, where project start-up was delayed due to the lack of an executing entity that could manage GEF funding and the initial reluctance of community members at one of Chile's sites to participate in the project.

Evaluation 'Key Strategic Questions'

- (a) **What evidence is available that the project activities regarding creation of AZE Sites and improved management of protected areas have contributed to prevent species extinctions? To what extent are biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in demonstration sites?**

12. The project's revised Goal was to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE). The evaluation found that the project made significant progress towards meeting this Goal. Project activities aimed at the improved management of protected areas and selected AZE sites were effective in helping to conserve critical AZE habitat. Measures taken at each site were a combination of three different strategies. The first was to focus on management effectiveness, using the GEF's Tracking Tool to guide the necessary improvements. The second was to increase the protection status of the sites, as achieved in Madagascar with the legal designation of Tsitongambarika Forest as a Protected Area, and in Brazil with the expansion of the Mata do Passarinho Private Reserve.

13. The third was to address threats and ecosystem degradation at all five sites through community involvement. This entailed fencing areas of AZE amphibian habitat in Chile to restrict access to ravines and help minimize impacts from illegal logging and cattle; restoring degraded areas of AZE habitat through reforestation campaigns and cacao planting in Brazil; and working with communities in Madagascar to introduce sustainable livelihood activities as alternatives to shifting agriculture and with this, halting deforestation in the project area. As a result of the project, AZE species monitoring has increased and data has revealed higher species densities, siting of individuals in new areas, as well as the presence of fungi affecting species health. Altogether, these actions serve to improve the conservation knowledge and status of targeted AZE sites, and with it, reduce the extinction risk of AZE species.

(b) What evidence is present to suggest that the project's interventions in mainstreaming conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites into the safeguard policies of key financial institutions, and Multilateral Development Banks have minimized the impact of development projects on AZE sites?

14. The project was able to mainstream the protection of AZE sites into the safeguard policies of key international financial institutions, such as Multilateral Development Banks, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Equator Principles Association. Doing so obligates these institutions and their members to screen investment projects for potential risks to areas classed as "Critical Habitat". The IFC's Performance Standards Guidance Note 6 now recognizes AZE sites, alongside UNESCO World Heritage sites, as the most critical of all, and refers to these sites as "no-go" areas, unless the development projects concerned are specifically designed to contribute to the area's conservation. It also states that "consultation with the relevant national and international organizations that designate these areas is required" and includes a reference to the AZE website.

15. The AZE Secretariat has continued to actively engage with IFC and the Equator Principles Association, even beyond the project, responding to queries (often derived from other financial institutions) and providing technical advice on measures that can be taken to avoid or reduce development project impacts in and around AZE sites, or even on cases that should not be approved. A growing number of national and international financial institutions are also subscribers to the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (www.ibat-alliance.org), which offers rapid visual screening for critical biodiversity areas and species, and facilitates the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations, including AZE, into finance sector decisions.

(c) What evidence is available that the project activities have helped countries to mainstream AZE site conservation into their national biodiversity strategies?

16. Project activities to mainstream AZE conservation into national biodiversity strategies were directed firstly at the three project countries, and secondly, more widely at Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). For this latter group particularly, the evidence base that project activities spurred the integration of AZE considerations into National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), CBD National Reports and other conservation strategies is weak, as the project had no GEF-funded interventions in those countries. Policy influencing with these 'non-project countries' was carried out on the global stage, using CBD processes and events, and virtual fora like the NBSAP Forum, to advocate for AZE site conservation and inform on the data and tools available to do so. Without an evidence trail or feedback on the ensuing internal processes, it is assumed that project activities made a substantive contribution to the mainstreaming of AZE into NBSAPs and other national CBD instruments in these countries.

17. With project countries, the baseline scenario was different in each case. Brazil had already integrated AZE into the country's NBSAP, but thanks to the project, went even further by mainstreaming AZE into two new federal regulations (Ordinances). Brazil's NBSAP was also updated with new references

to AZE sites and their importance, and to role of the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction. In Madagascar, AZE was successfully incorporated into the country's NBSAP and gained traction as a concept that couples well with protected area management and sub-national plans. Only in Chile was the mainstreaming target not achieved nationally but was taken up at the local level.

(d) To what extent and in what ways is the Project considered an important initiative for the conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites, by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions?

18. Stakeholders consulted in this evaluation confirmed that the project had indeed been important for the conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites. In all cases, the project was able to bring much-needed attention to particular species, and with it, their irreplaceable sites, for which direct action and attention to reduce threats was needed. The mainstreaming approach was important too, as it facilitated the understanding that most of the needs for AZE conservation can readily be taken up in existing conservation policies and strategies, including those for protected areas. The project made good use of the links between species and habitat protection, motivating local communities to take up conservation through education campaigns, festivals and actions that local stakeholders viewed as beneficial – for instance, reforestation of degraded areas, or ecotourism activities.

19. The project was also important for leveraging additional financial resources for AZE site conservation, through fundraising efforts. For governments, the initiative was important in that it allowed the provision of new information and data, such as country-specific AZE maps, AZE species lists and studies, and information on forest cover, useful for planning, decision-making and monitoring trends. It also allowed the AZE concept to be understood, adopted and used for priority-setting. Likewise with IFIs that mainstreamed AZE into their safeguard policies and are already putting their new guidelines into practice, using AZE global datasets to avert further threats to AZE sites.

(e) What potential follow up initiatives would be needed to sustain the Project's impact, replicate and upscale this experience?

20. Through the upcoming GEF-7 AZE project, the current project's approach will be replicated and upscaled to address threats at a larger number of AZE sites and in new project countries. The mainstreaming approach will also continue, and be expanded, seeking this time to integrate AZE site conservation into: a) the government policies and regulations of project countries; b) climate mitigation and adaptation actions and climate resilience strategies and policies at the national and global levels; c) industry policies and standards, and d) the policies and operational approaches of a further set of financial institutions (including local, regional and national banks and investors).

21. In order to sustain the project's initial impact in Mehuin, this AZE site is again included in the cohort of Chilean sites in the GEF-7 AZE project, thus bringing much-needed funding to implement the area's community-driven Management Plan. At all new sites, conservation actions that address local needs and include sustainable livelihood options have a greater likelihood of success. Biodiversity threats can be abated by different means but in all cases, positive community involvement, that is, one that mobilizes and benefits key groups (women's associations, school children, park rangers, landowners, etc) can bring lasting behavioural and environmental changes, and build social capital. This approach will be replicated in the new GEF-7 AZE project, and will include the testing of "Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures" as a novel conservation approach.

22. For the new project, ensuring the provision of high quality spatial AZE data will become a key priority. If the experience of using AZE data to guide business and finance decisions is to be successfully replicated, and uptake of AZE achieved across more private sector actors, special attention will need to be paid to spatial data quality and the applicability of AZE maps under various investment scenarios. To further upscale the current experience, and considering that the adoption of new post-2020 indicators and targets could soon become a global driver, collaborations with universities and species research groups could also be sought, in benefit of site-based interventions, as an avenue for greater stakeholder participation and a means to mobilize AZE data.

(f) To what extent was UNEP able to facilitate the integration of AZE priorities within NBSAPs through the NBSAP forum and through the specific NBSAP revision projects for which UNEP currently serves as the GEF Implementing Agency (global project titled "Support to GEF Eligible Countries for achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 17 through a globally guided NBSAPs update process) as a result of this project?

23. The NBSAP revision projects for which UNEP was the GEF Implementing Agency were not directly used to facilitate the integration of AZE priorities into NBSAPs. Instead, the NBSAP Forum served as a channel through which the project team was able to share materials on AZE and explain how AZE sites, as a subset of Key Biodiversity Areas, could be integrated into NBSAPs to achieve Aichi Targets and CBD reporting requirements. BirdLife International is a contributing partner to the NBSAP Forum, and collaborates regularly with UNEP-WCMC, one of the Forum's host agencies.

Lessons Learned

24. Lesson 1: Collaborative arrangements between government and NGOs for protected area management or species conservation can be effective means to achieve both conservation and development objectives, and channel private sector resources, in countries or localities where government capacities are insufficient.

25. Lesson 2: Linking species protection with ecosystem conservation, and vice versa, is a coherent way to maximise resources and consistency with national policies and priorities, and local conservation plans and approaches.

26. Lesson 3: Ensuring a common understanding of project requirements among all executing partners - especially with respect to reporting - is more advantageous if done during the project design or inception phases, as it helps to establish enabling conditions for more efficient project execution and impactful reporting.

27. Lesson 4: Given the challenges entailed in attributing policy achievements to specific conservation projects, and demonstrating the avoidance of species extinctions on-the-ground, it is worth making provisions to build a strong and systematic evidence base for project results that combines primary and secondary sources of information.

28. Lesson 5: Global project management and oversight structures need to be efficient, well nested and adequately funded in order to be meaningful to the project and bring value addition to its execution.

Recommendations

29. Recommendation 1: Place special emphasis on M&E practice in the GEF-7 AZE project, in order to lay the foundations for clear attribution of results, internal consistency, transparency in adaptive management decisions, and feedback loops and learning.

- i. Prepare a Monitoring Plan that specifies: (i) the needs associated with results monitoring; (ii) the M&E exercises expected to take place at inception, mid-term (MTR) and project-end (TE),
- ii. Considering language and time-zone differences, set realistic expectations for how the Global Project Steering Committee will function and adaptive management decisions be accounted for.
- iii. Identify practical and innovative ways to obtain evidence for attribution of results and feedback from beneficiaries on project performance.

30. Recommendation 2: Integrate and report on social elements more distinctly in site-based interventions in the GEF-7 AZE project, considering them as factors of success (TOC drivers and assumptions), and develop a narrative for how the project benefitted indigenous groups, gender mainstreaming and marginalization issues and how these in turn favoured conservation outcomes.

31. Recommendation 3: Render co-finance tracking a meaningful exercise in the GEF-7 AZE project, by seeking firstly, a common understanding of co-finance sources and their relevance to the project and its reporting, and secondly, the means to track which results/Outcome Indicators the co-funding contributes towards.

I. Introduction

32. "Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity" is a medium-sized global project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the GEF Implementing Agency. The project was executed in Brazil, Chile, Madagascar and globally between October 2015 and June 2019 by BirdLife International, closely supported by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) as the AZE Secretariat and national executing partners in each project country.

33. The project was overseen by the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit of UNEP's Ecosystems Division and responded to specific Expected Accomplishments in UNEP's Programme of Work (2014–2017), namely Expected Accomplishment (a) (Outputs 1 and 5) and Expected Accomplishment (c) (Outputs 2 and 5). Its global partners were the CBD Secretariat (SCBD), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

34. The project's overall goal, as revised by this evaluation, was: "to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE)". The project had a global reach as well as national foci for Brazil, Chile and Madagascar, where five pilot AZE sites were chosen for direct conservation actions. The project also influenced a number of other countries as well as global processes. The project's main AZE sites are listed in **Table 2**, together with 11 additional sites targeted for replication.

Table 2. Main and additional AZE sites selected for the project

Countries	Main project AZE sites	Countries	Additional AZE sites
1. Brazil	Mata do Passarinho Reserve	1. Brazil	Oasis Araripe Reserve
2. Chile	Mocha Island Reserve	2. Brazil	Serra do Urubu Reserve
3. Chile	Mehuin – site 1	3. Brazil	Murici Ecological Station
4. Chile	Mehuin -site 2	4. Dominican Republic	Sierra de Bahoruco National Park
5. Madagascar	Tsitongambarika Forest	5. Madagascar	Mahavavy-Kinkony Complex
		6. Ecuador	Yunguilla Reserve
		7. Ecuador	Tapichalaca Reserve
		8. Guatemala	Sierra Caral Reserve
		9. Jamaica	Blue & John Crow Mountains National Park
		10. Peru	Abra Patricia Reserve
		11. Costa Rica	Osa National Wildlife Refuge

35. The total GEF grant was USD 1,922,813 and expected co-financing from national executing entities, government agencies in project countries, and other contributors was USD 4,797,171. The GEF approved the project for implementation in July 2015. No information was available regarding UNEP's Project Review Committee approval. The project underwent an independent Mid-Term Review in 2018/19 and is now subject to a Terminal Evaluation.

36. This evaluation seeks to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine the project's outcomes and impacts (actual and potential), including the sustainability of its results. As stated in the evaluation Terms of Reference, this Terminal Evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing among the teams at UNEP, BirdLife, the AZE Secretariat and national partners. This second purpose is most relevant in the context of a second global AZE project, designed by ABC, BirdLife and UNEP, and funded under GEF-7, that will begin execution in the first half of 2022.

II. Evaluation Methods

A. UNEP's evaluation model/approach

Definitions of evaluation criteria

37. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, the UNEP Programme Manual and the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations, this Terminal Evaluation (TE) has been carried out using a set of 9 commonly applied evaluation criteria which include: (1) Strategic Relevance, (2) Quality of Project Design, (3) Nature of External Context, (4) Effectiveness (including availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact), (5) Financial Management, (6) Efficiency, (7) Monitoring and Reporting, (8) Sustainability and (9) Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues. An Evaluation Framework that offers more detail on each evaluation criterion is presented in the TE Inception Report (its Annex D).

38. Most evaluation criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.

Matrix of ratings levels for each criterion

39. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements that need to be demonstrated at each level (from Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each evaluation criterion. The evaluator considered all evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix, in order to generate evaluation criteria performance ratings.

Strategic evaluation questions

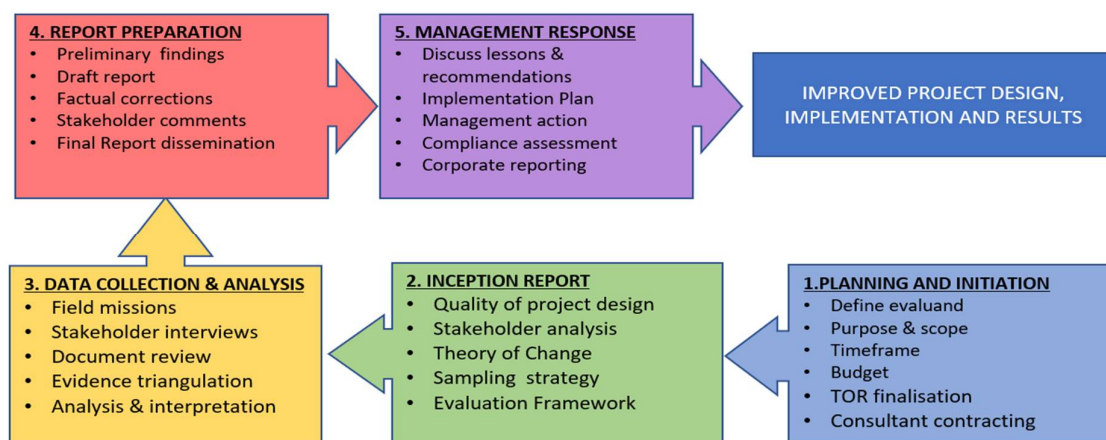
40. In addition to the 9 evaluation criteria outlined above, this TE addresses a number of strategic questions formulated in the Terms of Reference (**Annex VIII**). These questions were posed by the UNEP Evaluation Office in conjunction with members of the project team. As a GEF-funded project, findings from this evaluation are to be uploaded on the GEF Portal. To support this process, evaluation findings related to the 5 topics of interest to the GEF are summarised in chapter V section I (as Factors affecting Performance and Crosscutting issues). The 5 topics are: i) performance against GEF's Core Indicator Targets; ii) engagement of stakeholders; iii) gender-responsive measures and gender result areas; iv) implementation of management measures taken against the Safeguards Plan and v) challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach.

B. Evaluation Process

41. This evaluation adopted a participatory approach, consulting with project team members, partners and beneficiaries at several stages in the process. The overall process, shown in **Figure 1**, initiated with a planning phase to define the scope of the TE which began with an Inception Report and was followed by a data collection phase and the drafting and completion of this Final report. Thereafter, the project team will be charged with preparing a management response or implementation plan to address this TE's recommendations.

42. Central to this evaluation was the analysis and reconstruction of the project's Theory of Change (TOC). Consultations held during the TE inception phase helped to arrive at a nuanced understanding of how the project intended to drive change and what contributing conditions ('assumptions' and 'drivers') would need to be in place to support such change. The reconstructed TOC, presented as a graphic representation and a narrative discussion of causal pathways, was shared with the project team and the UNEP Evaluation Manager. The final version of the TOC is presented in this report and has been used throughout the evaluation process.

Figure 1. UNEP Evaluation Process



C. Data Collection

Primary data sources

i) Sampling strategy

43. Different key groups involved in project execution were the main primary data providers. Key staff from BirdLife International (Executing Agency) were interviewed, as well as the Project Management Team (PMT) comprising the Global Project Manager from BirdLife and an AZE staff from ABC who supported project management and global advocacy and coordination tasks. Given UNEP's Implementing Agency role, UNEP staff were also primary information sources, in particular the Task Manager, the Fund Management Officer and the Financial Assistant. The PMT plus UNEP staff are collectively referred to as the "project team".

44. Amongst national partners, the project's three non-governmental executing entities and three main Ministries were also considered primary sources of information, in addition to other relevant government agencies involved. The last group sampled were the project beneficiaries and non-executing partners, which included international organizations, sub-national entities, local community groups, private companies and scientists. No country visits or field missions were carried out due to the prevailing pandemic. In consequence, the sample obtained in the beneficiary group was very small, and limited to international organizations.

Table 3. Respondents' sample for Terminal Evaluation

PEOPLE (M = Male. F = Female)		# involved	# contacted	respondents	% response
Project team - those with management responsibilities	Implementing Agency	2M / 1F	2M / 1F	2M / 1F	100%
	Executing Agencies (2) *	3M / 3F	2M / 3F	2M / 3F	100%
ENTITIES	# involved	# contacted	# contacted	respondents	% response
Project partners (executing) - those receiving GEF funds	4	4	3M / 4F	3M / 4F	100%
Project partners ** (collaborating /contributing) - those supporting without receiving GEF funds	6	5	7M / 3F	4M / 1F	44.4%
Beneficiaries	undefined	2	2M / 1F	0M / 1F	33.3%
TOTAL			16M / 12F	11M / 10F	75%

* Numbers exclude finance staff

** Contributing partners considered here are those that provided resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc). Partners that were also "executing/ implementing" partners are also "contributing" partners but not listed here to avoid double counting.

45. **Table 3** above shows the number of people/entities considered in each sample group (avoiding double counting), how many were contacted (by gender) and the percentage of respondents. Contact selection was purposive, targeting only persons directly involved in the project. Of a total of 28 people contacted (16 male, 12 female), responses were obtained from 21 (11 male, 10 female), which corresponds to a 75% response rate.

ii) Data collection tools

46. Data were verified by triangulation as much as possible, by using different tools to corroborate inputs and responses: interviews, questionnaires, web-stories and document reviews. In the absence of country visits, project stakeholders were interviewed by virtual means (email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.), mostly individually but also in groups, and in some cases, were requested to complete a questionnaire. The full list of persons contacted and interviewed is provided in **Annex IV**. The evaluation questionnaire was tailored to different respondent groups but ultimately applied only to executing partners. It used a scoring system that allowed respondents to provide a rapid, personal appraisal of the project, in line with specific evaluation criteria. Three completed questionnaires were received from a total of five requests (60% response rate).

47. Throughout this evaluation and in the compilation of this Final Evaluation Report, efforts were made to consider the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups, and act in respect of human rights. The voices of executing partners are over represented in this evaluation, while those of marginalised community groups are the least audible. Of all people interviewed, 52% were male, 48% female. Interviews remained confidential and anonymity was protected through data aggregation. All information was collected according to relevant UNEP guidelines and UN standards of conduct.

iii) Actions taken to increase response

48. To initiate contact with project partners and beneficiaries, the evaluator requested the Global Project Manager to reach out to the Global Steering Committee and the technical counterparts in each country, and then followed up on those contacts. Response rates with executing entities were initially very good but tailed off during the data collection period, in part due to the start of a key holiday period. Responses were few with government entities, and least with final beneficiaries, despite re-sending of emails, trying with alternative contacts, and seeking assistance from the executing partners to set up interviews with local beneficiaries.

Secondary data sources

49. In order to review available documentation (legal, financial and technical), the evaluator was given access to a Dropbox maintained as a project repository by BirdLife, and SharePoint folders maintained by UNEP (Task Manager and Evaluation Manager). Therein, a large volume of documents was found, providing evidence of project execution and its flow of outputs and activities. These two sources of secondary information are hereafter jointly referred to as "the project files".

50. Relevant secondary data consisted in project design documents presented to and approved by the GEF Secretariat and UNEP, jointly referred to as Project Documents (Prodoc), as well as implementation documents such as periodic reports (technical, GEF expenditures and co-financing) and project outputs (publications, maps, field studies, etc). Additional material such as web-stories, videos and outreach material generated either by the project or by third parties was also reviewed. **Annex V** presents the full list of documents consulted.

Limitations and mitigation strategy

51. Some of the limitations that affected the depth, completeness or representativity of the data collected in this evaluation are listed below:

- no country visits planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which made the TE overly reliant on documented evidence;
- lack of access to key project stakeholders due to significant time lapse (over two years) since operational completion of the project;
- gaps in response groups, especially in project countries, with particular difficulties in reaching "on-the-ground" groups;

- weak or fading response rates in key sectors, combined with interrupted contact with the PMT;
- partial access to project financial documentation and data sources, given the project management divide between BirdLife and ABC.

52. The evaluation's data collection phase was intermittent and took longer than anticipated. It got off to a slow start due to key global meetings taking place during the last semester of 2021 that delayed BirdLife's engagement in the TE and consequent access to project information. The data collection phase also ran into the end-of-year holiday period, which slowed down or paused communications with stakeholders. Lastly, in early 2022, interviews with a key informant were delayed due to unforeseeable circumstances.

53. The TE is biased towards the perspective of executing entities, having had very little input from other beneficiaries. Government contacts from Brazil and Madagascar were unavailable for interview; the persons involved in the project had either left their positions or were unresponsive. This means that a key sector (i.e., government) is represented solely by Chile. Without country visits, community-based beneficiaries could not be interviewed either, despite the evaluator's aspiration to do so telephonically. Altogether, this limited the primary inputs obtained through interviews, which concentrated mainly on the global PMT, the national AZE executing partners, and UNEP.

54. As the main Executing Agency, BirdLife was bound by reporting requirements and made available its project management documentation. Despite the key role of ABC in project management, however, access to ABC's project management files was limited. Of particular interest were the reports from executing partners in Brazil and Chile sub-contracted by ABC. During implementation and for each reporting cycle, ABC submitted consolidated reports (financial and technical) for itself and its two national partners. This was practical for compilation purposes, but for accountability purposes, limited the extent to which GEF financing could be traced and accounted for along the project's execution paths.

55. Communications with country stakeholders, in particular community and site-level beneficiaries, could only be channelled through executing partners. To depend entirely on the capacity or availability of these partners to engage in the TE and mobilize local stakeholders was a limitation, as low response periods from these partners resulted in no communications with site-level stakeholders.

D. Analysis

56. The primary mode of analysis relied on securing evidence to support the project's results pathways and the main elements of its reconstructed TOC. Without intending to carry out a full Contribution Analysis, this methodology was emulated as a way to guide the data analysis process. Two underlying questions that were central to the examination of change processes taking place along the TOC pathways were: "What role did the intervention play in bringing about behaviour and policy changes?" and "How and why did these changes occur?".

57. In seeking evidence that would answer these questions and justify the relationship between project efforts and its results and impact, the evaluator aimed to establish attribution² of project results where possible, or alternatively, substantive contributions³ or a credible association⁴ where not possible due to insufficient evidence. This approach included the triangulation, as much as possible, of evidence and information from different sources and followed guidance from the UNEP Evaluation Office on the use of TOC in project evaluations.

² **Attribution** can be claimed when comprehensive evidence *proving* the cause-and-effect relationship between the project and the observed results is presented. To make a strong claim of attribution one needs to be able to isolate the effects of an intervention from changes over time and differences in contexts (UNEP guidance).

³ **Contribution** can be claimed when compelling evidence *supports* a cause-and-effect relationship through which intended collective results are achieved by the combined efforts of more than one project (UNEP guidance).

⁴ A claim to a **credible association** can be made based on the project's intentions (stated in the Prodoc), its causality pathways (the TOC), and evidence derived from the chronology of events, the roles played by executing partners and the influence of identified drivers that shows that the intention was followed and the expected causality pathways emerged (UNEP guidance).

III. The Project

A. Context

58. The Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) is a joint initiative of biodiversity conservation organizations aiming to prevent species extinctions around the world, by identifying and safeguarding key sites that are the last remaining refuge of one or more Endangered or Critically Endangered Species. These key sites are amongst the top priorities if global biodiversity loss is to be halted and reversed.

59. In 2015 (at the time of project approval), there were 587 AZE sites identified globally, containing the entire populations of at least 920 species of the world's most threatened species. Of these sites, 40% were in unprotected areas. AZE sites face numerous and rising threats worldwide, the main ones being habitat loss caused by deforestation and impacts from invasive species; climate change impacts, pollution, and uncontrolled hunting are also among known threats. The following are considered barriers to improving the status of AZE species and their habitats:

- i. Conservation efforts primarily focused on ecosystems and large areas of habitat may miss irreplaceable sites for highly unique, threatened species, given that they often occupy relatively small areas.
- ii. Local natural resource managers often lack sufficient knowledge of AZE species, and even if they know of them, capacity to conserve them is often low.
- iii. Local communities tend to be unaware of the global uniqueness and importance of AZE species in their area, and to have few alternatives to the livelihood practices that may threaten those AZE species.
- iv. Investment strategies of lending institutions seemingly pay insufficient attention to globally irreplaceable sites for biodiversity conservation due to a lack of access to, and use of, AZE data.

60. In 2012, members of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) requested Parties to the CBD to include gap analyses of AZE sites in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), as the principal policy instrument -together with the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) - for planning the implementation of the Convention at the national level. The AZE Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the CBD Secretariat to provide "assistance to CBD Parties with integrating the zero extinction target into national biodiversity strategies and action plans". Through this partnership, and together with IUCN and UNEP, AZE has since been providing information to signatory nations for inclusion in their NBSAPs.

61. Back in 2015, the CBD's Aichi Targets also presented a unique opportunity to scale-up protection for AZE sites, especially as AZE sites and species are recognized indicators for Targets 11 and 12. Yet access to data and lack of information on AZE sites and species limited efforts to include them in NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans, to carry out targeted conservation actions and to safeguard them from development projects. These constraints, together with the need for area-based conservation actions at AZE sites, resulted in the design of this project, originally with the general Objective: "to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE".

62. This project was the first GEF-funded effort to integrate AZE as a distinct priority into conservation planning at the national level, leveraging up through global opportunities to do the same, including the investment decision-making arena, and using five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar to improve the conservation status of distinct AZE species. These sites were selected based on "AZE trigger" species:

BRAZIL: **AZE species:** *Merulaxis stresemanni* – critically endangered bird (Stresemann's Bristlefront). **AZE site:** Mata do Passarihno Reserve - all known locations of the species are within the Reserve though its historic range is known to be larger.

CHILE: **AZE species:** Eupsophus insularis – critically endangered frog. **AZE site:** Isla Mocha National Reserve is the only known site for this frog.

CHILE: **AZE species:** Eupsophus migueli and Insuetophrynus acarpicus - critically endangered frogs. **AZE sites (2):** Specific areas of Mehuín represent the only places on earth for these two species.

MADAGASCAR: **AZE species:** Ravenea musicalis (critically endangered palm); Micronychia bemangidiensis (endangered Araliaceae plant); five reptiles (in the lizard genera Brookesia, Lygodactylus and Phelsuma, and snake genera Liophidium and Liopholidophis) and six amphibians (in the frog genera Boophis [2], Gephyromantis, Mantidactylus, Spinomantis and Vatomantis) presumed to be either endangered or critically endangered. **AZE site:** Tsitongambarika forest, the only place where these species have been recorded.

63. The five selected sites were within both protected and unprotected areas where unsustainable practices and encroachments by local communities were driving habitat loss and degradation, and posed a threat to the survival of the above 17 AZE species. By including replication at a further ten sites, in addition to the five main sites, the project also sought to increase momentum for the uptake of AZE site conservation globally.

B. Results Framework

64. The project was designed with two mutually-supportive components that have local, national and global dimensions. Component 1 focused on conservation activities at the site level that aimed to avoid the extinction of species and deterioration/loss of five critically important AZE sites in the three project countries, while also leveraging site-level actions at 10 additional sites, covering at least 160,000 ha in total. Component 2 sought to mobilise and strengthen the capacity of the AZE partnership; develop key conservation planning tools and guidelines and improve access to AZE data in order to support the achievement of CBD Aichi Targets 11 and 12; and foster the adoption of AZE as part of NBSAPs in project countries and at least nine additional countries, as well as within the safeguard policies of international finance institutions. To deliver against these results, the project's management structure combines execution by global and local partners, a close working relationship with national governments, and mobilization of AZE's global network and partnerships.

65. The project contains a highly comprehensive Results Framework, without a Theory of Change (TOC). The Results Framework provides a full set of Activities, Outputs and Outcomes that respond to the Project Objective, as well as a baseline for each Outcome Indicator, together with accompanying assumptions and mid-term and end-of-project Targets. Where relevant (in Component 1), indicators and targets make use of the GEF-5 Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for Protected Areas to measure progress, as expected under Objective 1 of GEF's Biodiversity Focal Area. As part of this Terminal Evaluation (TE), specific revisions were proposed to the Results Framework, which are described in chapter IV below (Theory of Change at Evaluation) and presented as a comparative table in **Annex II** (original vs. revised Results Framework).

C. Stakeholders

66. The TE Inception Report provides a full analysis of stakeholder roles and relevance, based on the Prodoc, and of the level of influence and interest of each group over the project, or over protected areas and species conservation in general. The majority of identified stakeholders can be considered project beneficiaries, and include several global institutions closely involved in the project. The main global organizations with implementation responsibilities were BirdLife International as the main designated Executing Agency, closely supported by ABC as the AZE Secretariat, and UNEP as the GEF Implementing Agency.

67. The SCBD, IUCN and the UNEP-WCMC acted as global partners, providing biodiversity information and opportunities to raise the profile of the project's actions, while at the same time being project beneficiaries. As a sub-contractor, IUCN provided access to data management and data updates from the Red List of Threatened Species. Another stakeholder group in the global 'beneficiary' category

was International Financial Institutions (IFIs), including Multilateral Development Banks, that under the project's second component, would gain knowledge on the importance of AZE and be prompted to mainstream AZE site protection into their investment safeguard policies and guidelines.

68. Stakeholders operating at the national or sub-national level were a mix of governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), some of which had executing responsibilities ('duty bearers') and all of which were project beneficiaries. The Ministries of Environment of Brazil and Chile, and the Ministry⁵ of Environment, Ecology and Forests of Madagascar, were all involved in the project, together with other more specialised government entities such as the Chico Mendes Biodiversity Institute of Brazil that manages the country's Red List of Threatened Species, and the National Forestry Corporation of Chile, in charge of protected area management.

69. For project execution in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar, and especially for site-level work, BirdLife and ABC relied on local non-governmental partners (all AZE members): Fundacao Biodiversitas (Brazil), Asity Madagascar and, later, the Chilean Herpetology Network Association (RECH), brought in to support the Chilean Ministry of Environment. These partners were to ensure the due involvement of local leaders, community groups, schools, research entities, private sector and/or other conservation organisations in project activities.

70. Given that the AZE sites in non-GEF-funded countries were selected between June 2016 and June 2017, after project approval, the organizations in charge of this site-level work are not named in the Prodoc. All turned out to be NGO AZE partners with prior experience working with either ABC or BirdLife and were either partially or fully responsible for protected area management at the selected sites. These sites were mostly within private reserves or public lands subject to protection and delegated /co-management arrangements with the government. Working through those directly involved in protected area management facilitated the causal link to attain "measurable improvements in conservation status" at the project's additional AZE sites.

71. Gender and minority group considerations are well described in the Prodoc, especially in the context of site-level interventions. The project states that "where applicable, priority in job creation, capacity building and project-related income generation activities will be given to the disadvantaged social groups, including women's groups, within the surrounding communities". The project's Results Framework also contains two Outcome indicators to account for the "equitable engagement of women, men and disadvantaged social groups, taking into account their different roles and their different concerns".

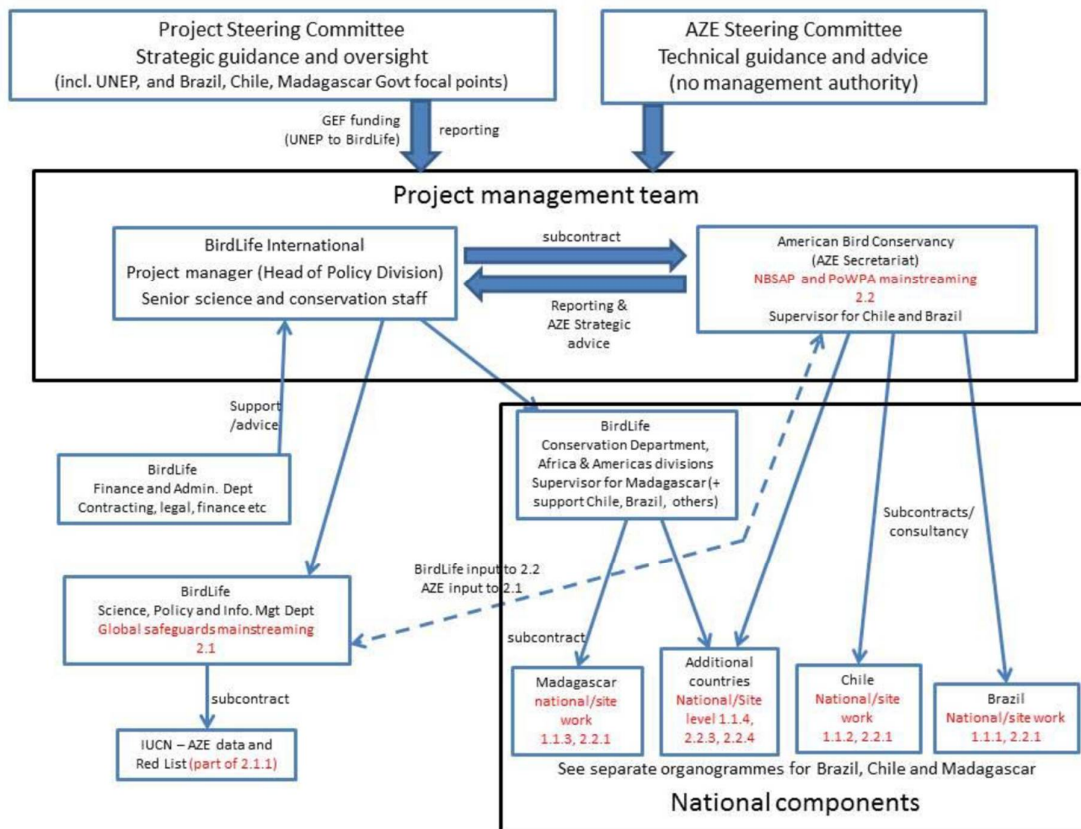
72. Of all stakeholder groups expected to drive change under the project, the non-governmental sector was the most influential, even if the uptake of results was principally in the hands of governments and IFIs. A feature of the project is its work on several levels, from global to national, sub-national and community-based actions. Overall, the project contemplated the involvement of eight of the nine major stakeholder groups recognized by UNEP: Business & Industries; Farmers; Indigenous People & their Communities; Children & Youth; Local Authorities; Non-Governmental Organizations; and the Scientific & Technological Community.

D. Project implementation structure and partners

73. BirdLife International and ABC are renowned organizations with a consolidated role in biodiversity conservation; they lead or take part in various partnerships and networks of like-minded organizations, one of which is AZE. Their technical role therefore was as central to this project as their project management role. Due to ongoing programmes and geographical affinities, ABC worked with Brazil and Chile, and BirdLife with Madagascar. Global activities and outputs were mostly led by BirdLife with ABC supporting the mainstreaming of AZE into public and private sector policies, as well as work with AZE sites in non-GEF funded countries. This division of roles, and key responsibilities over project Outcomes, is shown in **Figure 2** below.

⁵ This Ministry has since been renamed as the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development

Figure 2. Organigram of the Project with key project key stakeholders



74. BirdLife's Global Project Manager and an AZE staff from ABC formed the core of the global PMT and, together with UNEP's Task Manager for the project, took part in the Global Steering Committee (GSC) as observers. The Ministries of Environment of Brazil and Chile, and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Madagascar, were the National Executing Agencies for the project; each had a focal point (government official) on the GSC, as did the SCBD. Additionally, each country was expected to set up its own National Project Steering Committee, presided by the government focal point and comprising mostly other government agencies, as well as a National Technical Committee or Group to provide complementary technical expertise.

75. Fundacao Biodiversitas, Brazil, and Asity Madagascar have a long history of working with ABC and BirdLife, respectively. They have protected area management responsibilities at the selected project sites in Brazil and Madagascar and in the case of Asity Madagascar, at a further site belonging to the cohort of additional sites in Component 1. The local partner in Chile presented a different situation, as RECH (an association of biological scientists) had no prior working experience with ABC or the Ministry of Environment, and no designated role in protected area management. As a scientific network, it had access to knowledge on Chile's project sites and could promote further studies of each area's biodiversity. In addition, Chile had three main project sites and marginal on-site presence, compared to single sites in Brazil and Madagascar where partner organizations had on-the-ground staff.

E. Changes in design during implementation

76. Project results remained unaltered during implementation; only specific activities and indicator targets were revised, either during the project's global inception workshop (November 2015) involving BirdLife, ABC, IUCN and the UNEP Task Manager, or at the first GSC meeting held virtually in February 2017. The changes made in the former case referred to reducing the number of taxonomic groups to be assessed (from 15 to 13) as part of indicator target 2.1.1 and revising the indicator and targets for the IFI policy outcome (indicator 2.1.4). The activities modified by agreement of the GSC in February 2017

(including one sub-activity) relate to the Outputs⁶ listed below, and in some cases, required budgetary reallocations.

- Output 1.1.2. Chile: Timeframe for delivery of selected activities extended from Sep. 2018 to Jan. 2019; Mehuin: Activity on "land tenure study" removed from work plan in response to community feedback.
- Output 1.1.3. Madagascar: Time for evaluation of community-based organisations extended from Mar. 2017 to Dec. 2017.
- Output 2.1.1. AZE data update: timeframe for AZE database, site reassessment and website development extended from Mar. 2017 to either Sep. or Dec. 2017.

77. The project underwent two short no-cost extensions that added 9 months to the initial planned duration of 36 months. These were mostly justified by the extended timeframe required for project activities in Chile, which initiated later than in Brazil and Madagascar, but also responded to the need for additional time to finalise specific activities in the other countries.

78. The project was subject to a **Mid-Term Review (MTR)**, which started in October 2018 and finalised in May 2019, coinciding with the project's technical completion (June 2019). The review focused mostly on execution between October 2015 and June 2018. In response to the review, the PMT prepared an Implementation Plan which was presented to the GSC at its closing meeting in June 2019. The Plan outlines measures to be taken to attend to the four MTR recommendations, three of which were accepted fully and one partially. Even though the MTR was out of synch with the project's mid-point, its findings and recommendations, combined with lessons learnt from this project, contributed nevertheless to the design of a further global AZE project, involving ABC, BirdLife and UNEP, which was recently approved under GEF-7 and is due to start implementation in Chile, Colombia, Madagascar and Dominican Republic in the first semester of 2022.

F. Project financing

79. The project was approved with a GEF grant allocation of USD 1,922,813 (accompanied by an earlier Project Preparation Grant of USD 77,187) and an expected co-financing amount of USD 4,797,171. The project's total budget was therefore USD 6,719,984. GEF financing was a mix of funds from the GEF's global set-aside under the Biodiversity Focal Area and from allocations by the respective governments from the GEF-5 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR), as shown in **Table 4** below. Project partners each received GEF funding for site-level work in the three project countries (about 91% of individual STAR amounts), as did IUCN as a sub-contractor for the work under Component 2.

80. The project's GEF budget was structured and reported on the basis of UNEP's budget template. Planned versus actual GEF expenditures are shown in **Annex III**. Up to 30 June 2019 (technical completion date), final GEF expenditures were reported as USD 1,877,813, accounting for all GEF funds received by BirdLife International, including those sub-contracted to project partners. This excludes the costs of the MTR (USD 14,620) and the current TE (USD 24,240), which once included, gives a closing total of **USD 1,916,673** in GEF expenditures. Total expenditures were used for a final budget realignment upon technical completion, which records show as the project's only formal budget revision.

Table 4. GEF budget allocations by project partner and related STAR allocations

Partner administrating GEF funds	Project Budget GEF allocation	Link to STAR allocation
BirdLife International	417,643	Global: 775,713
American Bird Conservancy (ABC)	363,463	
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	101,048	
BR: Biodiversitas Brazil	400,973	BR: 441,621
CL: Chilean Herpetology Network Association (RECH)	235,757	CL: 260,274

⁶ These Outputs are listed using their original Prodoc numbering.

MG: Asity Madagascar	403,936	MG: 445,205
TOTAL	1,922,820	1,922,813

Table 5. Planned and actual co-financing by stakeholder group (cash and in-kind)

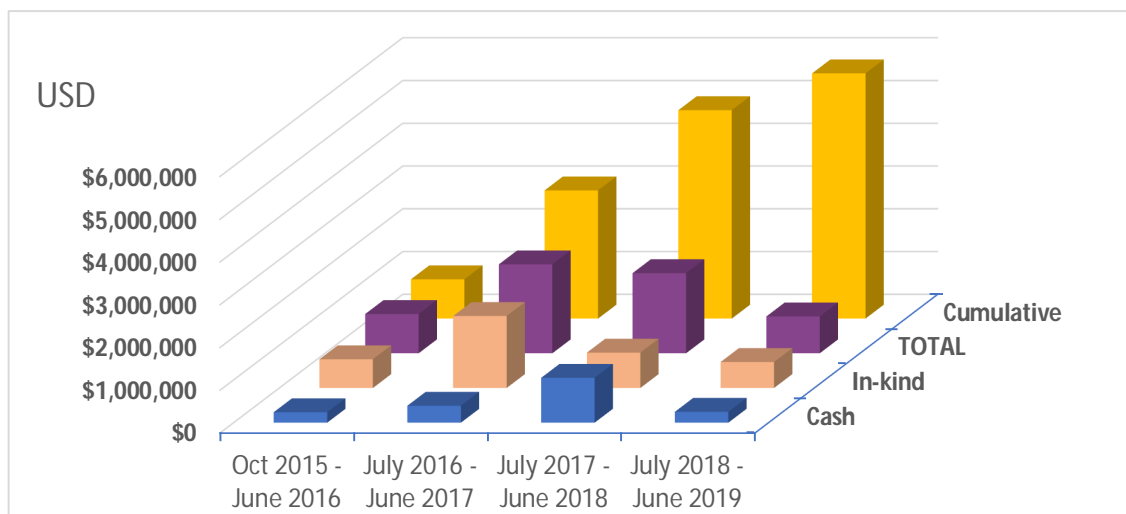
Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing (US\$1,000)		Governments ¹ (US\$1,000)		Other ² (US\$1,000)		Total (US\$1,000)		Actual Co-finance as % of Planned
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
Grants ³ (cash)			100.74	113.506	1348.244	1832.13	1448.984	1945.636	134%
Loans									
Credits									
Equity invest.									
In-kind support	200	280	573	603.224	2575.187	2905.318	3348.187	3788.542	113%
Other (*)									
Totals	200	280	673.74	716.730	3923.431	4737.448	4797.171	5734.178	120%

1 - Government entities from Brazil, Chile and Madagascar

2 - Contributions from NGOs (BirdLife, ABC, Asity Madagascar and Fundacao Biodiversitas) and the private sector (Rio Tinto QMM).

3 - Grants here are equated with in cash co-financing as per GEF terminology.

81. Actual (achieved) co-financing was reported as **USD 5,734,177**, which is about 20% higher than that pledged at project approval. **Table 5** above shows that co-financing sources were a mix of both in cash and in-kind funding from governments (three project countries), NGOs (executing partners), the private sector (Rio Tinto QMM⁷) and UNEP as a multilateral agency. The amounts calculated for each contributing partner are listed in **Annex III** and show that cash co-finance was 34% higher than amounts pledged at project approval and in-kind co-finance was 13% higher. Co-financing trends across reporting periods, which correspond to GEF fiscal years (running from July to June), can be seen in **Figure 3** below.

Figure 3. Actual co-finance across reporting periods

⁷ Rio Tinto QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM) is a mining company that is 80% owned by Rio Tinto and 20% by the Government of Madagascar.

IV. Theory of Change at Evaluation

Re-constructing the TOC

82. In the Prodoc, the intervention is presented as a logical Results Framework and an explanatory narrative without a Theory of Change (TOC). The TOC was reconstructed as part of this TE, following the UNEP Evaluation Office's TOC guidelines and using primarily the Results Framework itself as well as periodic project reports. The Results Framework and project's design were not modified during execution, though some changes were made concerning site locations in Chile, specific indicators, certain Activities, and the project's duration. The reconstructed TOC ('TOC at Evaluation Inception') was accompanied by specific revisions to the Results Framework (**Annex II**), and then shared with the PMT and refined based on comments from UNEP's Task Manager and Evaluation Manager, to arrive at the final iteration ('TOC at Evaluation') presented here.

83. The 'TOC at Evaluation' (Figure 4 and Figure 5) shows the project's main causal pathways, including assumptions and drivers. Through the reconstruction exercise, the vertical logic of the results pathways was reaffirmed, assumptions refined, and the hierarchy from Outputs to Impact completed. The Project Objective and Development Goal (here equated with Project Goal) were exchanged by the evaluator; as it now stands, the Goal contributes clearly to the proposed long-term Intended Impact. Other significant revisions relate to the addition of new result layers in the results hierarchy, as several Outputs and Outcomes contained higher order elements that justified these changes. This exercise also served to clarify ambition levels and results attainable within the project period.

Intervention logic

84. Preventing species extinctions must be part of any global strategy to reduce biodiversity loss. Accordingly, the AZE aims to prevent extinctions by identifying and safeguarding key sites, each one of which is the last remaining refuge of one or more Endangered or Critically Endangered species (in line with the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species). A root cause of threat to these sites is habitat loss caused by deforestation and unsustainable practices. Drivers of these threats range from small-scale local community livelihood practices, to policy and institutional weaknesses, and investment projects that lack guidance to avoid critical habitats.

85. Through the current project, site-based conservation actions would improve the status of AZE sites (and with this, of AZE species) in three countries where AZE allies operate, thus aiding uptake of the AZE concept and the mainstreaming of AZE into national policy plans, such as NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans. Additional countries and sites would also benefit from the project, in support of CBD's Aichi Targets 11 and 12, demonstrating the scalability of the AZE concept. The international finance sector would also be called upon to recognise AZE in their safeguard policies for investment projects, making this the first GEF funded national/global effort to integrate AZE as a distinct priority into conservation and investment planning, by leveraging knowledge from the local to the international level. Over the long term, the AZE approach aims to contribute to decelerating global extinction rates.

Figure 4. Theory of Change diagram (Component 1)

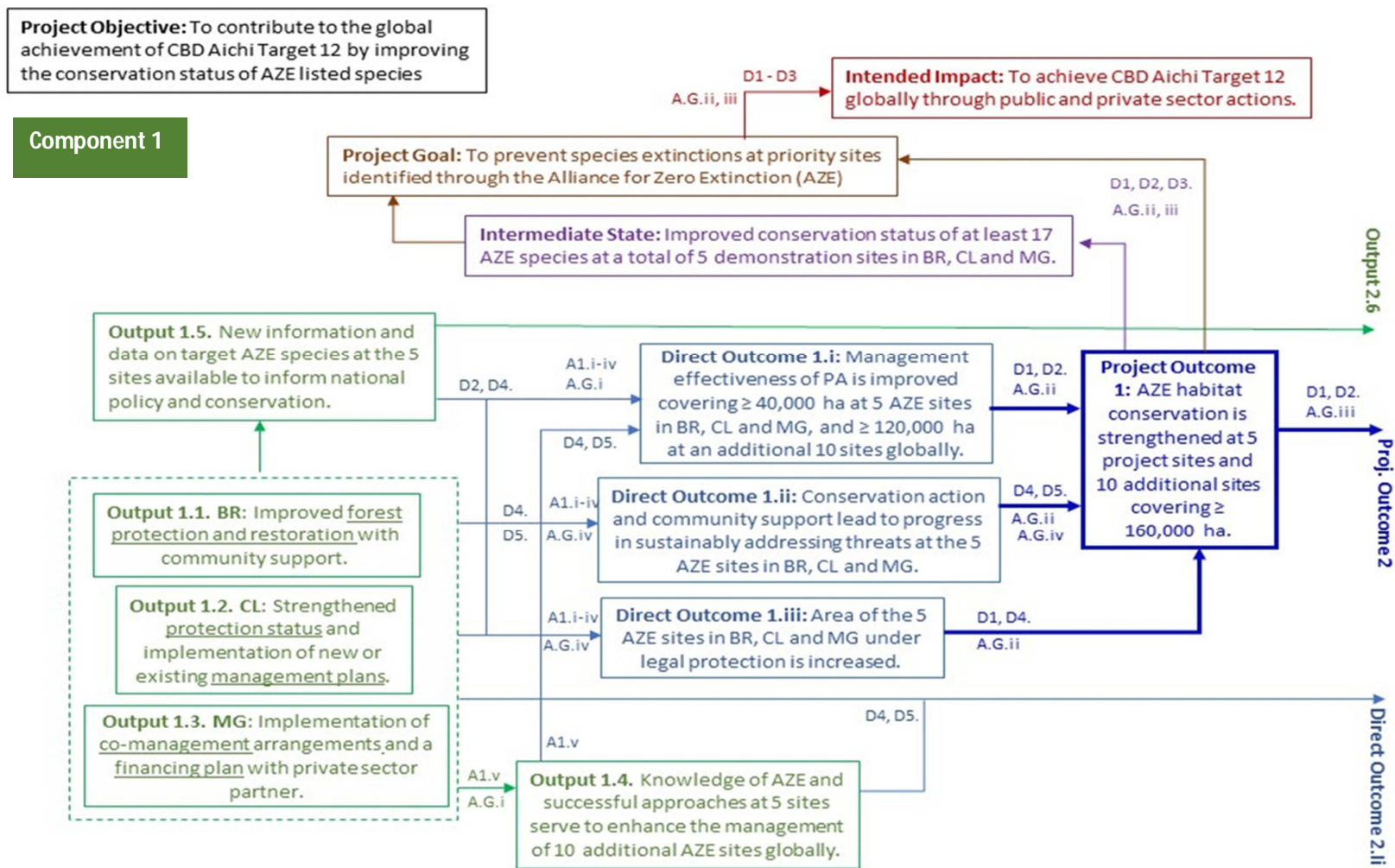
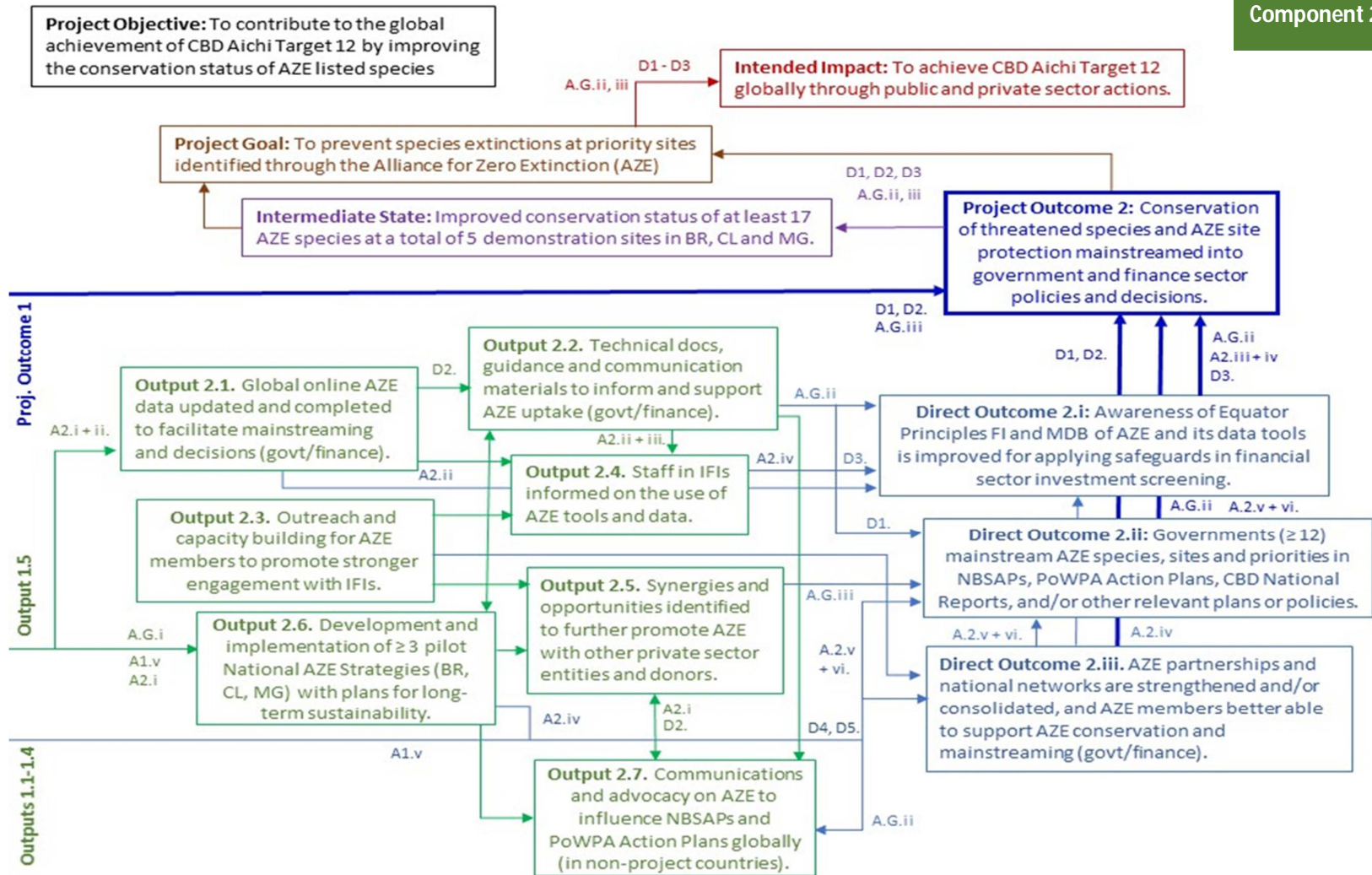


Figure 5. Theory of Change diagram (Component 2)

Component 2



TOC causal pathways

86. The project is structured as two Components, each representing a results pathway with causal interlinkages (internal or that run from Component 1 to 2). These causal pathways lead to six Direct Outcomes and two high-level Project Outcomes, before contributing to an intermediate state and the Project Goal. Project Outcome 1 is built from site-level results and has two dimensions: area-based and species-based conservation, while Project Outcome 2 from the global mainstreaming of AZE into public and private sector policies.

87. The first results pathway (Project Outcome 1) points to project countries and additional (non-GEF-funded) countries, and speaks to the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area priorities for protected areas, which focus on improving the management effectiveness of protected areas, as measured using the GEF's Tracking Tool (METT). The pathway assumes that the METT indeed "gives a true and complete assessment of management effectiveness related to the achievement of site conservation goals". Project Outcome 1 aims to **strengthen AZE habitat conservation** based on site-level work covering at least 160,000 ha, as the project's AZE sites are found in and around protected areas. To arrive at this result:

- AZE partners involved in area-based interventions (5 main sites, plus 10 additional ones) would demonstrate management improvements in their corresponding protected areas and sites (Direct Outcome 1.i).
- Threats to AZE sites from unsustainable livelihood practices would be addressed at the five main sites through conservation actions that have community support (such as fencing, patrolling, forest restoration, control of firewood extraction, and fire prevention training), as well as actions to monitor biodiversity, educate and mobilise resources (Direct Outcome 1.ii).
- The legal status of the 5 sites (Brazil, Chile and Madagascar) would be improved by granting legal protection to previously unprotected areas of AZE habitat (Direct Outcome 1.iii).

88. In order to generate these Direct Outcomes, Outputs under Component 1 would first deliver the following:

- improved protection and management practices at the project's five main AZE sites (Outputs 1.1 to 1.3 covering just over 62,000 ha), focusing on: forest protection, restoration, long-term goals and community support in Brazil; enhanced protection status and the implementation of new or existing management plans in Chile; and protected area co-management arrangements and private sector financing in Madagascar.
- using knowledge gained on successful AZE approaches, enhanced site management at 10 additional AZE sites around the world (Output 1.4 covering a minimum of 120,000 ha in total in protected areas).
- data and information on AZE species for the main project sites that would inform local conservation efforts as well as national policy (Output 1.5).

89. The second results pathway (Project Outcome 2) has two distinct lines of work that share the same mainstreaming theme. This result recognises the value of AZE data and information for conservation priority-setting and for better investment decisions, plus the need for technical guidance, advocacy, and dissemination in order for the conservation of threatened species and the protection of **AZE sites to be mainstreamed into government and financial sector policies** and decisions. To reach this Project Outcome:

- Equator Principles Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks would gain insight into AZE and its data tools, in order to apply safeguards in investment decisions and seek to minimize the impact of development projects on AZE sites (Direct Outcome 2.i).
- Governments (from the 3 project countries, plus a further nine) would seek to integrate AZE species, sites and priorities in support of CBD targets when revising and implementing their NBSAPs, PoWPA Action Plans or other relevant national plans / policies, or preparing their National Reports to the CBD (Direct Outcome 2.ii).
- AZE partnerships and national networks would be strengthened and/or consolidated to better enable AZE members to support AZE mainstreaming actions (Direct Outcome 2.iii).

90. Before reaching these Direct Outcomes in Component 2, a series of Outputs catering to a range of needs was first required:

- o new online AZE data available globally to facilitate AZE mainstreaming and conservation decisions (Output 2.1), including technical guidance and communication materials intended for governments and IFIs (Output 2.2).
- o outreach and training for AZE members to be better prepared to engage with IFIs (Output 2.3), and for IFI staff on the use of AZE tools (Output 2.4).
- o synergies and opportunities identified to promote AZE with other private sector entities (Output 2.5) as a means to further the AZE concept and mobilise resources.
- o pilot National AZE Strategies developed and implemented, with plans to support sustainability at the main project sites (Output 2.6)
- o AZE mainstreamed into the NBSAPs or PoWPA Action Plans of additional countries around the world (Output 2.7, at least 9 countries).

91. Ultimately, the (revised)⁸ Project Goal is to **prevent species extinctions at priority sites** identified through the AZE. Towards this, an Intermediate State (that follows from improving AZE habitat conservation) is to first attain "improved conservation status for at least 17 AZE species" at the five demonstration sites. The (revised) Project Objective also represents an intermediate state that is well within the reach of the project: **To contribute to the global achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 by improving the conservation status of AZE listed species.**

92. Considering a longer time horizon, a growing acknowledgement of AZE sites as critical habitats in urgent need of protection, and the confluence of numerous interventions, the project's TOC offers a route to directly contribute to the reduction of global extinction rates and eventually, to the **global achievement of Aichi Target 12 through public and private sector actions** (Intended Impact).

93. The assumptions provided in the Prodocs were fitted into the reconstructed TOC, as requisite or "taken-for-granted" conditions that needed to hold in order to arrive at the desired results. Prodoc assumptions correlate directly with Outcome Indicators, and for this reason, were mostly untouched by the evaluator. On the other hand, all drivers in the reconstructed TOC are proposed by the evaluator, underpinned by the desk review carried out and the project's overall context. These drivers are underlying conditions that either favour each pathway and could be tapped into, or that could be directly influenced or shaped by the project to drive change along those pathways.

94. While the Prodoc was missing assumptions or drivers that directly referred to human rights and gender equality, the intention to promote inclusive conservation and respect the rights of women and local communities was explicit in project design:

- a. Many site-level efforts were to be community-led or first validated at the community level; some even functioned through bottom-up decision-making or coordination mechanisms.
- b. Alternative livelihood options and reforestation activities were part of the project workplan, opening new opportunities for community members, in particular women.
- c. The vision and customs of indigenous peoples and local tribes needed to be respected when working on the ground in project countries, especially in Chile and Madagascar.
- d. School children were target groups in specific activities, showing that even inclusive conservation can begin with science education.

95. The project indeed expected to promote equality and inclusivity, as recognised in Direct Outcome 1.ii. In order to give wider recognition to the social elements at play in the Results Framework, and in response to UNEP Evaluation Office guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality considerations in the TOC, a driver (D5) and an assumption (A.G.iv) were each added to the 'TOC at Evaluation' (see below and refer to **Figure 4** and **Figure 5** as well as chapter V section D).

⁸ Refer to the "Comparative Results Framework and justification for reformulation of results statements" table in **Annex II** for a detailed explanation for this revision.

TOC Assumptions

96. All Assumptions below were described in the UNEP and GEF project documents. Where text edits were made by the evaluator, these are shown as underlined text or strike-through. Assumptions (A) are numbered in line with Project Outcomes 1 and 2, or are classed as "General" (G).

Project Outcome 1

- **A1.i** METT gives a true and complete assessment of management effectiveness related to the achievement of site conservation goals (for Indicator 1.1.1).
- **A1.ii** BR: Interest among private landowners and local Governments in establishing RPPNs and complying with Forest Code is forthcoming (for Indicator 1.1.2).
- **A1.iii** CL: Effective site management can precede lengthy process of formal declaration as protected area (for Indicator 1.1.2) + AZE amphibian populations can be assessed, despite their scarcity, by viable field methodologies (for Indicator 1.1.3).
- **A1.iv** MG: Government continues with confirmation of new PAs, following Promise of Sydney (for Indicator 1.1.2) + Amphibian fungus Bd, recently confirmed present in MG, does not reach, and cause mortality to, frogs in Tsitongambarika (for Indicator 1.1.3). **Note:** This assumption (in two parts) held for the main Madagascar site, yet it is unclear how the threat of a fungus would have been relevant to Indicator 1.1.3, as noted in the Prodoc, which relates to reducing deforestation rates at the AZE site.
- **A1.v** Lessons learned from demonstration sites can be applied to replication sites, and project duration is sufficient to achieve initial results at replication sites (for Indicator 1.1.4).

Project Outcome 2

- **A2.i** Specialist Groups and experts engage in process to identify and verify sites (for Indicators. 2.1.1 and 2.1.2)
- **A2.ii** AZE website visitors and IBAT users are interested in accessing ~~and use~~ the AZE information presented (for Indicator 2.1.3)
- **A2.iii** Opportunities to influence IFI policies occur during lifespan of project (for Indicator 2.1.4)
- **A2.iv** IFIs engage and are open to dialogue, uptake of guidance and AZE information ~~sharing~~ (for Indicator 2.1.5)
- **A2.v** Political support is sustained for the incorporation of AZE into national policies and plans by the implementing partner governments (for Indicator 2.2.1 and 2.2.2)
- **A2.vi** NBSAP and PoWPA Action Plan updates or CBD National Reports are completed according to a schedule that allows AZE to be incorporated by end of project (for Indicator 2.2.3). **Note:** Only in the case of PoWPA Actions Plans did this assumption not materialise.

General

- **A.G.i** Baseline conditions (including threats, barriers to success, and responses) in the selected demonstration sites can be extrapolated with confidence to other AZE sites in the three demonstration countries of BR, CL and MG, and to some extent to AZE sites elsewhere. **Note:** Whether this assumption held or not cannot readily be corroborated due to insufficient information. Extrapolation to additional sites within the project countries would have had the best prospects in Madagascar (1 additional site, also administrated by Asity Madagascar) and Brazil (3 additional sites, not administrated by F. Biodiversitas).
- **A.G.ii** Increased awareness and capacity will lead to changes in behaviour with respect to the concerned issues (i.e. integration of AZE species into conservation priorities, local land use policies and practices, national conservation plans and policies, and the safeguard policies of international finance institutions). Changes in behaviour were indeed observed, not only for policy purposes, but also in relation to local land use practices. There are clear examples of favourable behaviour changes, from individuals and communities, in all 3 project countries.
- **A.G.iii** Effective management of sites supporting AZE species will increasingly become a national priority for the countries targeted by this project as knowledge and information are made available.

This assumption materialised clearly in Brazil and Madagascar (where AZE sites and species were incorporated into new regulations and the country's NBSAP, respectively), and to some extent in Chile, where the government was motivated to continue prioritising AZE conservation through a follow-up GEF-7 AZE project.

- **A.G.iv** There is sufficient support from local authorities and communities, and involvement of women and marginalised groups, for site-level AZE conservation to be successful and sustained.

TOC Drivers

97. All the Drivers described below were proposed by the evaluator and were expected to contribute to the realisation of the project results:

- **D1.** The Executive Secretary of the CBD has the ability to urge governments to include AZE sites in NBSAPs or PoWPA Action Plans and to encourage AZE site conservation. AZE is already recognized as a formal indicator for both CBD Aichi Targets 11 and 12.
- **D2.** Countries have the opportunity to use AZE data and priorities to determine concrete and measurable biodiversity targets and indicators to measure conservation action, a need that is becoming increasingly relevant in light of the adoption of post-2020 Global Biodiversity framework.
- **D3.** The finance sector is increasingly looking to enhance the achievement of the triple bottom line of financial profitability, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility. To do so, many IFIs have already committed to the Equator Principles or Principles for Responsible Investment and are keen to develop policy/guidance to inform the institution's investment and lending practices.
- **D4:** Working through existing multi-stakeholder /coordination structures at the country or local level, and collaborating with other ongoing projects and programmes, are opportunities to boost uptake, efficiency and sustainability of project results.
- **D5:** There are opportunities to be had in involving women, indigenous peoples, youth and other marginalized groups in conservation activities, as these can offer a means to build social capital, promote the recognition of rights, and ensure inclusive conservation.

V. Evaluation Findings

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

98. The project responds well to the 'Ecosystem Management' Sub-programme of [UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2017](#) and the expected accomplishments (EA) under which it was approved. The relevant EA are:

- Ecosystem Management – **EA(a)** "Production": Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased;
- Ecosystem Management – **EA(c)** "Enabling environment": Services and benefits derived from ecosystems are integrated with development planning and accounting and the implementation of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements.

99. Each UNEP Medium-Term Strategy is operationalised through two biennial Programmes of Work, the relevant one here being the Programme of Work of 2014-2015. As stated in the UNEP Prodoc, the project was expected to contribute to two UNEP Outputs planned for that biennium in pursuit of EA(a) and (c). In addition, the evaluator also considered that a further two Outputs under the same EA were also relevant - shown here in italics:

EA(a) "Use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased"

- Output 1: Methodologies, partnerships and tools to maintain or restore ecosystem services and integrate the ecosystem management approach with the conservation and management of ecosystems and output;
- Output 5: Collaboration with the private sector through partnerships and pilot projects to integrate the ecosystem approach into sectoral strategies and operations is enhanced.

EA(c) "Services and benefits derived from ecosystems are integrated with development planning and accounting, and the implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem related multilateral agreements"

- Output 2: Biodiversity and ecosystem service values are assessed, demonstrated and communicated to strengthen decision-making by Governments, businesses and consumers.
- Output 5: Synergies between tools, approaches and multilateral initiatives on biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster prevention identified and integrated with development planning, poverty reduction measures, strategic investment partnerships along with the ecosystem approach and national obligations for biodiversity related MEAs.

100. The project was also found to align with the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building, adopted by UNEP's Governing Council to strengthen the capacity of governments to coherently address their needs, priorities and obligations in the environmental field. It also responds to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, and is in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

101. Overall, the project scored 5 in this sub-criterion, which is equivalent to a '[Satisfactory](#)' rating. The score would likely have been higher, had the project identified its contribution to specific EA indicators.

Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities

102. The [GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies](#) and [GEF-5 Programming Document](#) established that projects funded under the Biodiversity Focal Area would be responsive to at least one of five objectives. This GEF-5 project responds to Objectives 1 (Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems) and 2 (Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors), in correlation with its two components. Accordingly, the project made use of the GEF Tracking Tools for both Objective 1 (BD-1) and Objective 2 (BD-2), which were devised to assist the GEF to measure

progress, at the portfolio level, in achieving the impacts and outcomes established under the Biodiversity Focal Area.

103. Given this strong quantitative alignment, the project scored 6 in this sub-criterion (Highly Satisfactory).

Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

104. Globally, this project was designed to contribute to the Aichi Targets set out in the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, most notably, Target 12 on species conservation, and Target 11 on Protected Areas. The CBD has long recognised the critical importance of AZE site and species conservation. In 2010, the CBD and AZE Secretariats signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) to provide "assistance to CBD Parties with integrating the zero extinction target into national biodiversity strategies and action plans". Through this partnership, and together with IUCN and UNEP, the AZE Secretariat has since been providing information to signatory nations for inclusion in their NBSAPs. In 2013, the CBD's LifeWeb initiative launched the [Zero Extinction Campaign](#) to focus attention on the global extinction crises and advance implementation of the Aichi Targets.

105. In the three project countries, the project was very much aligned with national priorities defined by international commitments. The project's site-level and policy-level work was intended to contribute towards the adoption and/or implementation of threatened species and protected areas targets in each country's NBSAP and PoWPA Action Plan to meet national obligations towards the CBD, as summarised below. In this sub-criterion, the project scored 6, which translates into a "Highly Satisfactory" rating.

- At the time of project design, Brazil was the first nation to include AZE in its NBSAP and had already identified 27 AZE sites. Brazil's NBSAP sought to promote the conservation of species diversity, supported by goals that envisioned 100% of threatened species effectively conserved in protected areas and the reduction by 25% of threatened species on the national list. AZE was already cited as a
- Chile's NBSAP (2003) and 4th National Report to CBD called for the preservation of species, and specifically to prioritize conservation efforts that targeted the most endangered species.
- In Madagascar, actions under the project would bring together the three strategic axes of the NBSAP (2002): conservation of biodiversity, promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity, and reducing pressures on biological resources, and would contribute to the establishment and expansion of the Protected Areas System of Madagascar, and the engagement of local communities in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, as defined in the PoWPA 2012-2020 and reiterated by the President of Madagascar at the World Parks Congress, Sydney, in 2014.

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/ Coherence

106. In this sub-criterion, the project scored 5, which is equivalent to a 'Satisfactory' rating. While a number of relevant GEF projects were identified in the Prodoc for coordination purposes, it is unclear to what extent collaboration actually occurred or was sought with these interventions. Still, the project was designed to be intricately, though not always explicitly, intertwined with existing interventions led by executing partners in Brazil, Madagascar and globally (only Chile was a newcomer to the group and new territory for AZE work, where no AZE interventions were unfolding). As a result, proving complementarity with, as well as the continuity and upscaling of, existing efforts was at the core of project design.

107. The selection of additional (non-GEF-funded) AZE sites was also based on locations where ongoing efforts and relationships could be leveraged. Indeed, several of these sites, together with the project's main AZE sites, had been listed as top priorities for the institutional conservation programmes of BirdLife and ABC as the AZE Secretariat. Such programmes included BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions and Forests of Hope Programmes, and ABC/AZE's site conservation and Oceans and Islands Programmes. As such, targeted sites would be subject to long-term commitments for their conservation, which included resource mobilization from BirdLife and ABC to fund their management. In addition, site selection in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar was a participatory process, as government experts and species specialists took part in discussions held during the project preparation phase and validated the choice of sites.

108. The workstream with IFIs was also not new to the AZE Secretariat. Liaisons with key IFIs had initiated some years prior, and had slowly been building up momentum. In this way, site-level interventions, together with the mainstreaming of AZE with IFIs and national governments, were designed to reinforce institutional priorities, and be incremental to existing initiatives, which in turn could be duly recognized as baseline conditions and project co-financing. In the Prodoc, complementary GEF projects being executed in each project country are also listed and potential areas of complementarity identified.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory	(Score 5.50)
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B. Quality of Project Design

109. The project's design demonstrates clear logic with regards to the main elements needed to arrive at expected results, considering various levels of intervention (site, national and global). In general, the project is well designed, as reviewed against the UNEP Evaluation Office's Template for Quality of Project Design Assessment. A complete assessment of project design quality is presented in the TE Inception Report (its Annex A).

110. Its main design strengths include a thorough problem analysis, situation analysis, stakeholder mapping, results framework and budgeting, and high strategic relevance. Overall, the project's results and general Objective are 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Attributable /Achievable, Realistic /Relevant, Time-bound) with clear indicators and targets provided. The main design weaknesses relate to the absence of a Theory of Change with explicit causality pathways, and the lack of clarity on the extent to which women, men and disadvantaged social groups were directly consulted during the project design phase in the three project countries. Nevertheless, the robust results framework confirms the solid basis and coherency on which the project was designed.

111. Human rights issues, even if not named as such, are considered in the context of planning site-level interventions and their social safeguards, and when considering project risks and the sustainability of project results. The project presents four Environmental and Social Safeguards Checklists (one for each selected project site, whereby two 'sister sites' in Chile were considered together) to signal whether any safeguard standards are triggered by the project. These identify no significant issues for the project that cannot be mitigated, and esteem any potential environmental and social risks to be manageable. Overall, the project is expected to result in long term positive impacts for biodiversity and greater participation of and benefits for local and indigenous communities in site management processes at the AZE demonstration sites.

112. Gender or minority group issues are explicitly cited in particular in relation to livelihood needs. The intervention contemplates reforestation employment opportunities for women at the site in Brazil, changes in agricultural and timber practices at the sites in Madagascar and Chile, and the presence of local indigenous groups at two of three sites in Chile. Though perhaps not exhaustive, there is evidence that stakeholder consultations did take place as part of project design, facilitated by a GEF Project Preparation Grant and involving mostly national and sub-national institutions. Whether local communities were involved in project design is unclear. Stakeholder workshops took place in all three project countries, as well as consultations with global partners, and good use is made of expert knowledge.

Rating for Project Design: Satisfactory	(Score: 4.96)
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C. Nature of the External Context

113. The project's external context was found to be generally Favourable. There were three key events that represented setbacks and challenges for site-based interventions in Brazil and Chile but were ultimately and adeptly addressed through adaptive management.

114. **Forest fires** are a root cause of habitat loss around and within the Mata do Passarinho Reserve, the main project site for Brazil. Fire is frequently used by neighbouring ranchers and farmers to clear forested land for pasture and agriculture, and often encroaches on the forests protected in the Reserve. Therefore, fires are named in the Prodoc as a major threat to the Reserve and a continuous management concern. In 2016, fires intensified by one of the worst droughts (2015/16) in the region's recorded history burned an area of the Reserve where the most sightings of Stresemann's Bristlefront (Merulaxis

stresemanni, the site's AZE trigger species) had occurred. Already reduced to very low numbers, these fires pushed the species to the brink of extinction; however, thanks to project efforts, it was again detected in 2018. Thus, climate change and unsustainable agricultural practices in the greater ecosystem presented challenges to the species' survival, and in consequence, to the project's expected results in Brazil.

115. On Isla Mocha Reserve, one of the AZE sites selected for Chile, an incident in May 2018 generated problems with the local community and **tensions** in its relationship with the government and local conservation NGOs. Islanders have a seasonal tradition of consuming the chicks of the pink-footed shearwaters (*Ardenna creatopus*), a practice that was believed to have greatly diminished, thanks to years of conservation initiatives aimed at improving awareness of the importance of protecting this endangered bird species. However, the **backlash in public opinion** that ensued after the massacre of about 300 individuals in May 2018 brought to a halt the process of changing the island's category from National Reserve to National Park. This in turn affected one of the results envisioned under Component 1. How local communities view, and eventually accept, the change of status to a National Park is now given great importance.

116. Project start-up in Chile saw changes in the willingness of community members in Mehuín to participate in the project. Most notably, **community resistance** or lack of support had been identified as a potential project risk during the design phase. Mehuín is an area of indigenous peoples with a history of weak property entitlements and little government presence. This, combined with the search for an executing entity that could manage GEF funds on behalf of the Ministry, caused set-backs to the workplan in Chile. Through swift adaptive management, a scientific executing entity brought on board (RECH) and two new locations were rapidly found by Environment Ministry staff, allowing Chile to initiate site activities 6-9 months behind the other countries.

Rating for Nature of the external context:	Favourable
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D. Effectiveness

117. In referring to project results (Outputs and Outcomes), this section uses the numbering established in the TOC reconstruction exercise (refer to **Annex II**), rather than the original Prodoc numbering. Conversely, Outcome Indicator numbering has not been changed, and correlates directly with Prodoc numbering. Overall, the project demonstrates significant successes regarding the usefulness and availability of its Outputs and the achievement of its expected Outcomes. In most cases, ambitious Outcome targets were met or exceeded within the project timeframe. Likewise, the project achieved its (revised) Objective and made relevant progress towards its intended impact.

Availability of Outputs

118. The project was able to deliver a large number of high-quality Outputs in relation to both site-level work (Component 1) and policy mainstreaming (Component 2). Five Outputs were successfully achieved under Component 1, and seven under Component 2. These Outputs are generally accounted for by means of concrete, measurable Outcome indicators, and completed Activities. As seen in the reconstructed TOC (**Figure 4** and **Figure 5**), all Outputs are clear contributors to each Component's Direct Outcomes and Project Outcome. All Outputs in Component 1 also supported specific results in Component 2.

119. The way in which Output achievement is demonstrated (or rather, reported) and Outputs remain useful and available to beneficiaries, is summarised in **Table 6** and **Table 7** below. These accounts are linked to the monitoring and evaluation of the project's Outcome Indicators and workplan; however, they are not always supported by corroborating evidence. Overall, the Availability of Outputs was rated as 'Satisfactory'.

120. In **Component 1**, four out of five Outputs were achieved to a high extent. For Outputs 1.1 to 1.3, site-level improvements were reported at the five AZE demonstration sites (in the three project countries) covering just over 64,400 ha, though supporting evidence was incomplete for one site. Output 1.4 pointed to similar improvements at 10 additional sites around the world that together covered almost 190,000 ha; for these sites, a credible association exists between project actions and the results obtained. Output

1.5 was a new addition to the Results Framework that reflected the relevance to Project Outcome 1 of the AZE species monitoring and ecological research that took place at each demonstration site.

121. Outputs 1.1 to 1.3 shared three common threads that were key to demonstrating improved conservation status on-the-ground in each project country: The use of METT scores to measure management effectiveness (Indicator 1.1.1); the area of AZE habitat under legal protection status (Indicator 1.1.2); and progress in addressing key threats, specific to each AZE site (Indicator 1.1.3). In addition to these measurable changes, supplementary results were also reported, often in relation to behaviour change at the community level, that are relevant to strengthening AZE habitat conservation (Project Outcome 1) at the five project sites.

Table 6. Output performance for Component 1.

Project Outcome 1: AZE habitat conservation is strengthened at 5 project sites and 10 additional sites covering at least 160,000 ha in total.	
Outputs	Evidence and relevance of Output delivery
<p>Output 1.1: Improved forest protection and restoration with community support to sustain long-term conservation at the Mata do Passarinho Private Reserve, Brazil.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1.1.1:</u> The management effectiveness of the Reserve increased from a baseline of 69% to a mid-term score of 78% to a final score of 81% (both above targets).</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.2:</u> A land purchase increased the Reserve area from 654 ha to 951 ha, improving forest protection and long-term conservation prospects.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.3:</u> Close to 40,000 trees were planted, restoring 40 ha of AZE habitat and reportedly using 27 native tree species. Some areas had to be cleared of invasive species. Reforestation success was 50%.</p> <p>Community support (and behaviour change) to participate in and sustain long-term conservation in and around the Reserve was evidenced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- fruitful relations forged between Reserve managers and local landowners (primarily cattle ranchers) who had previously been hesitant to collaborate with the reserve. → landowner interest in reforestation activities. → landowner interest in creating a private reserve (20 ha) near the Mata do Passarinho Reserve. -- Park rangers trained in fire-fighting techniques. -- Reserve Business Plan developed and implemented, focusing on cacao production and tourism. → 10.07 ha of cacao seedlings planted and ~ 4,000 cacao seeds to continue expanding the productive area. → ecotourism and birdwatching activities carried out (involving women) -- To continue promoting the creation of private reserves and new protected areas, and guide larger reforestation efforts, in this Atlantic Forest region, a study ("Socio-environmental assessment of the Merulaxis stresemanni distribution area"), an interactive map on land use and land tenure, and another with data from 264 farms (covering 16,548 ha) from the surrounding area, were produced based on the various categories of the Rural Environmental Cadastre (CAR).
<p>Output 1.2: Strengthened protection status and implementation of new or existing management plans at Isla Mocha Reserve and two Mehuin sites, Chile.</p> <p>Output PARTIALLY DELIVERED</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1.1.1:</u> The management effectiveness of the Isla Mocha Reserve increased from a baseline of 62% to a mid-term score of 64% to a final score of 70%.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.1:</u> The management effectiveness of Mehuin site 1 increased from a baseline of 41% (taken at mid-term) to a final score of 64%. Was expected to double. At Mehuin site 2, baseline was 23% (taken at mid-term) but final score was unavailable.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.2:</u> Stronger legal protection (from Reserve to National Park) not achieved for Isla Mocha. Technical dossier presented to authorities.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.2:</u> A participatory Conservation Plan for Mehuin was officially launched in 2018 with support from local authorities and key stakeholders, and an agreement to establish an Implementation Committee for the Plan.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.3:</u> Map (overlay) of wood harvesting areas and AZE species registration points, produced for protected area authority (CONAF) to use in its permit granting for wood harvesting. Exclusion zones not officially established</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.3:</u> To prevent access to cattle, 8.1 ha of AZE habitat (around ravines) in Mehuin were fenced off; 1 ha also reforested with native trees species. Plus, wooden fences (7) and interpretative panels installed (8) on Isla Mocha to prevent</p>

	<p>unauthorized access to sectors of the Reserve, and educate visitors about the forest and water provision, respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental education undertaken in schools and kindergartens (workshops, mural painting, guided tours, research project, games, crafts, songs, putting on a play, songs, etc.) involving 80 children and their families on Isla Mocha, and 87 students between the ages of 7 and 14 (from 8 schools) in Mehuin. - Participatory Socio-Environmental Strategy developed for Isla Mocha, and a 4-day Community Leadership Workshop held with local organizations. - Responsible pet ownership promoted on Isla Mocha through dissemination activities. - Analysis of energy supply options and the viability of fuelwood alternatives was stalled due to lack of political will to move this forward. - Community members in Mehuin trained in the good management and conservation of native forests.
<p>Output 1.3: Implementation of co-management arrangements, and a financing plan with a private sector partner, for the Tsitongambarika forest, <u>Madagascar</u>.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1.1.1:</u> T The management effectiveness of Tsitongambarika Forest increased from a baseline of 58% to a mid-term score of 65% to a final score of 77%.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.2:</u> Legal protection of Tsitongambarika secured (Protected Area category)</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.3:</u> No new forest clearance observed during community monitoring in project target zone, representing 100% reduction in deforestation. Due to effective patrols and surveys and increased community support for the site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rio Tinto continues to support conservation and community development in the area and has extended the coverage of its biodiversity offset funding to the entirety of Tsitongambarika (rather than just the initial offset area). - Management Plan for Tsitongambarika was updated (using socio-economic and ecological monitoring studies) and contains a conservation strategy for amphibians and plans to promote a research station and tourism development for Tsitongambarika as an AZE site. - Co-management arrangements with local village associations (called COBAs) made effective through due diligence and contractual processes, with 8 out of 53 COBA having legal Terms of Reference and contracts by the project end, through capacity building with COBA members, and through strengthening KOMFITA, the umbrella body for protected area management. - Forest restoration carried out through reforestation using 85,000 trees from village nurseries, with plantation success 90%, and 67 ha of passive restoration supported by patrolling. - Training provided to forest managers /rangers on inspections to avoid deforestation, illegal hardwood extraction and fires. - Income generating activities put in motion, reaching over 1,600 households with advances in vegetable and coffee cultivation and honey production, and the piloting of poultry farming. - Rapprochement by local stakeholders, interested in reinforcing their partnership with Asity Madagascar, and develop a joint funding proposal, after seeing the successes at Tsitongambarika (compared to neighbouring protected areas).
<p>Output 1.4: Knowledge of AZE and successful approaches at the five project sites serve to enhance the management of 10 additional AZE sites <u>globally</u>, covering a minimum of 120,000 ha (in non-project countries).</p> <p>Output PARTIALLY DELIVERED</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1.1.4:</u> Interventions at 11 additional sites were devised, based on key threats and management needs determined through baseline application of the METT. All but 1 of those sites then carried out a final METT: 7 sites (70%) showed measurable improvement in METT scores (6-13% increases); 3 sites had unchanged scores. The area covered (around 190,000 ha) is 58% higher than the minimum target of 120,000 ha.</p> <p>The rationale for these interventions was that improving management effectiveness would be geared towards reducing key threats impacting the AZE species, reducing overall vulnerabilities of the sites, and strengthening the scientific understanding of the species.</p>

<p>Output 1.5: New information and data on target AZE species at the five project sites available to inform national policy and conservation efforts at the five project sites Brazil, Chile, Madagascar).</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagnostic studies containing AZE maps, species lists, and/or gap analyses, were produced at the sub-national and national level. - Species data and surveys generated for <i>Merulaxis stresemanni</i> (Brazil), <i>Eupsophus insularis</i> (Chile), <i>Eupsophus migueli</i> and <i>Insuetophrynus acarpicus</i> (Chile), and target AZE in species Madagascar. Other species include the lemur <i>Microcebus tanosi</i> (Madagascar) and new AZE trigger species such as the Critically Endangered millipede <i>Aphistogoniulus corralipes</i> identified at Tsitongambarika. - In the case of Chile, studies on <i>Eupsophus insularis</i> were published in a peer-reviewed journal, and a book (baseline study) on aquatic fauna was also produced.
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122. In **Component 2**, six out of seven Outputs were fully delivered, and one partially. Of all Outputs, the most notable relate to the global availability of up-to-date AZE datasets (Output 2.1) through the mapping and assessment of 853 AZE sites (triggered by 1,483 AZE species), and the advocacy and close liaisons established with a number of IFIs and other private sector actors (Output 2.4 and 2.5) to promote the mainstreaming of AZE into their safeguard policies and standards. In the work to mainstream AZE into government plans and policies, partial successes were had in project countries, even if "pilot National AZE Strategies" (Output 2.6) were not fully delivered in each case, and high visibility was given to AZE through communications and advocacy aimed at other (non-GEF-funded) countries (Output 2.7).

Table 7. Output performance for Component 2.

<p>Project Outcome 2: The conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites are mainstreamed into government and finance sector policies and decision-making.</p>	
Outputs	Evidence and relevance of Output delivery
<p>Output 2.1: Global online AZE data updated and completed to facilitate mainstreaming of AZE and relevant decision-making at national and international levels.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>AZE sites were systematically identified for 17 comprehensively assessed taxonomic groups (Indicator 2.1.1), and 853 AZE sites, triggered by 1,483 AZE trigger species, were mapped and documented (Indicator 2.1.2).</p> <p>AZE data integrated within the World Database on Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) greatly increases the rigour with which AZE sites are identified, as these now meet the new KBA Global Standard, and in turns allows visualisation through the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT).</p> <p>A revamped AZE website was launched, with the updated AZE site list and map. The new AZE website had 27,295 hits for the year July 2018-June 2019 (and 4902 interactions with the AZE map app between January and June 2019). Although the expected target of 100,000 visitors per year was not met, visitors to the AZE, KBA and IBAT websites are estimated at > 50,000/year. (Indicator 2.1.3)</p>
<p>Output 2.2: Technical documents, guidance and communication materials to inform and support the incorporation of AZE species and site considerations into national biodiversity plans and policies, and financial sector investment decisions.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>For internal project use, an IFI scoping study, engagement strategy, capacity development programme outline, and tracking tool, were developed.</p> <p>Webinars, factsheets, position statements, case-studies, briefs, maps, press releases, alongside other training and policy support materials, were generated for use in AZE mainstreaming: some of these materials are available on the AZE and IBAT websites.</p>
<p>Output 2.3: Outreach and capacity building directed at AZE members to promote stronger engagement with</p>	<p>Trainings and outreach were less directed at AZE members and more at BirdLife staff and partners. Webinars were given at the BirdLife Global Partnership meetings in 2017 and 2019.</p> <p>A capacity development strategy was developed, which then fed into a collaborative project developed under the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, co-coordinated by BirdLife, to build the capacity and tools of conservation organisations to engage with</p>

<p>international finance institutions.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>IFIs and certification bodies on biodiversity safeguards and standards. This project was approved and will continue to support activities relating to this Output.</p> <p>BirdLife worked with other AZE member organisations to review the safeguard policies of Multilateral Development Banks and IFIs.</p>
<p>Output 2.4: Staff in international financial institutions (IFIs) informed on the use of AZE tools and data.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>The project had direct engagements and consultations with a number of IFIs and Multilateral Development Banks through the course of the project: EBRD (European Bank of Reconstruction and Development), CAF (Development Bank of Latin America), the Equator Principles Association, Mizuho Bank, ANZ Bank, HSBC, DBS and Aviva, World Bank, IFC, European Investment Bank (EIB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Danish Export Credit agency (EKF) and Swedish Export Credit agency (EKN).</p> <p>AZE was presented at two IFC "Community of Learning" events in 2016 with the attendance of 71 Equator Principles Finance Institutions, and again in 2018. A webinar was given and AZE guidance shared.</p> <p>The project engaged with IFIs at the 2017 Business and Nature Forum, securing 10 new IBAT subscribers and other engagements, and again at the Responsible Business Forum in 2018. There are now 22 IFI subscribers to IBAT.</p>
<p>Output 2.5: Synergies and opportunities identified to further promote AZE conservation with other private sector entities and donors.</p> <p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>Opportunities that could be scoped through UNEP's Finance Initiative were identified, but not followed-through</p> <p>Fund-raising was successfully carried out for project sites to continue with AZE conservation and species monitoring in Brazil and Madagascar, as well as reforestation activities in Madagascar. In Chile, there were funding ideas for waste management and setting up an environmental information center on Isla Mocha.</p> <p>Donor funding was successfully secured for the project's additional sites in Brazil (2) and Jamaica to strengthen their management capacities and financial sustainability.</p> <p>The Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction initiated discussions with Unimed, a health care company, on a proposal to create green investment bonds that investors can purchase as a retirement fund and that would provide funding for AZE site conservation throughout Brazil.</p> <p>Major conservation planning agencies in Madagascar and the two largest private sector investments in the country (mining projects Ambatovy and Rio Tinto QMM) are working towards the agreed development of a national plan to integrate AZE into existing policy.</p>
<p>Output 2.6: Development and implementation of at least three pilot National AZE Strategies (Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar) with plans for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Output PARTIALLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>"Pilot National AZE Strategies" were not similarly developed in all three project countries. Instead, other equally relevant policy-supporting outputs were generated. (<u>Indicator 2.2.1</u>)</p> <p>In <u>Madagascar</u>, a "Mainstreaming Action Plan and AZE Conservation Strategy" was drafted with government participation. It shows an updated national AZE map, the management and conservation status of each site, potential new AZE sites, and 13 currently unmanaged 'orphan' sites. It was agreed to mainstream AZE into existing conservation policies, especially those relating to KBAs and protected areas, rather than develop a 'standalone' AZE national strategy.</p> <p>In <u>Brazil</u>, new AZE Ordinances (federal decrees) were enacted that (i) define the need to recognize Brazilian AZE maps and their updates through specific ordinances and include them in public conservation strategies, and (ii) link the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction (an NGO network) to the National Biodiversity Council. This opens possibilities for the inclusion of AZE in consolidated policies, such as the definition of Priority Areas for Conservation and National Action Plans. As a consequence, the map of Brazilian AZE fauna sites was included in the discussions of the revision of the Priority Areas for the Conservation of the Atlantic Forest.</p> <p>In <u>Chile</u>, an initial stocktaking exercise for 4 taxa was carried out with species experts to identify 68 national AZE sites. Of these, 35 sites were prioritized to have GIS-based boundaries defined, in order to be used as input for national level biodiversity policy instruments and conservation actions. Potential entry points are Chile's "Last Refuges for endangered biodiversity" internal planning and/or "National Map of Biodiversity Protection Priorities."</p>

<p>Output 2.7: Communication materials and advocacy on AZE in order to influence the development and updating of further NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans globally (in non-project countries).</p>	<p>Advocacy took place around CBD meetings such as those of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the Conference of the Parties (COP), where positions statements were given, flyers and briefs handed out, and side-events and informal discussions held with country delegations,</p> <p>A webinar was given through the NBSAP Forum, after the distribution via the SCBD of tailored information dossiers with AZE sites, to all 196 CBD Parties.</p> <p>Two further webinars were conducted with CBD Parties and AZE members in 2019, to introduce KBAs and AZE sites, and discuss what Parties can do to better conserve AZE sites.</p>
<p>Output FULLY DELIVERED</p>	<p>Brazil and the AZE partnership submitted an information document to SBSTTA-22, presenting options to accelerate progress towards Aichi Targets 11 and 12; and together with Mexico, championed a COP-14 Decision that took up the protection of AZE sites</p> <p>7 (non-project) countries had national AZE partnerships strengthened through AZE mini-workshops and national strategy development workshops (Indicator 2.2.4): Colombia, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Africa, and Mexico.</p>

123. A number of factors, described below, positively influenced the project's performance in Output delivery, thus raising its Effectiveness. These factors were interlinked and mutually supportive, built into project design, and successfully capitalized or boosted by the project: i) Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality; ii) Stakeholder participation and cooperation; iii) Environmental and Social Safeguards; and iv) Communication and public awareness.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:

124. The project was able to take into account "the equitable engagement of women, men and disadvantaged social groups, as well as their different roles and their different concerns" in various ways. This occurred in site-based interventions in the three project countries, though was not measured through sex-disaggregated data or by degree of vulnerability or marginalisation. It was not reported in relation to the interventions aimed at improving management effectiveness at the project's 10 additional sites (Output 1.4), as was expected for Outcome Indicator 1.1.4. At these additional sites, Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality was assumed to be integral to the protected area management plans of each site.

125. **Work at the main project sites involved marginalised communities in Madagascar and Chile** (Mapuche-lafkenche indigenous peoples from Mehuin), who are dependent on the natural resources in and around the AZE sites. These interventions had tacit social objectives that entailed building trust and a gender-sensitive bottom-up approach to landscape management. In this way, the project's Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality was mostly unwritten yet directly linked to its more explicit conservation objectives. It even gave shape to one of the [Drivers](#) in the TOC.

126. Available evidence, however, does not do justice to the work achieved with communities. In this TE, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the possibility of country visits, so the evaluator was limited in the extent to which evidence could be collected to support or demonstrate the project's influence on human rights and gender equality. This, summed to few photographic records among project files and no access to local partner reports, conspired to reduce the evidence base for this evaluation criterion. Nevertheless, from a counterfactual perspective, it could be said that without community involvement, the recognition of rights, and the role of women, the project may not have had the same success in reducing species threats and improving site management effectiveness, and the prospects of conservation results at its main sites.

127. The project narrative describes **actions responsive to gender equality** at the main AZE sites, seen in the conscientious involvement of women in: i) reforestation activities and running agroforestry (cacao) nurseries in Brazil; ii) craftwork in Chile and Madagascar as a livelihood option for women; and iii) mobilizing communities in Chile through school activities, to learn about protecting a uniquely local AZE frog. In addition, project teams at the global and national levels had women leading on different aspects of the project and fulfilling the central role of Project Manager in each case.

128. Gender issues were often linked to Stakeholder Participation, as highlighted during the MTR, which recognised the role of women in project management and partnerships. The project's Final Report (2019) notes: "The MTR highlighted the strong involvement of women and good incorporation of gender aspects in all levels of project implementation as a strength of the project. Gender was explicitly considered in the Prodoc and mainstreamed in project implementation. The promotion of more sustainable livelihoods was at the centre-stage of the project and the needs of local communities (particularly those related to forest resource use) were taken into account, including on a gender-differentiated basis."

Communications and Public Awareness:

129. Outreach activities and the spread of **knowledge about AZE sites** contributed positively to Output availability and visibility, as they were in fact interrelated. Several Outputs were intended to be communicated and useful for public awareness-raising, policy mainstreaming and implementation, and AZE site management. A number of activities entailed science education in schools; community campaigns, learning and exchanges; and reaching out to global communities-of-practice. Therefore, Communications and public awareness was not only embodied in Output 2.7, but also a contributing factor that injected energy into the TOC drivers, helping to motivate change processes along the project's causal pathways.

130. A key Assumption in the TOC (A.G.ii) was the notion that "Increased awareness and capacity will lead to changes in behaviour with respect to the concerned issues (i.e., integration of AZE species into conservation priorities, local land use policies and practices, national conservation plans and policies, and the safeguard policies of IFIs)". Communication and public awareness were instrumental for this Assumption to hold in the TOC, as it was thought that reaching out through global networks and communities-of-practice would encourage more countries and IFIs to take an interest in, and actively work to, conserve AZE sites. In practice, such **behaviour change** was indeed observed, although it is unclear to what extent it was prompted directly by the project.

131. Several global events destined for businesses, governments and conservation NGOs provided opportunities for outreach and advocacy on the importance of protecting AZE sites, and the tools available to do so:

- International policy events and conferences, including side-events, position statements and interventions by BirdLife and other AZE partners at three CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) meetings, two CBD Conferences of the Parties (COP) and the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2016;
- High-profile business events, such as the Responsible Business Forum (Singapore, Oct. 2018) and the Global Business and Biodiversity Forum (Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, Nov. 2018);
- Communities-of-practice, where users have an interest in applying AZE in policy implementation and decision-making:
 - The International Finance Corporation (IFC) organises an annual and well-attended "Community of Learning" event that covers state-of-the-art and emerging issues, at which the AZE Secretariat was invited to present twice (London, November 2016; and Washington DC, October 2018);
 - Calling on existing partnerships with SCBD and UNEP-WCMC, the NBSAP Forum was used as a platform through which to offer governments (CBD Parties) knowledge about AZE, its tools and its relevance to biodiversity policy.

132. In line with Assumption A.G.ii, the project deployed communication and advocacy (Output 2.7) and its technical solvency (Output 2.2) to raise interest in AZE and influence non-project countries (in addition to project countries) to mainstream AZE into their NBSAPs, PoWPA Action Plan or other national conservation policies, as well as IFIs to adopt AZE in their environmental safeguard policies and standards. To this end, and despite the lack of a specific budget for communications, a number of **communication and awareness-raising outputs** were produced by BirdLife and AZE partners that raised the profile of AZE. This included factsheets, SCBD-endorsed webinars, web-stories, press releases, flyers and project briefs amongst other means of communications.

133. Two global partners also made important contributions in terms of Communications and public awareness. UNEP, as part of its co-finance to the project, produced two web-stories and a video, giving coverage to site-level interventions in [Chile](#) and [Madagascar](#), and providing evidence of results achieved. The SCBD in turn, worked with the PMT and others, to send a [CBD Notification](#) to Parties mid-2019,

updating on recent progress in safeguarding AZE sites and inviting countries to step up efforts to protect these irreplaceable sites as a priority action.

134. Many knowledge products were made to improve community understanding of why and how to conserve AZE sites. Knowledge and communication activities were tailored to surrounding communities, and both formal and informal education on AZE species and habitats and their restoration was promoted. Throughout this work, communications and community-based knowledge exchange were used as key forces for change. In some cases, formal trainings were provided (e.g. training local women to carry out ecotourism and birdwatching tours); in others, informal exchanges offered a means for learning and mobilising support for conservation. Local communities are frequently unaware of the global uniqueness of the AZE species in their area, so raising awareness on the importance of protecting AZE species can help to motivate their involvement in conservation actions.

135. This was the case in [Brazil](#), where reforestation is a key need for AZE and other species in the Atlantic Forest, 93% of which has been lost. Close to the Mata do Passarinho AZE site in Brazil, Reserve staff presented at local events, such as the "Dia do campo", or field day, organised for rural producers and attended by over 300 people. Through such social encounters, Reserve staff garnered support for conserving natural resources and carrying out reforestation activities. Another case are the local education campaigns, beyond just school children, that were hugely successful in [Chile](#). To increase community knowledge of AZE frogs and other amphibians in the region, an itinerant Amphibian Exposition was held at three community centres and six local schools. School children learnt to identify a previously unknown frog species that even bore the locality's name ("el sapo de Mehuin"). The project not only channelled academic content into science classes (see Figure 5 **Figure 6**), but also created a sense of pride and duty in having "a species of our own" that is critically endangered. In [Madagascar](#), children of four local primary were similarly engaged in learning about the importance of biodiversity, with a particular focus on the endemic species of Tsitongambarika.

Figure 6. School excursions to learn about threatened amphibian species (Mehuín, Chile)



Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation:

136. The engagement and cooperation of key stakeholders ran as a common thread throughout the project, and was a **critical factor of success**. Globally, data providers mobilised through existing networks actively participated in the on-line consultation process that led to the updated AZE sites map. Collaborative relations already established with certain IFIs also enabled the project to take part in and contribute to safeguard policy reviews. At the management level, cooperation and communication between the PMT and executing teams in countries, as well as with global partners, was strong and consolidated, having benefitted (with the exception of Chile) from years of joint initiatives prior to this project.

137. In project countries, stakeholder participation and consultations began during the project design phase and brought together technical specialists, scientific researchers, NGO representatives and government officials (including from sub-national offices and several Ministries). Only in Madagascar did consultations also involve community representatives and the private sector, due to Asity-Madagascar's existing relationships with local communities and Rio Tinto QMM. In this sense, the project was well primed to maximise collaboration with, and participation of, a wide array of key stakeholders during implementation.

138. Locally, stakeholder participation and community support were the basis of much of the site-based work to reduce threats to AZE habitat in the three project countries:

- Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation is key to protected area management in Madagascar, where community associations are active players in the country's protected area co-management scheme. In Tsitongambarika, multi-stakeholder cooperation between community groups, the government and Rio Tinto QMM, was further nurtured by the project, mediated by Asity.
- In Chile, collaboration with Oikonos, a conservation NGO with years of experience on Mocha Island, was an important "door-opener" for the project's work with schools and community members. In Mehuin, the project team was able to turn initial indigenous (Mapuche) community resistance into strong acceptance and willingness to work together to protect the AZE trigger species. Community members took part in the development of a regional Conservation Plan (officially launched in May 2018), which the community now views as its own, given its vast input into the Plan, and is interested in implementing beyond the life of the project.
- By forging links and building trust with local landowners, primarily cattle ranchers around the Mata do Passarinho Reserve in Brazil, reserve managers were able to advocate on the importance of reforestation and cooperation on local conservation initiatives, and convince some landowners to create private reserves on their properties.

139. In the work to mainstream AZE into public policies and position AZE conservation in CBD processes, close **collaboration** occurred between governmental and non-governmental sectors. In Brazil, AZE was already part of the national biodiversity agenda and, until the change of government in 2018, NGOs and government agencies had a history of working in a mutually supportive fashion towards common goals, including influencing CBD negotiations and decisions. In Madagascar, participation and cooperation between government and NGOs also helped to drive forward the integration of AZE conservation into the NBSAP. In this sense, Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation functioned as a precursor to Country Ownership and Driven-ness, and one of the building blocks of the project's Sustainability.

Environmental and Social Safeguards:

140. This factor was the basis of the work with IFI safeguards and industry standards., to apply Environmental and Social Safeguards to. The achievement in this area is quite significant, as IFC has essentially recognised AZE sites as "critical habitat" and established that investment projects with potential negative impacts to those sites are a 'no-go' – the strongest safeguard yet – with exceptions only for investment projects that would favour the conservation of the areas concerned.

141. In as far as project execution was concerned, the UNEP Prodoc presents Environmental and Social Checklists for each project site that do not identify any significant environmental or social risks associated with the project. A further set of risks identified in the Prodoc define four social and environmental risks that could warrant the need for mitigation or safeguard measures. Of those risks, two actually materialised (in Brazil and Chile) and as a result, were routinely reported on, monitored and successfully addressed by the project team, as part of risk management.

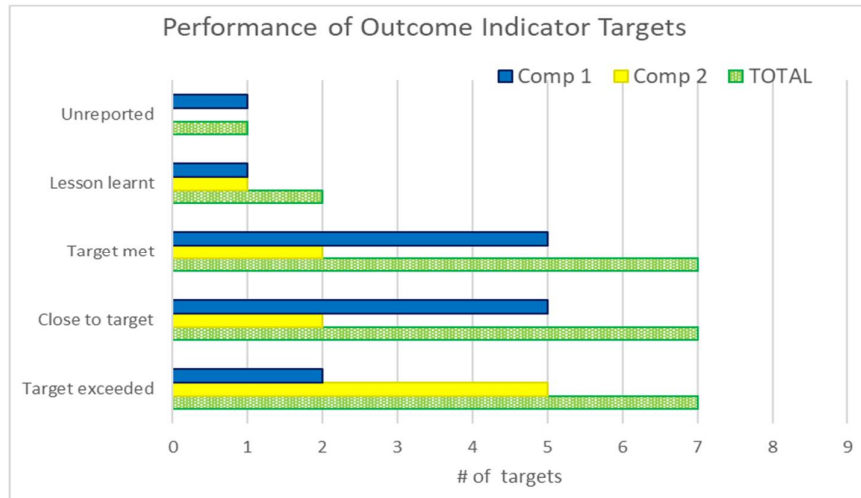
Achievement of Project Outcomes

142. The project achieved all of its expected Outcomes to varying degrees (considering both Direct Outcomes and Project Outcomes) and could account for the majority of its Outcome Indicators. Results were comprehensively reported on and provided solid narrative in most cases of how the project influenced or drove change along its causal pathways. Documented evidence to support this narrative was somewhat exiguous. Both behaviour changes and policy changes were made possible by the project, though in the mainstreaming Component, attribution of results was more evident in relation to IFI policies and standards, than to government plans and policies. Overall, the Achievement of Project Outcomes was rated as 'Satisfactory'.

143. The project's causal pathways are supported by five assumptions in Component 1 (A1.i to A1.v) and six in Component 2 (A2.i to A2.vi) that needed to hold in order to arrive at each Project Outcome. There are also four general or overarching assumptions (A.G.i to A.G.iv) that apply to both Components and were necessary if the Project Goal, and eventually the Intended Impact, were to be reached. Of all 15

assumptions, 13 were considered to have held, one only partially and one could not be corroborated. Likewise, five drivers were identified (by the evaluator) which the project was able to take advantage of, or actively promote, in order to drive change processes forward. Assumptions and drivers are listed together with the TOC in **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**, where comments are also included in relation to how particular assumptions manifested.

Figure 7. Performance of Outcome Indicator Targets



144. Outcome Indicators were used to measure Outcome performance. As shown in **Figure 7** above, from a total of 24 Outcome Indicator Targets, seven were met (29%), seven exceeded (29%) and seven came close (29%). Only two Targets were not met but offered lessons on underlying assumptions, and one Target from Component 1 went unreported (the final METT score for one of Chile's project sites). The full analysis of Outcome achievement is provided in **Annex VI**.

145. Under **Component 1**, positive changes and improvements achieved at targeted AZE sites can be attributed to the project, or failing that, a credible association can be established. Strong claims of attribution can be made only for results directed at the project sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar, namely, Direct Outcomes 1.ii (addressing threats) and 1.iii (legal protection), and less so for results relating to the management effectiveness at the project's 10 additional AZE sites (Direct Outcome 1.i). Overall, evidence points to AZE habitat conservation indeed being strengthened at the main 5 project sites and at least 7 out of 10 additional sites covering around 190,000 ha, which is very close to the expected **Project Outcome 1**. For a more detailed analysis, refer to **Annex VI**.

PROJECT OUTCOME 1: AZE habitat conservation is strengthened at 5 project sites and 10 additional sites covering ≥ 160,000 ha.

Direct Outcome 1.i: Management effectiveness of PA is improved covering ≥ 40,000 ha at 5 AZE sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar and ≥ 120,000 ha at an additional 10 sites globally.

Direct Outcome 1.ii: Conservation action and community support lead to progress in sustainably addressing threats at the 5 AZE sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar.

Direct Outcome 1.iii: Area of the 5 AZE sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar under legal protection is increased.

146. Under **Component 2**, expected Outcomes were to raise awareness of AZE and its tools among Equator Principle Finance Institutions and Multi-lateral Development Banks (Direct Outcome 2.i), mainstream AZE into government biodiversity and protected area policies and CBD National Reports (Direct Outcome 2.ii), and strengthen AZE partnerships and networks to better support the above two workstreams (Direct Outcome 2.iii). Through 10 Outcome indicators, good progress is demonstrated for each of these results, though with varying degrees of attribution.

PROJECT OUTCOME 2: Conservation of threatened species and AZE site protection mainstreamed into government and finance sector policies and decisions.

Direct Outcome 2.i: Awareness of Equator Principles FI and MDB of AZE and its data tools is improved for applying safeguards in financial sector investment screening.

Direct Outcome 2.ii: Governments (≥ 12) mainstream AZE species, sites and priorities in NBSAPs, PoWPA Action Plans, CBD National Reports, and/or other relevant plans or policies.

Direct Outcome 2.iii. AZE partnerships and national networks are strengthened and/or consolidated, and AZE members better able to support AZE conservation and mainstreaming (govt/finance).

147. The work to mainstream AZE into IFI policy was found to have a stronger evidence base and could more readily be attributed to project efforts. This work included engagement with a number of Multilateral Development Banks and IFIs to respond to queries, and make direct and formal inputs into the review processes of specific safeguard policies and standards, including the World Bank Group's EHS Wind Energy Guidelines and the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) Standard for Responsible Mining. **Uptake of AZE into IFC's Performance Standards was a key milestone.** By reference to AZEs as "Critical Habitat" under the IFC's Performance Standard 6, this safeguard also extends to all Equator Principle Financial Institutions (currently counted at 128). For this transitions from Output 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 onto Direct Outcome, two important Assumptions held, namely that opportunities to influence IFI policies would occur during lifespan of project (A2.iii) and that IFIs would engage and be open to dialogue, uptake of guidance and AZE information sharing (A2.iv).

148. For mainstreaming AZE into government policies (Direct Outcome 2.ii), two separate targets were set: One for project countries (target = 3, considering one project country - Brazil - had already integrated AZE into its NBSAP at baseline), and another for non-project countries that the project would nevertheless influence (target = at least 9). Under this result, the mainstreaming of AZE into in Madagascar's NBSAP can readily be attributed to the project, even if achieved quite early on. Madagascar also used AZE data in its most recent CBD National Report and has plans to integrate the concept into all national documents, including Regional Development Plans and Communal Development Plans.

149. This result however was not achieved in Chile and no evidence was found that such 'formal' mainstreaming is likely to occur in the short-term. There is some possibility that Chilean AZE sites will be used as input for national level biodiversity policy instruments and conservation actions. In Brazil, on the other hand, F. Biodiversitas proposed inputs to the process of updating Brazil's NBSAP, resulting in several pages of the new NBSAP focused on AZE protection. Mainstreaming in Brazil even went one step further and reached the regulatory arena, with AZE conservation now given greater priority through two unique federal decrees, an achievement that can clearly be attributed to project actions.

150. In contrast, with non-project countries, only a credible association could be established between project actions and the 16 countries that, during the project period, took into account AZE data and priorities in their NBSAPs, PoWPA Action Plans, or even CBD National Reports. Below, **Table 8** shows that there is little correlation between countries that actually mainstreamed AZE between late 2015 and mid-2019, and those that were targeted by the project, either for site-based work (additional sites from Output 1.4) or for carrying out AZE workshops to strengthen national AZE partnerships and promote AZE conservation (Output 2.7 and Direct Outcome 2.iii). Even though 16 countries (against a target of 9) integrated AZE into their NBSAPs, PoWPA Action Plan or other national conservation policy during the project period, it is hard to attribute this result, in its entirety, to the project.

Table 8. Correlation between countries that mainstreamed AZE and those targeted by the project

COUNTRIES THAT MAINSTREAMED AZE		ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES TARGETED BY PROJECT	
At baseline (+)	During project (**)	AZE workshops	Additional AZE sites
	Madagascar		Madagascar (1)
Brazil			Brazil (3)

Philippines		Philippines	
Indonesia	Bahrain	Dominican Republic	
Nauru	Cape Verde	South Africa	
Vietnam	D.R. of the Congo	Colombia	Costa Rica (1)
	Eritrea	Papua New Guinea	Dominican Republic (1)
	Haiti	Kenya	Ecuador (2)
	Mexico	Mexico	
	Guatemala		Guatemala (1)
	Jamaica		Jamaica (1)
	Peru		Peru (1)
	Honduras		
	Panama		
	Iraq		
	India		
	Rwanda		
	Solomon Islands		
	Vanuatu		

(+) Countries that had already included AZE in their NBSAPs and/or PoWPA Action Plans.

(**) Countries in *italics* had included AZE in their NBSAPs and/or CBD National Reports by June 2016.

Country Ownership and Driven-ness:

151. Differing degrees of Country Ownership and Driven-ness influenced how much progress could be made along result pathways in each project country. This factor was clearly much higher in Brazil and Madagascar than in Chile. Not only was Chile less politically primed to adopt AZE within its biodiversity policies, but it was at a disadvantage in other respects too. Neither the Chilean Ministry of Environment nor RECH had joined forces before with ABC or BirdLife to execute a conservation project, in contrast to the prior experience of Asity and F. Biodiversitas. Additionally, at the site level, unlike Asity and F. Biodiversitas, RECH has no designated role in protected area management. Lastly, unlike the other countries, Chile had three novel AZE sites to manage, instead of one well-established one, and scarce on-site presence, alongside the uncertainty that comes with initiating a conservation agenda with relatively marginalised (indigenous and insular) communities.

152. In this regard, site-level results in Chile were particularly successful and AZE conservation was well received amongst senior and technical government staff, but less so with decision-makers in central government, where confidence levels were not sufficiently high to declare Isla Mocha a National Park (Output 1.2), develop a "pilot National AZE Strategy" (Output 2.6 – although other policy-supporting AZE outputs were developed) or fully mainstream AZE into the country's NBSAP or protected area policies (Direct Outcome 2.ii). While Chile showed incipient levels of Country Ownership and Driven-ness in this project, this may indeed change with the new GEF-7 AZE project due to initiate soon.

153. In contrast, Country Ownership and Driven-ness was much higher in Brazil and Madagascar, in part due to interventions being channelled through existing management structures and platforms, and in part because high-level government representatives were sensitised to the convenience of addressing the protection of endangered species in the context of protected areas and land management. In this way, stakeholders who were project beneficiaries in these two countries were also agents of change who could help to move project results forward.

Quality of project management and supervision:

154. To deliver project results, adaptive management was called for on a number of occasions, not least in the face of external constraints such as site location changes in Chile and the forest fires at the site in Brazil. Adaptive management, anchored in the project's risk management, served the project well and contributed to maintain good performance in Effectiveness. In Brazil, after the 2015/16 fires, birdwatching tourism was temporarily interrupted at the Mata do Passarinho, as it could have negative

impacts on Stresemann's bristlefront, mainly due to use of the playback technique. As an adaptive management measure, the Reserve focused instead on other types of tourism (school groups and local ecotourism) and developed an interpretive trail and observation tower.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact

155. This sub-criterion was rated as 'Highly Likely'. In just under four years (45 months), the project achieved its Objective and made relevant progress towards its Goal. The project's revised Objective was "to contribute to the global achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 by improving the conservation status of AZE listed species", and the (revised) Project Goal was "to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE". The TOC defined the "improved conservation status of at least 17 AZE species at a total of five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar" as an Intermediate State (i.e., a change occurring beyond the level of Project Outcomes 1 and 2, that is required to contribute towards the achievement of the intended Impact). This considers that strengthened AZE habitat conservation precedes improved status of AZE species.

156. The long-term Intended Impact was "to achieve CBD Aichi Target 12 globally through public and private sector actions". Using the 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'⁹, the likelihood of the project's intended, positive impacts becoming a reality was found to be between "Likely" and "Highly Likely". This analysis is based primarily on whether or not the TOC assumptions and drivers held or will continue to hold.

157. Interestingly, as part of its TOC, the project sought firstly to upscale its results by targeting organisations with a multiplying effect, namely IFIs such as the IFC and the World Bank, and secondly, to promote replication (its rationale included demonstration elements). This could potentially augment the project's impact or likelihood of impact. Assumptions and drivers about the engagement of IFIs held strong and caused results to escalate by expanding the target group reached. Notoriously, once the IFC and Equator Principles Association took up AZE in their guidance, the upscaling effect reached 101¹⁰ Equator Principles Financial Institutions as users of this guidance. A commensurate number of threats averted to AZE sites is likely to have resulted from application of these guidelines.

158. Replication as a means to achieve greater impact was intended in the project's design. Here, however, the assumption that the project would be able to apply lessons learned from the main demonstration sites to other replication sites (A1.v) held only weakly, if at all, and assumed also that project duration would be sufficient to achieve initial results at the replication sites. In this sense, rather than functioning as replication sites, the additional (non-GEF-funded) sites in the project were based around commonalities in AZE site management. Only in Madagascar, which had both a demonstration site and an additional site, both managed by the same organization (Asity-Madagascar), can it be inferred that the main site could have had some demonstrative value for the additional site, and that a degree of replication may have occurred in a short timeframe.

159. The project certainly generated catalytic effects, observed as additional actions that were neither funded nor planned by the project. For example, the process of mapping and documenting new AZE sites and updating existing ones (Output 2.1) created a drive for further scientific research and a surge of data for updating the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The project also enabled the formal integration of AZE site identification and visualisation into the wider Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) process, including within the World Database on KBAs. There is value-addition and foresight in this complementarity, as AZE sites can stand-out as a type of KBA, and serve to mutually reinforce both concepts and their datasets.

160. Certain unplanned positive results were directly relevant to the project's Outcomes and Goal, and were readily "taken up" in the reconstructed TOC. These results in effect allowed the project to exceed many of its targets, and cause additional change along the results pathways. Thus, even while these were initially not in the project workplan, the project took advantage of the same causal linkages and drivers that were leading to the Project Goal and Intended Impact, to bolster its impact. Unplanned additional results (that are now Outputs) include:

- The work in Brazil (subsequently recognised as part of Project Outcome 2) to enact two federal decrees (2018), the first in the world, recognizing 146 Brazilian AZE sites as irreplaceable with

⁹ A tool developed by the Evaluation Office of UNEP to assist in assessing the likelihood of Impact achievement

¹⁰ At March 2022, this number had increased to 128.

230 target species, and the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction as a platform linked to the National Biodiversity Council.

- The successful promotion of AZE conservation through CBD mechanisms (Output 2.7), such as the SBSTTA, which, at its 22nd meeting, saw a joint submission by the Government of Brazil and the AZE partnership, of an information document ([CBD/SBSTTA/22/INF/23](#)) presenting options to accelerate progress towards Aichi Targets 11 and 12; and the COP, which, at its 14th meeting, supported by Brazil and Mexico, took up the protection of AZE sites in its Decision [CBD/COP/DEC/14/1](#).
- The integration of AZE, not only into IFI policies, but also into the safeguard policies and standards of other industry bodies, is reflected in the World Bank Group's EHS Wind Energy Guidelines and the IRMA's Standard for Responsible Mining (integrated as part of Output 2.5).

161. Lastly, the project is likely to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and the strategic priorities of the GEF. The project relates most clearly to Target 15.1 (conserve terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services) and Target 15.5 (halt the loss of biodiversity and protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species) of the Sustainable Development Goals. In setting strategic priorities for GEF-5, the GEF defined two main objectives for its Biodiversity Focal Area. Under these, "new protected areas and coverage of unprotected threatened species" and "policies and regulatory frameworks for production sectors" are the core global outputs to which this project contributes.

Rating for Effectiveness:	Satisfactory	(Score 5.00)
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E. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

162. This sub-criterion was given a 'Satisfactory' rating, based on the available evidence from UNEP. For the awarding of GEF funds, UNEP's role as GEF Implementing Agency requires the signature of an Agreement with the responsible Executing Agency (national, regional or global). In this case, a Project Cooperation Agreement was signed between UNEP's Division of Environmental Policy Implementation and BirdLife International on 2 October 2015. The first cash advance, which is considered the project's operational starting date, occurred in February 2016.

163. GEF projects are subject to specific due diligence processes and are implemented in line with [UNEP's Partnership Policy and Procedures](#) and the [Financial Rules and Regulations of the United Nations](#). There is evidence of adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures in the submission to UNEP of the necessary periodic reports from BirdLife as the Executing Agency; in UNEP seeking clearance of technical and financial reports (including co-financing) before proceeding with cash advances; in undertaking budget revisions together with no-cost extensions; in keeping a 5% retainer until project reporting is complete; and in allowing 12 months for terminal reporting (including final audits) after technical completion.

164. Adherence to UNEP financial management policies could not be fully corroborated in the context of sub-granting of GEF funds to project partners. This project entailed two additional financial management layers to that of the main executing entity. BirdLife signed agreements with ABC, Asity Madagascar and IUCN that required the submission of periodic financial reports in line with their GEF budget allocation (see **Table 4**) and UNEP budget lines. Related documents were managed by BirdLife, a sample of which was reviewed for the TE. ABC in turn sub-contracted Biodiversitas in Brazil and RECH in Chile, and placed similar reporting requirements on these executing partners. The reporting files managed by ABC, however, were not available for the TE; this placed limitations on the verification of all GEF funding accountability trails. For procurement purposes, the Prodoc states that the policies and procedures of Birdlife International would be followed.

Completeness of Financial Information

165. Performance under this sub-criterion was found to be 'Moderately Unsatisfactory'. Financial documents relating to project management were available though somewhat dispersed and with some

inconsistencies. BirdLife submitted to UNEP a complete set of consolidated financial reports in a timely and diligent manner from October 2015 to June 2019. These GEF expenditure reports were based on the approved budget, covered quarterly periods and were accompanied by half-yearly (July - December) and annual (July - June) technical and co-finance reports.

166. In order to compile these reports, BirdLife would in turn receive half-yearly financial reports from Asity Madagascar and ABC, as well as IUCN (although for the latter, these were all seemingly revised in the first quarter of 2018). The reports submitted by ABC to BirdLife would themselves be consolidated financial reports that included separate expenditure tables for ABC, RECH and Biodiversitas. The GEF expenditures for Chile and Brazil would be signed-off by ABC, rather than by the local executing partners (the reports of which were unavailable).

167. Co-finance reports were duly compiled by BirdLife, reflecting annual totals (July to June) for each co-financier, and totals achieved in cash and in-kind. Executing and contributing partners all submitted final co-finance reports, once the project finalised. However, there is little evidence that these partners submitted periodic (annual) co-finance reports, to either to BirdLife or ABC. In Madagascar, Asity seemingly collected co-finance information from Rio Tinto QMM and the (then) Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Forests, to present consolidated figures to BirdLife. From ABC's consolidated co-finance reports, it is similarly assumed that government and NGO entities from Chile and Brazil relayed their co-financing figures to ABC, for inward transmission to BirdLife.

168. UNEP financial and legal records were incomplete in the project files: **Records of cash advance requests submitted and approved by UNEP (February 2016 to February 2019) differed between BirdLife and UNEP and did not always bear expected signatures**; the Project Cooperation Agreement between UNEP and BirdLife was archived without the suite of annexes that are integral to the agreement; UNEP's co-finance report, and the closing budget revision, were filed as unsigned copies.

Quality of project management and supervision:

169. A change of UNEP Task Manager took place shortly after the project inception workshop (November 2015). Not all partners were present at this workshop (only BirdLife, ABC and UNEP) or equally familiar with UNEP-GEF projects and their reporting requirements. At BirdLife, a change of Global Project Manager also took place in 2017 that left a gap while the new recruit came on board. It seems all these factors contributed to lessen the quality of financial reporting. The need to provision key financial documents for the TE, as per the 'Financial Assessment table' included in **Annex III**, was unclear to project partners. Through the TE, it became apparent that countersigned legal and financial documents were not centrally or systematically filed. In GEF expenditure and co-finance reports presented to UNEP, there would often be corrections and footnotes from one report to the next. This points to learning-by-doing and inconsistencies or tardiness in partner inputs affecting the quality of consolidated reports. Though ultimately, financial reports from BirdLife were thorough, corrections were coherent, and figures corresponded with what was expected, this finding signals the lack of a comprehensive induction from UNEP.

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

170. This sub-criterion was rated as 'Satisfactory'. Finance staff at UNEP, consisting of a Fund Management Officer and a Finance Assistant, liaised mostly with the UNEP Task Manager with whom communications were fluid and regular. Exchanges between them would ensure all reports (technical progress reports, GEF expenditure reports, and when relevant, co-finance reports) were cleared by the Task Manager, before processing further payments to BirdLife. On occasions, and especially during the technical completion phase, UNEP fund management staff would communicate directly via email with project partners, giving guidance on how to meet reporting requirements (especially terminal reporting).

Rating for Financial Management:	Moderately Satisfactory	(Score: 4.00)
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F. Efficiency

171. The project was found to be efficient, even in the face of its 9-month extension. It was designed to achieve a lot on a small budget and make strategic use of prior and existing investments as baseline support (co-finance). Indeed, its cost-effectiveness is anchored on its intelligent integration with ongoing

efforts at selected AZE sites, especially in Brazil and Madagascar, and on boosting existing capacities and processes with incremental GEF investments.

172. In fact, as noted in section A (Strategic Relevance) regarding the project's coherence and complementarity with existing initiatives, the project's selection of AZE sites in Brazil and Madagascar was intrinsically efficient, as it was based on AZE locations where ongoing efforts and relationships could be leveraged, in particular those derived from existing BirdLife and ABC programmes (e.g. Preventing Extinctions; Forests of Hope; Oceans and Islands).

173. Achievements in Madagascar are a clear example of how this efficiency played out on-the-ground. Tsitongambarika gained legal protection through its formal designation as a Protected Area very early in the project (in 2015, around the time of GEF project approval), which speaks of a process initiated many years prior being capitalised by the project to generate impactful results in a short period. The project's timeliness was well calculated in this regard, as it ensured the flow of GEF resources at a significant time for Tsitongambarika.

174. In addition, the site and its partners were well primed to deliver results for the area. Fruitful and long-standing relationships already existed with local communities and their governance structures, as did a Management Plan for the Tsitongambarika Forest. This meant that enabling conditions were already in place when the project started that facilitated the tasks of updating the Management Plan once the Protected Area was declared, formalising the involvement of community associations in the co-management of the Protected Area, and promoting community uptake of sustainable agricultural practices, alternative livelihoods and forest restoration.

175. Another example comes from the roll-out of major improvements in the scope and online accessibility of AZE datasets for global users. Here, the project made strategic use of the distinct capacity of its global partners for such work and ongoing co-financed support for the maintenance of such data. Likewise, the leveraging of CBD processes and platforms, and more recently, the engagement with IFIs in biodiversity safeguards, were areas of work in which ABC and BirdLife had already positioned themselves, gained traction and identified appropriate entry points. Thus, with comparatively small yet well targeted inputs and a short timeline, the project was able to deliver substantive and globally significant outputs (i.e., maximum results from limited GEF resources).

Preparation and Readiness:

176. Nevertheless, the project did face delays that prompted the need for an extension. Thanks to this additional time, more results accrued and could be accounted for, yet it is also true that some of the causes for delay could have been avoided. The lack of an executing entity in Chile that could readily administer GEF funds caused delays to the start-up of activities, and is a sign of low Preparation and Readiness. The Chilean Ministry is not new to the need to delegate its GEF fund management in UNEP-GEF projects and had not appointed an executing entity during the project preparation phase.

177. A swing of events at start-up (that had been listed amongst potential project risks) also stalled on-the-ground readiness in Mehuin, home to two of Chile's project sites, and affected Chile's capacity to execute. Two landowners whose properties harboured AZE habitat were unwilling to participate in the project, due to issues of mistrust. The Ministry of Environment's regional staff were quick to bring on board new landowners whose properties were also home to the AZE trigger species, ably mitigating further delays in Chile. The MTR cited this incident as a lesson learnt, highlighting that: "Early proper stakeholder involvement reduces the chances of subsequent undesirable consequences". It seems that the opportunity to appropriately approach local community members in Mehuin was missed during the project preparation phase and gave rise to one of the external constraints named in section C (Nature of the external context). Altogether, these findings lowered the score for Preparation and Readiness, and with it, the project's Efficiency, but did not dampen its Effectiveness **as key results were still achieved in Chile and overall.**

Quality of Project Management and Supervision:

178. The multi-level coordination required by this intervention made project management a complex endeavour. Project management was generally solid and efficient, with global and national teams demonstrating effective coordination and adaptive management, as well as notable conservation expertise. Executing entities all combined project management duties with high quality technical support. This speaks to an efficient use of GEF resources but also implied a high workload, especially for PMT

staff, who also played a critical role in global activities. The PMT proved to be up to the task, diligently maintaining the necessary vertical and horizontal coordination, and putting its technical knowhow to good use throughout the project. Certain oversight duties, such as country visits, were combined with more technical objectives in order to take advantage of the PMT's AZE expertise, give the project visibility, and help to win further advocates for AZE uptake in national policies, amongst research groups, and/or with communities.

Rating for Efficiency:	Satisfactory	(Score: 5.00)
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G. Monitoring and Reporting

Quality of project management and supervision:

179. The project entailed a number of execution layers, from global to national to local, that implied vertical and horizontal coordination. Amidst this complexity, factors relating to Project Management and Supervision Quality affected the project's capacity for Monitoring and Reporting. These factors were firstly, a recruitment gap between global project managers in 2017, secondly, the sparse functioning of the project's various Steering Committees; and thirdly, a delay in the MTR, which took place in the project's final semester. The causes for delay and inconsistencies in reporting could have been avoided by better use of the project's project preparation phase, and later, inception period. The inception workshop, held in November 2015 with UNEP, BirdLife, ABC and IUCN, had indeed contemplated the need to clarify financial reporting requirements for partners, and ensure that reporting requirements are covered in national inception workshops.

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

180. Performance under this sub-criterion was found to be 'Moderately Satisfactory', in part due to a degree of misalignment between TE expectations over monitoring and what the project actually contemplated for monitoring purposes. The project documents required by UNEP (the Prodoc) and GEF (called the 'Request for CEO Approval') present different types of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plans. The GEF document contains a minimalistic M&E plan, without a budget, that emphasises only the MTR and TE, and the use of GEF Tracking Tools. These tasks, together with Global Steering Committee meetings, were understood by the PMT as the project's main M&E processes.

181. The UNEP Prodoc, on the other hand, provides a more thorough M&E Plan that lists a series of tasks and their estimated costs, responsible parties and expected timeframe. This plan refers more to M&E obligations (such as periodic reporting, meetings and evaluations) than to actual results monitoring. Its list of 16 M&E activities (see **Table 9**) was estimated to cost around USD 108,500 and fell on either BirdLife, UNEP or the National Project Coordinators (from the national executing entities) to carry out. Adequate resources were budgeted for MTR and TE, though figures in the M&E Plan differ to the approved project budget. The majority (13) of listed M&E activities were found to have taken place during the life of the project (**Table 9**), showing a good degree of M&E compliance.

Table 9. M&E activities for the project (as listed in the UNEP Prodoc)

Done?	M&E activity	Estimated Budget	Comment /basis
1. ✓	Global inception workshop/teleconference	\$5,000	Limited travel; mainly remote using telecoms
2. ✓	National inception workshops	\$10,000	Plus \$5,000 in co-finance
3. ✓	Inception Report		
4. ✓	Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Indicators (outcome, progress and performance indicators, GEF Tracking Tools) at national and global levels	\$20,000	To be finalized in Inception phase for annual workplans. Rio Tinto co-finance would cover most monitoring costs in Madagascar.
5. ✓	Project Implementation Reviews		Annual GEF reporting: from July to June

Done?	M&E activity	Estimated Budget	Comment /basis
6. ✓ 7. X	Co-financing reports		Annual (July to June) Half-yearly (July to Dec)
8. ✓	Progress reports to UNEP		Half-yearly (July to Dec)
9. ✓	Global Steering Committee minutes		Remotely using telecoms
10. (?)	National Steering Committee minutes	\$9,000	\$1,000/meeting x 3 countries x 3 years
11. ✓	Monitoring visits to the field sites	\$7,500	(*) Based on \$2,500/visit x 3 sites. Plus \$15,000 in co-finance
12. ✓	Mid-Term Evaluation or Review	\$15,000	
13. X	National Terminal Evaluations	\$15,000	Based on \$5,000/country
14. ✓	Global Terminal Evaluation (**)	\$15,000	
15. ✓	Project Terminal Report / Final Report		
16. X	Lessons learnt	\$12,000	Based on \$1,000/year x 3 countries x 4 years
17. ✓	Annual audits		Covered by co-finance
	Total indicative costs (***)	\$108,500	Excludes staff time and UNEP staff /travel expenses

(?) Minutes were unavailable.

(*) The basis for calculation was originally states as "\$2,500/visit x 3 sites x 3 visits" but this does not result in the amount indicated.

(**) This amount does not coincide with the approved project budget, which set aside \$30,000 for the TE.

(***) The Prodoc Costed M&E Plan shows an indicative total of \$112,500 which does not correspond with the sum of figures in the table.

182. This evaluation sub-criterion expects a monitoring plan to have been prepared at project launch or inception for the measurement of project indicators, detailing associated data collection methods, frequency, budgets and responsible persons. Instead of such a plan, which according to M&E activity #4 in Table 9 above, would be based on annual workplans, the project team utilised instead the results monitoring framework contained in the annual Project Implementation Reviews (M&E activity #5 above) and half-yearly UNEP progress reports (M&E activity #8 above).

183. Thus, in order to track delivery of its Outputs and Outcomes, the project relied on half-yearly reporting cycles to inform on progress against its Output-based activities and 'SMART' Outcome Indicators. In general, these Indicators, and their corresponding mid-term and end-of-project targets, were relevant, measurable and appropriate for tracking progress. Some indicators required baselines and targets to be confirmed during the project inception phase, or showed certain inconsistencies (e.g. the # of hectares in Indicator 1.1.4 differs from the # of hectares in the end-of-project target). Moreover, some indicators (such as 2.2.1¹¹) proved more challenging than others, either because different interpretations could be made of the same indicator or because evidence and data that could prove an attributive cause-and-effect relationship was inaccessible (as with Indicator 2.1.6¹²). It was expected that the project would account for its equitable engagement of women, men and disadvantaged social groups through two indicators (1.1.4 and 2.2.1) for which sex-disaggregated data would be collected among targeted communities.

Monitoring of Project Implementation

184. This sub-criterion was given a 'Moderately Satisfactory' rating. As seen from **Table 9** above, the most crucial M&E activities were duly carried out during implementation, yet their timing or periodicity was not always as required. GSC meetings were expected to take place on a six-monthly basis; however,

¹¹ Indicator 2.2.1: Number of endorsed and launched pilot national AZE Strategies in project countries (Brazil, Chile, Madagascar)

¹² Indicator 2.1.6: Number of AZE sites with conservation enhanced or threats averted by participating IFIs through avoidance, mitigation and/or compensation related to development project impacts.

the Committee was not convened at project inception and met only twice thereafter, the second time at technical completion. The MTR finalised mid-2019 and was out-of-synch with the project's timeline; similarly with the current TE, which initiated two years after the project's technical completion date. The timeliness of these key M&E activities, which are usually coordinated by the GEF Implementing Agency, in this case, UNEP, affected their utility as tools for monitoring and learning.

185. Steering Committee structures generally did not play a significant role in monitoring project performance. At the global level, the GSC was intended to bring together government officials from the three project countries, the SCBD, AZE Secretariat, and UNEP, with the PMT (BirdLife and ABS staff) as observers, to provide strategic guidance to the project. During implementation, however, the GSC was hindered by language and time-zone differences, and its convening by human resource issues. At the country level, each project country was to set up its own National Project Steering Committee, presided by the government focal point and comprising mostly other government agencies, as well as a National Technical Committee or Group to provide complementary technical expertise. In practice, these committees were either not established or did not function as expected. In effect, only Chile set up a National Steering Committee and called on ad hoc technical expert groups when needed. Madagascar substituted the Steering Committee with an existing body that oversaw wider protected area management issues, while Brazil operated without a committee.

186. Results and activities monitoring was a continuous exercise. The PMT met almost monthly to review progress, define next steps and strategies, and address challenges. The PMT stayed abreast of emerging issues through fluid and regular communications with country counterparts, and did country visits for both oversight and technical support. In the Results Framework, baseline data for project indicators was well presented and showed a good understanding of the prevailing situation. Overall, activity monitoring by the PMT was particularly strong and result indicators were consistently tracked. Species monitoring data was used during implementation to support adaptive management as well as general site management. The **evidence base to support results monitoring**, on the other hand, was less robust. The "means of verification" listed in the project's Results Framework were not used as a guide for the type of evidence that could be collected in order to verify and account for results. Documented evidence usually related to technical Outputs and global activities, and contained less material to support site-based actions or policy mainstreaming, or even adaptive management decisions.

Project Reporting:

187. The project team fulfilled the majority of UNEP and GEF reporting commitments, resulting in a 'Satisfactory' rating for this sub-criterion. Progress reports were found to be complete, timely, thorough and well drafted, providing a clear and technically-sound narrative of how change was being generated, and risks managed. Workplan changes were also well documented. GEF Tracking Tools were also used to track progress and account for results: The METT is tailored to protected area management components (such as Component 1 in this project) and served to track progress towards Direct Outcome 1.i, covering both demonstration and additional sites; while the Tracking Tool designed to monitor the "Mainstreaming of Biodiversity Conservation in Production Landscapes /Seascapes and Sectors" was applied to Component 2.

188. This TE noted, however, that not all GEF Tracking Tools were completed at project end. Those missing are: GEF Tracking Tool for Mainstreaming of Biodiversity Conservation in Production Landscapes /Seascapes and Sectors; the METTs for two Mehuin sites in Chile; and the METT for Osa National Wildlife Refuge as one of the additional AZE sites. These files were unavailable from UNEP or the PMT. For the project's main AZE sites, METTs were completed for Brazil and Madagascar at baseline (project approval), at mid-term (June 2017) for all but the Chilean sites, and at project end (first semester of 2019). In Chile, the baselines of all three sites were generated around the project mid-term, so only one further METT assessment at project end was possible at those sites. For the additional AZE sites, 11 baseline METTs were drafted between 2015 and 2017, and then updated for 10 sites towards the end of the project (between 2017 and 2019).

189. In addition, some inconsistencies and gaps were noted in results monitoring. For example, hectare totals cited in GEF Tracking Tools for additional AZE sites differed significantly from those provided in project reports (close to 494,000 ha in one case, versus 190,000 ha in the other). While this may reflect the size of AZE sites being different to the size of the protected areas, a common way to report on these results would have been preferable. There were also cases of targets inputted incorrectly in the Prodoc, and subsequently in project reports, that could have been revised at inception, and others

that were revised at inception, but were not followed-through in project reporting. Several persons interviews mentioned that support was warranted to understand and meet GEF reporting requirements and that an induction process would have been helpful.

190. Results monitoring was not disaggregated by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation, despite two indicators that pointed to the need for this. At the site level, improvements in conservation status (Indicator 1.1.4) were expected to include the "equitable engagement of women, men and disadvantaged social groups, taking into account their different roles and concerns". This aspect of the work was not accounted for, even if most protected area management plans do include a component on social and environmental safeguards. At the national level, "pilot national AZE strategies" (Indicator 2.2.1) as such were not similarly produced across the three project countries, and there was no evidence to determine whether the "equitable engagement of women, men and disadvantaged social groups" was considered in the policy-supporting outputs that were produced.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	Satisfactory	(Score: 4.33)
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H. Sustainability

191. The sustainability of Project Outcomes is considered as the likelihood of these being maintained and developed beyond the end of the project. The project's five main sites, three countries and global scope of work creates a sustainability mosaic that is difficult to interpret as a single evaluation rating. Therefore, sustainability ratings are proposed for each project country, and globally, using the three sub-criteria below (see **Table 10**). As an average, it was found that each sub-criterion came out as 'Likely'. Given that sustainability is also a measure of the extent to which project results are "owned" by stakeholders and beneficiaries, either prior to or after the project, some overlap with the criterion Country Ownership and Driven-ness is unavoidable for each country.

Socio-political Sustainability

192. The sustainability of project outcomes is highly dependent on social/political factors. This is true as much for site-level achievements, as for results of a national and global nature. In all cases, there are examples of ownership, interest and commitment among government entities, species conservation experts and their networks, NGOs, local communities and landowners, and IFIs, to take the project results forwards. This sub-criterion was therefore found to be 'Likely'.

193. Two of the three project countries have signed up for a further UNEP-GEF project for AZE conservation, recently approved under GEF-7. This demonstrates political will on behalf of the governments concerned (Chile and Madagascar) to continue the work initiated or boosted by the current GEF-5 project, and sustained interest from the relevant NGO partners, which will continue to be RECH and Asity, respectively. This new project has two additional countries on board (Colombia and Dominican Republic), which itself is a sign of growing political interest in the AZE conservation approach.

194. Many project results are part of a continuum that, in itself, confers a degree of socio-political sustainability to the work done. This applies to achievements in policy and regulations, data availability, land management practices, and corporate behaviour. Governments beyond the project countries have been taking up the AZE concept and techniques. The number of NBSAPs, CBD National Reports and/or PoWPA Action Plans that cite AZE has continued to grow after the project and seems likely to maintain this trend. Thanks to the mobilization of the academic sector, updated AZE data is now more readily available for countries to use in planning, monitoring and reporting, and is also relevant to private sector agents, Multilateral Development Banks and other IFIs. There is political interest from IFIs to continue consolidating the application of biodiversity safeguards through the consideration of KBAs in general, and AZE sites in particular, in their investment screening and corporate decisions.

195. Considering national achievements, there are key sustainability differences between project countries:

- Brazil has a considerable lead, given its history of exceptional engagement in CBD processes and early mainstreaming of AZE in its NBSAP. Brazil began the project with strong baseline conditions, including a Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction that could be mobilized by the project, and so had a sustainability advantage. At present, a change of governmental (following elections in October 2022) could be favourable to the continuation of project achievements.

- Madagascar included AZE in its NBSAP early on in the project (before June 2016), as it had begun laying the foundations for this change before the project came on board. Making threatened species conservation part of wider ecosystem conservation plans and goals was an effective means to ensure the political sustainability of AZE and project results in Madagascar.
- Chile may not have mainstreamed AZE into its policies, but AZE does seem to have permeated into the work of government officials, managers, practitioners and academic experts. This incipient uptake or "ownership", however, may be subject to government changes. Given the recent change of government (March 2022), and the new GEF-7 AZE project that will soon begin execution, it can only be hoped that interest in AZE will extend to the critical levels of government that have the power to sustain project Outcomes, and build the necessary ownership.

196. At the site-level, if the novel experience of applying the METT and linking AZE with protected area management was a formative exercise, it would be contributing to the project's social sustainability. There are project-driven processes at the main AZE sites that likely built social capital within and across communities. Indeed, building conservation awareness in community leaders and landowners, promoting income generating activities, and expanding the knowledge of local stakeholders can be effective means to bolster socio-political sustainability locally. These approaches were reported in all three project countries, with different foci:

- In Chile, the focus was on environmental education programmes in rural schools at the three project sites and on promoting AZE species as a local emblem (or mascot) and even tourism at the Municipality level.
- In Madagascar, the project focused on strengthening the capacity of park rangers and of the protected area management body (known as KOMFITA) and local community associations, and on income-generating activities for local people as alternative livelihoods to shifting agriculture and illegal hardwood extraction.
- In Brazil, liaising and building new relationships with local landowners, mostly cattle ranchers and farmers, was crucial to securing support for the project site and for raising interest in new properties becoming private reserves.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:

197. This factor became a driver of change, particularly at the AZE sites in Chile and Madagascar where the project was responsive to the needs of mostly marginalised communities, and was able to benefit youth and women, among others. Women were not only involved in the project management teams of executing entities, but also in organizing reforestation activities in Brazil, craftwork production in Chile and Madagascar, and school expeditions in Chile, which shows that women had a central role in mobilizing community members and achieving social buy-in for project activities. Indeed, if this led to social capital being built at project sites, not only would this mean sustainability gains, but would also represent benefits in Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality.

Financial Sustainability

198. This sub-criterion was rated as 'Likely'. Evaluation findings point to project Outputs and Outcomes (particularly site-level results) having, on the one hand, a high dependency on future funding or persistent financial flows in order for the benefits they bring to be sustained, and on the other, the means to provide for their own financial sustainability to a certain degree (thus mitigating the high dependency). In fact, built into the project's design was the need to seek the financial sustainability of AZE site management, through donor fundraising as well as income generating activities that would provide economic benefits to local communities and the protected areas concerned.

199. At the main project site in Brazil, over 10 ha of shade cacao were planted and training given on cacao cultivation, to provide for the future financial sustainability of the Mata do Passarinho Reserve and its conservation. Tourism, in particular bird tourism, is another source of income for the Reserve. Even though the reception of birdwatchers was temporarily halted following the fires of 2015/16, the Reserve focused on promoting other types of tourism (ecotourism, school excursions), for which an interpretive trail and observation tower were developed, and new signs and trail maps created. Women in particular were targeted to carry out birdwatching activities.

200. In Madagascar, the need to reduce unsustainable agricultural practices and illegal hardwood extraction in Tsitongambarika led to the development of new, alternative sources of income for over 1,600 households, such as vegetable farming, beekeeping (honey production), coffee cultivation, and even demonstrations in poultry farming. Financial flows from these economic activities raise the prospects of conservation results being sustained over time at this project site. Lastly, two key Asity Madagascar staff received training in sustainable financing for forest conservation with BirdLife in the frame of the project.

201. In both Brazil and Madagascar, there are good examples of how financial sustainability was sought through biodiversity off-set agreements with industry. These agreements, with Petrobras in Brazil and Rio Tinto in Madagascar, aimed to benefit both protected area management and community development. With time, and in line with current NBSAPs, public financing for AZE and threatened species is expected to increase, especially in Brazil where AZE is now built into the country's regulatory framework as well as the NBSAP.

202. Moreover, AZE is being considered by the Brazilian government in the evaluation of investment projects, to define which areas can and cannot be intervened. This was reported for an energy infrastructure project in the area of the Mata do Passarinho Reserve. The company requesting the permits agreed to finance restoration within the Reserve for 5 years and buy land that should be donated to Fundacao Biodiversitas.

203. In Madagascar, Rio Tinto continues to provide funding to Tsitongambarika as part of a biodiversity offset scheme, which compensates, in good part, the gaps in government funding. It was reported that Rio Tinto has now extended the coverage of this biodiversity offset funding to support conservation across the entirety of Tsitongambarika, rather than just the initial offset area. This additional donation from Rio Tinto to Asity Madagascar is considered a recompense for conservation successes and confers a good level of financial sustainability to efforts at the Tsitongambarika site.

204. Chile faces an altogether different situation, as AZE is still novel and only beginning to build traction policy- and management-wise. Until AZE sites become mainstreamed into policy and institutional budgets, AZE conservation action will likely remain dependent on donor funding, such as that sourced from the GEF-7 project that will soon begin. Even if community motivation to implement the Management Plan in Mehuin remains high, it is still wholly dependent on external funding.

205. Similarly, for the additional AZE sites, the project contemplated putting together funding proposals (Output 2.5) as a means to contribute to the financial sustainability of these sites, and that of the main project sites, that led to at least seven AZE funding proposals being presented to donors. In Madagascar, such proposals are critically important as economic and political conditions in the country remain challenging, and government capacity and resources limited. The recent approval of the GEF-7 global AZE project also shows that the governments of Chile and Madagascar are willing to continue directing GEF resources and co-financing to AZE conservation efforts.

Institutional Sustainability

206. Even though this sub-criterion was given a 'Likely' rating, institutional sustainability varies widely between project countries. It is highest in Brazil, where AZE considerations are engrained at the regulatory, federal policy and operational levels and where the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction (led by F. Biodiversitas) has a seat at the policy table, and public-private collaborations for protected area management and species conservation are common practice.

207. In Madagascar, institutional sustainability takes the form of community-led landscape management mechanisms that combine sustainable resource use with protected area (and species) management, through legitimised community associations and an umbrella entity led by Asity. This community-based co-management model is supported through institutional frameworks, and has gained traction through the experience at Tsitongambarika. There is little doubt that this bottom-up "institutionality" remains operational beyond the project and will continue to develop and consolidate at the Madagascar site. Moreover, there is a new national body, the National Commission for KBA Coordination, now also concerned with AZE site conservation in Madagascar.

208. In Chile, on the other hand, institutional sustainability invokes uncertainty. This may be one of the factors that led the country to take an interest in joining a further GEF-7 AZE initiative, as indeed the political and operational uptake of AZE are still pending issues. At the technical level, there seems to be good support for the AZE concept and its approach to conservation, even if AZE has yet to be written into

Chile's national policies and frameworks. Moreover, Isla Mocha remains to this day (March 2022) a National Reserve. The process to convert it to a National Park was initiated by the project but could not be completed before 2020. The Reserve's change of category shows little indication it will happen any time soon, given that a change of government just took place in March 2022, and that the transfer of authority over protected areas from CONAF to the Ministry of Environment (that has been "on the books" for a number of years) could be a reason to delay such political decisions.

209. Globally, the institutional uptake of AZE is evident and offers a good guarantee of continuity. Within the CBD, the interest in AZE is likely to continue, in light of its inclusion in a COP Decision and its global applicability and relevance to threatened species targets for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that is in the making. IFI application of safeguard criteria concerning AZE continues, accompanied by guidance material and consultations with staff at the AZE Secretariat. AZE data (especially spatial data) and technical advice, is likely to continue to be in demand, given the most recent iteration of the Equator Principles (July 2020), which specifically mentions AZE sites and refers to IFC's Performance Standards Guidance Note 6 (from February 2019).

210. The offer of global AZE data is also likely to grow, rather than fade, as increasingly more taxonomic groups are assessed or updated. The importance of high quality (i.e., high precision) spatial data for use by the finance and investment sectors will also increase. AZE datasets, accessible via the [AZE website](#), are maintained by ABC as the AZE Secretariat with support from BirdLife, and also upheld by the [World Database of KBAs](#) managed by BirdLife and IUCN as co-hosts of the KBA Secretariat. Both these platforms have been in existence for several years and have become "institutionalised" within the AZE and the KBA partnerships, and as such, are unlikely to cease benefitting from institutional support. To give even greater sustainability to AZE data provision services, this data is also available via the [Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool](#) (IBAT), a subscriber-based platform run by BirdLife, Conservation International, IUCN and UNEP-WCMC, specifically designed for decision-makers in government and the productive and finance sectors.

Table 10. Sustainability ratings by country, globally, and by sub-criterion

	Socio-Political	Financial	Institutional
Brazil	Likely	Likely	Highly Likely
Chile	Moderately Likely	Moderately Likely	Moderately Unlikely
Madagascar	Likely	Likely	Highly Likely
Global	Highly Likely	Likely	Highly Likely
OVERALL	Likely (5.00)	Likely (4.75)	Likely (5.25)

Rating for Sustainability: **Likely** (Score 5.00)

I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

211. Factors that affected project performance (positively or negatively) are described throughout the evaluation findings (chapter V, sections D to H). Those presented here are only in response to the "Questions Required for the GEF Portal" included in the TE Terms of Reference (see **Annex VIII**). The overall rating given below considers the following individual ratings for factors affecting performance and other cross-cutting issues:

Preparation and readiness	MU
Quality of project management and supervision	MS
Stakeholder participation and cooperation	S
Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	S
Environmental, social and economic safeguards	S
Country ownership and driven-ness	MS

Communication and public awareness

HS

Questions Required for the GEF Portal¹³

→ **What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR?** (linked to factor: Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation).

212. The main challenges arose prior to the MTR and were appropriately handled by country teams, with support from the PMT. Following the MTR, no further challenges were encountered. Key successes in stakeholder engagement are described in paragraphs **136-139**.

→ **What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas?** (linked to factor: Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality).

213. This project included a number of gender-responsive measures that led to concrete (but unquantified) gender results. Gender-responsive measures entailed the conscientious involvement of women in: i) reforestation activities and the running of agroforestry (cacao) nurseries in Brazil; ii) training to carry out birdwatching tourism in Brazil; iii) craftwork training in Chile and Madagascar as a livelihood option; iv) mobilizing communities in Chile through school activities, to learn about protecting a uniquely local AZE frog; and v) project management teams at the global and national levels. Gender results were not quantified, so an analysis is precluded by the lack of sex-disaggregated data. Please refer to paragraphs **124-128** for further details.

→ **What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval?** (linked to factor: Environmental and Social Safeguards).

214. A Safeguards Plan was not submitted at project approval. Instead, in line with UNEP and GEF-5 requirements, the project presented Environmental and Social Checklists for each project demonstration site (note: the two Mehuin sites in Chile are reviewed as one). Risk ratings for the project were reported as "Low" throughout the executing period. The most significant delays were regularly tracked. Some project management risks arose as well as environmental and social risks that had been identified in the Prodoc and required adaptive management in order to keep project execution on track.

215. The most critical of these were the forest fires at Mata do Passarinho Reserve, Brazil, and the community resistance initially encountered at Mehuin, Chile. To help prevent and control future potential fires, Reserve staff were trained in firefighting techniques and implemented preventive measures, such as the construction of firebreaks. In Mehuin, the relationship between government entities and communities was improved, and with time, trust built up to the point where community members became interested in participating in the development of a Conservation Plan for the region, and after its official launch in 2018, were keen to mobilise resources for its continued implementation. The lesson learnt in this situation was that early contact and consultations with local proprietors could have avoided the setbacks and delays faced at project start-up.

→ **What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach**, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; and Adaptive Management Actions? (linked to factor: Communication and Public Awareness)

216. The project included key Knowledge and Learning Deliverables, not least the revamped [AZE website](#), which now offers updated AZE data through a searchable global map of AZE sites. The AZE website is more user-friendly, and includes technical resources and sections aimed at governments and IFIs. By means of this project, and following two extensive online consultation exercises in 2017, AZE sites were systematically identified and updated for the 6 species groups already included in the 2010 AZE dataset, and for 11 new groups, bringing the total of comprehensively assessed taxonomic groups to 17.

217. Importantly, the project also facilitated the integration of AZE site identification and visualisation into the KBA mechanism. This included integration within the [World Database on KBAs](#), and

¹³ The question pertaining to Core Indicator Targets is excluded as it does not apply in this case.

consequently, the [IBAT](#) platform, where KBA /AZE sites can be combined with other spatial data layers (e.g. protected areas). This means that all 853 AZE sites now identified (triggered by 1,483 AZE species) have been verified by the KBA Technical Working Group to confirm that they meet the [Global Standard for the Identification of KBAs](#), and can be viewed as a subset of KBAs through several credible platforms. Integration with IBAT enables access to spatial AZE data by industry, IFIs, governments and other stakeholders interested in screening for the presence of AZE sites and other KBAs to reduce risk of impacts from development projects. Completing this process brought with it resistance from some conservation organisations and research groups when certain species, upon revision, were re-classified and downgraded to a less threatened category. If such species no longer act as AZE trigger species, this could have consequences for site-level conservation efforts.

218. The project contemplated a number of [Knowledge Products/Events](#) aimed at increasing understanding of the AZE concept, its relevance and the tools available to use it. Outreach materials, datasets and tools developed through this project have helped to position AZE and formalize AZE sites as a sub-set of KBAs, which is also useful when looking to have stronger, clearer biodiversity targets, for the future implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and data quality assurance for IFIs and other IBAT subscribers. Species monitoring at all five project sites also generated fresh data on endangered species, which is often deficient in many countries, and provided an opportunity to update species lists and publish new research.

219. The section on [Communications and Public Awareness](#) (paragraphs **129-135**) is relevant here. This section explains how communications and awareness-raising were built into the project's design for both global and site-based interventions. The project complemented its more technical outputs (such as factsheets, guidelines, maps and gap analyses of AZE sites) with awareness-raising, outreach and advocacy activities (to share webinars, case-studies, and position statements at CBD meetings). Formal and informal education was promoted. A number of activities entailed science education in schools; local campaigns, learning and exchanges; and reaching out to global communities-of-practice. Undoubtedly, AZE helped to bring much-needed attention to particular species.

220. [Adaptive Management](#) actions took place within the PMT, involved country teams and consultations with the UNEP Task Manager when relevant. Refer to the section C "Nature of the External Context" (paragraphs **113-116**) for details on the issues faced that warranted adaptive management measures. For knowledge management purposes, lessons learnt were reviewed by the project team, together with the GSC, as part of the MTR. These lessons served to inform the design of the follow-up GEF-7 AZE project.

221. For [Lessons Learned](#), please refer to [chapter VI, section D, below](#). An additional lesson, highlighted by the MTR, refers to the lack of exchanges between national teams: "With regard to the exchange of learning and expertise, in particular, there is a significant opportunity for improvement. There seems to be limited communication among implementing groups located in the three countries that hold demonstration sites. This situation is unfortunate since there are several important topics (e.g., water quality as a strong perceived benefit among local communities, development of effective habitat management tools to reduce the impact of direct threats) that are relevant to more than one site. In this context, information sharing would be advantageous." It seems in practice, such exchanges were hampered by language and time-zone differences, and the project management divide between BirdLife and ABC.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues:	Satisfactory (Score: 4.44)
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VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

222. This section highlights the main strengths and weaknesses of the project (providing cross-referencing in brackets to supporting paragraphs in the report), answers the evaluation's Key Strategic Questions, and at the end, provides ratings for each evaluation criteria.

223. The project exhibited **many strengths with regards to Strategic Relevance** (see paragr. 98-108). It showed full alignment with UNEP and GEF-5 strategic priorities, as well as with global and national environmental priorities, especially those born from CBD commitments. It was responsive to a growing interest from IFIs in applying biodiversity safeguards as the first GEF-funded threatened species project to venture into the field of investment decision-making. By taking strategic advantage of relevant existing interventions and partnerships, such as with the SCBD, IUCN and UNEP-WCMC and the AZE member network, **strong enabling conditions for the project's policy and site-based work were built into the project's design**. This not only brought coherency to the project, but also added to its Efficiency and Sustainability.

224. The project faced **important external constraints**, that affected its execution but were nonetheless fittingly **addressed through adaptive management** (see paragr. 113-116). These factors had been identified as potential risks during the project design phase and related to community behaviour (Chile) and natural disasters (Brazil) affecting the project. Even though specific incidents put a strain on the project, the criterion **Nature of External Context** was rated as Favourable in light of the project's strong adaptive management and successful responses to these challenges.

225. Under **Effectiveness**, the project was found to be **extremely effective in delivering its expected Outputs and Outcomes** (see paragr. 118-123 and 142-150). A suite of site-, national- and global-level Outputs was produced that remains relevant and available to beneficiaries and partners, many of whom are continuing with the work initiated. In both its AZE site management and mainstreaming Components, the project generated a high number of quality Outputs that were directly relevant to Outcome achievement and the Project Goal, notably, to AZE conservation on-the-ground and globally. In most part, observed results could be directly attributed to the project, helped by the enabling conditions in place when it initiated.

226. Both **behaviour changes and policy changes** were made possible by the project, though in the policy Component, attribution of results was more evident in relation to mainstreaming AZE into IFI policies and standards, than into government plans and policies. In the AZE site management Component, the project can be attributed with improving the conservation status of AZE habitat at 5 sites through improved management effectiveness, threat reduction and/or enhanced legal protection. The site management improvements achieved at 7 out of 10 additional sites (without GEF funding) allude to a credible association with project efforts.

227. The project also **achieved upscaling and additional unplanned results that significantly raise its impact** or likelihood of impact (see paragr. 155-161). This was observed particularly in Brazil where two AZE federal decrees were enacted, and globally through CBD mechanisms. In the work with IFIs, the integration of AZE into the safeguard policies and environmental and social frameworks of IFIs was in itself a significant result, but was magnified by the fact that this included guidelines and standards aimed at **non-finance sectors**, specifically wind energy and mining companies, **and IFC's Performance Standard 6**, which is followed by **all Equator Principles Financial Institutions** (now tallying at 128). Therefore, the prospects of this project helping to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE (Project Goal) and contributing to the achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 globally through public and private sector actions (Intended Impact) are very high.

228. The main factor found to contribute to the project's Efficiency, making it a notable project strength, was its **strategic integration with ongoing initiatives and prior efforts**, both in the global arena and at the site-level (see paragr. 171-175). The project made sure to work through and with existing structures, processes and programmes to confer "value-for-money" to its interventions and achieve maximum results on a small budget. In the work aimed at CBD and IFI processes, BirdLife and ABC had identified appropriate entry points that could potentially lead to the desired policy changes.

229. At the site-level, behaviour change was possible through targeted and socially-sound interventions that took advantage of existing relationships and synergies with other ongoing or prior efforts. Despite challenging external events, this approach was efficient and led to Sustainability gains, as the project was able to generate lasting results that will carry forward beyond the end of the project. This is in line with the GEF's incremental reasoning and shows how the intervention was efficiently built on a solid co-financed baseline.

230. **Sustainability was found to be high at the global level, but varied widely between project countries** (see paragr. 191-210). In all cases (except Chile) institutional sustainability was the strongest. Sustainability was highest in Brazil, closely followed by Madagascar, and lowest in Chile where the AZE site conservation approach is still incipient.

231. In this project, there are numerous examples of stakeholder participation and collaboration occurring at the local community level, across national networks and in the global arena (see paragr. 136-139). Indeed, a good degree of **behaviour change can be attributed to the project's strong emphasis on Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation**. This factor contributed to change processes and evidently enriched the project's actions and reach, even in countries that received no GEF funding.

232. The two sectors that collaborated and coordinated most substantially were government and NGO partners, seen in both Brazil and Chile, where project and Ministry staff worked closely on project activities, including site-level management (Chile) and AZE integration into CBD processes (Brazil). In Madagascar, where government capacity remains an issue, inter-sectoral cooperation in protected area management was a means to achieve what the government alone lacks the resources to do. This helped to boost Country Ownership and Driven-ness (see paragr. 151-153) and the Sustainability of project results.

233. **Outreach activities and the spread of knowledge about AZE sites contributed positively** to Output availability and visibility, and to motivate change along the project's causal pathways (see paragr. 129-135). Several Outputs were intended to be communicated and useful for public awareness-raising, education, policy mainstreaming and implementation, and AZE site management. As part of its policy influencing and advocacy work, the project positioned AZE site conservation at key global events and platforms destined for businesses, governments and conservation NGOs (CBD meetings, high-profile business events, the NBSAP Forum and the IFC's annual "Community of Learning"). Thanks to this, a credible association can be established between the project's actions and the mainstreaming of AZE into NBSAPs and CBD National Reports, beyond the project countries.

234. **Some weaknesses were found** in the project's **Preparation and Readiness** in Chile (see paragr-176-177), where proprietors in Mehuin were not approached early enough to secure their willingness to take part in the project. This situation was compounded by the lack of an executing entity that could handle GEF funding on behalf of the government at project start-up. The resulting delays and later need for a no-cost extension reduced the project's Efficiency.

235. **Both strengths and minor weaknesses were observed under Monitoring and Reporting** (see paragr. 180-190). Project reporting requirements were all duly met, as were the majority of planned M&E tasks. Reports were well drafted, and technically-sound; activity monitoring by the PMT was particularly strong and result indicators were consistently tracked. The evidence base to support results monitoring, however, was less robust, making it difficult to verify certain results as part of this TE. Results monitoring was not disaggregated by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation, but made good use of GEF-5 Tracking Tools, although some gaps and inconsistencies were noted in their use.

236. The oversight of project implementation, which had a number of execution layers, was expected to rely on global and national Steering Committee structures but, in practice, relied mostly on the project team. The GSC, constrained by language barriers and time-zone differences, did not meet enough times to function as a steering committee, while in project countries, only Chile actually set up a National Project Steering Committee. These constitute missed opportunities for the committees, in particular the GSC, to provide feedback that supported results monitoring and adaptive management. From this, it seems that the intended institutional set-up (at design) was not practical or functional to project execution, which was nonetheless well steered thanks to the high execution capacity and political savviness of national and global partners, and UNEP's oversight role.

237. Project management was a complex endeavour, given the multi-level coordination required by this intervention. This said, **project management was found to be solid and efficient**, with global and national teams demonstrating effective coordination and adaptive management, as well as notable

conservation expertise. As a result, external constraints faced during implementation were adeptly addressed, and efficiency gains had by working with teams with strong project management skills and high technical solvency. These strengths contributed positively to the project's Effectiveness (see paragr. 154) and Efficiency (see paragr. 178).

238. Nevertheless, project management and supervision quality was affected in four ways: by a change of UNEP Task Manager in the project's inception period; by a recruitment gap between global project managers in 2017; by the sparse functioning of the project's various Steering Committees; and by a delay in the MTR, which took place in the project's final semester. These factors, combined with uneven knowledge of GEF reporting requirements across project partners and the lack of a comprehensive induction from UNEP, contributed to lessen the quality of financial reporting (affecting the rating for Financial Management - see paragr. 169) and are also linked to the weaknesses noted in the project's Monitoring and Reporting (see paragr. 179).

Key Strategic Questions

(a) What evidence is available that the project activities regarding creation of AZE Sites and improved management of protected areas have contributed to prevent species extinctions? To what extent are biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in demonstration sites?

239. The project's revised Goal was to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE. The evaluation found that the project made significant progress towards meeting this Goal. Project activities aimed at the improved management of protected areas and selected AZE sites were effective in helping to conserve critical AZE habitat. Measures taken at each site were a combination of three different strategies. The first was to focus on management effectiveness, using the GEF's Tracking Tool to guide the necessary improvements. The second was to increase the protection status of the sites, as achieved in Madagascar with the legal designation of Tsitongambarika Forest as a Protected Area, and in Brazil with the expansion of the Mata do Passarinho Private Reserve.

240. The third was to address threats and ecosystem degradation at all five sites through community involvement. This entailed fencing areas of AZE amphibian habitat in Chile to restrict access to ravines and help minimize impacts from illegal logging and cattle; restoring degraded areas of AZE habitat through reforestation campaigns and cacao planting in Brazil; and working with communities in Madagascar to introduce sustainable livelihood activities as alternatives to shifting agriculture and with this, halting deforestation in the project area. As a result of the project, AZE species monitoring has increased and data has revealed higher species densities, siting of individuals in new areas, as well as the presence of fungi affecting species health. Altogether, these actions serve to improve the conservation knowledge and status of targeted AZE sites, and with it, reduce the extinction risk of AZE species.

(b) What evidence is present to suggest that the project's interventions in mainstreaming conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites into the safeguard policies of key financial institutions, and Multilateral Development Banks have minimized the impact of development projects on AZE sites?

241. The project was able to mainstream the protection of AZE sites into the safeguard policies of key international financial institutions, such as Multilateral Development Banks, the IFC and Equator Principles Association. Doing so obligates these institutions and their members to screen investment projects for potential risks to areas classed as "Critical Habitat", which now recognize AZE sites, alongside UNESCO World Heritage sites, as the most critical of all. The IFC's Performance Standards Guidance Note 6 refers to AZE sites as "no-go" areas, unless the development projects concerned are specifically designed to contribute to the conservation of the area. It also states that "consultation with the relevant national and international organizations that designate these areas is required" and includes a reference to the AZE website.

242. The AZE Secretariat has continued to actively engage with IFC and the Equator Principles Association, even beyond the project, responding to queries (often derived from other financial institutions) and providing technical advice on measures that can be taken to avoid or reduce development project impacts in and around AZE sites, or even on cases that should not be approved. A growing number of national and international financial institutions are also subscribers to the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (www.ibat-alliance.org), which offers rapid visual screening for critical

biodiversity areas and species, and facilitates the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations, including AZE, into finance sector decisions.

(c) What evidence is available that the project activities have helped countries to mainstream AZE site conservation into their national biodiversity strategies?

243. Project activities to mainstream AZE conservation into national biodiversity strategies were directed firstly, at the three project countries, and secondly, more widely at CBD Parties. For this latter group particularly, the evidence base that project activities spurred the integration of AZE considerations into NBSAPs, CBD National Reports and other conservation strategies is weak, as the project had no GEF-funded interventions in those countries. Policy influencing with these 'non-project' countries was carried out on the global stage, using CBD processes and events, and virtual fora like the NBSAP Forum, to advocate for AZE site conservation and inform on the data and tools available to do so. Without an evidence trail or feedback on the ensuing internal processes, it is assumed that project activities made a substantive contribution to the mainstreaming of AZE into NBSAPs and other national CBD instruments in these countries.

244. With project countries, the baseline scenario was different in each case. Brazil had already integrated AZE into the country's NBSAP, but thanks to the project, went even further by mainstreaming AZE into two new federal regulations (Ordinances).. Brazil's NBSAP was also updated with new references to AZE sites and their importance, and to role of the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction. In Madagascar, AZE was successfully incorporated into the country's NBSAP and gained traction as a concept that couples well with protected area management and sub-national plans. Only in Chile was the mainstreaming target not achieved nationally, but was taken up at the local level.

(d) To what extent and in what ways is the Project considered an important initiative for the conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites, by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions?

245. Stakeholders consulted in this evaluation confirmed that the project was indeed important for the conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites. In all cases, the project was able to bring much-needed attention to particular species, and with it, their irreplaceable sites, for which direct action and attention to reduce threats was needed. The mainstreaming approach was important too, as it facilitated the understanding that most of the needs for AZE conservation can readily be taken up in existing conservation policies and strategies, including those for protected areas. The project made good use of the links between species and habitat protection, motivating local communities to take up conservation through education campaigns, festivals and actions that local stakeholders viewed as beneficial – for instance, reforestation of degraded areas or ecotourism activities.

246. The project was also important for leveraging additional financial resources for AZE site conservation, through fundraising efforts. For governments, the initiative was important in that it allowed the provision of new information and data, such as country-specific AZE maps, AZE species lists and studies, and information on forest cover, useful for planning, decision-making and monitoring trends. It also allowed the AZE concept to be understood, adopted and used for priority-setting. Likewise with IFIs that mainstreamed AZE into their safeguard policies and are already putting their new guidelines into practice, using AZE global datasets to avert further threats to AZE sites.

(e) What potential follow up initiatives would be needed to sustain the Project's impact, replicate and upscale this experience?

247. Through the upcoming GEF-7 AZE project, the current project's approach will be replicated and upscaled to address threats at a larger number of AZE sites and in new project countries. The mainstreaming approach will also continue, and be expanded, seeking this time to integrate AZE site conservation into: a) the government policies and regulations of project countries; b) climate mitigation and adaptation actions and climate resilience strategies and policies at the national and global levels; c) industry policies and standards, and d) the policies and operational approaches of a further set of financial institutions (including local, regional and national banks and investors).

248. In order to sustain the project's initial impact in Mehuin, this AZE site is again included in the cohort of Chilean sites in the GEF-7 AZE project, thus bringing much-needed funding to implement the area's community-driven Management Plan. At all new sites, conservation actions that address local needs and include sustainable livelihood options have a greater likelihood of success. Biodiversity threats can be abated by different means but in all cases, positive community involvement, that is, one that

mobilizes and benefits key groups (women's associations, school children, park rangers, landowners, etc.) can bring lasting behavioural and environmental changes, and build social capital. This approach will be replicated in the new GEF-7 AZE project, and will include the testing of "Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures" as a novel conservation approach.

249. For the new project, ensuring the provision of high quality spatial AZE data will become a key priority. If the experience of using AZE data to guide business and finance decisions is to be successfully replicated, and uptake of AZE achieved across more private sector actors, special attention will need to be paid to spatial data quality and the applicability of AZE maps under various investment scenarios. To further upscale the current experience, and considering that the adoption of new post-2020 indicators and targets could soon become a global driver, collaborations with universities and species research groups could also be sought, in benefit of site-based interventions, as an avenue for greater stakeholder participation and a means to mobilize AZE data.

(f) To what extent was UNEP able to facilitate the integration of AZE priorities within NBSAPs through the NBSAP forum and through the specific NBSAP revision projects for which UNEP currently serves as the GEF Implementing Agency (global project titled "Support to GEF Eligible Countries for achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 17 through a globally guided NBSAPs update process) as a result of this project?

250. The NBSAP revision projects for which UNEP was the GEF Implementing Agency were not directly used to facilitate the integration of AZE priorities into NBSAPs. Instead, the NBSAP Forum served as a channel through which the project team was able to share materials on AZE and explain how AZE sites, as a subset of KBAs, could be integrated into NBSAPs to achieve Aichi Targets and CBD reporting requirements. BirdLife International is a contributing partner to the NBSAP Forum, and collaborates regularly with UNEP-WCMC, one of the Forum's host agencies.

Summary of project findings and ratings

251. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and findings discussed in Chapter 0. Overall, the project demonstrates a rating of **'Satisfactory'** obtained through a score of 5.02.

Table 11. Summary of project findings and ratings

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Proven strategic relevance and coherence	HS
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Strongly aligned with the 'Ecosystem Management' Sub-programme of UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2017.	S
2. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner strategic priorities	Strongly aligned to GEF-5 programming priorities under the Biodiversity Focal Area.	HS
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Strongly responsive to global priorities for reducing species extinction rates (Aichi Targets) and to national priorities for CBD implementation and protected area management.	HS
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	High complementarity and strategic integration with prior efforts and ongoing initiatives that brought efficiency and sustainability gains.	S
Quality of Project Design	Project design was technically-sound. Theory of Change was lacking. Through re-construction exercise, edits were made and new result layers added to the results framework.	S
Nature of External Context	The external context was challenging but favourable.	F
Effectiveness	Very effective in achieving results	HS
1. Availability of outputs	Outputs were high quality and remain available, in place, or in use today.	S
2. Achievement of project outcomes	The majority of Outcomes were achieved, some even exceeded.	S
3. Likelihood of impact	Progress made towards the Project Goal. High likelihood of impact	HL
Financial Management	Gaps in financial files	MS
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	UNEP policies and procedures were followed	S
2. Completeness of project financial information	Financial information showed gaps and inconsistencies linked to country sub-agreements and sub-contractors was comprehensive, yet gaps existed intra-Divisionally.	MU

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	Communications were good, mostly between UNEP Task Manager and fund management staff.	S
Efficiency	Project design was inherently efficient. Some efficiency was lost to implementation delays.	S
Monitoring and Reporting	M&E was well designed but not fully followed through	S
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	M&E activities well planned, with clear Indicator targets available for monitoring. Data collection and means of verification not systemised.	MS
2. Monitoring of project implementation	Activities monitoring was strong; results monitoring was done well but over-reliant on narratives without an evidence base (means of verification). Global Steering Committee did not play a significant role in results monitoring or reporting.	MS
3. Project reporting	Good quality reporting and use of GEF Tracking Tools, though with some inconsistencies /gaps. No data disaggregated by gender or vulnerable /marginalized groups was collected. Project management was solid, with minor issues relating to reporting requirements (especially those of country partners).	S
Sustainability	Substantive sustainability factors exist	L
1. Socio-political sustainability	Political interest and commitment are relatively high in Brazil and Madagascar, and moderate in Chile, but may shift with government changes. Locally and globally, there are good signs of socio-political sustainability	L
2. Financial sustainability	Financial dependency is high but new financial flows secured through fundraising, income generating activities and private sector partners.	L
3. Institutional sustainability	Was strong in Brazil and Madagascar (much less so in Chile) and with IFIs and the CBD, due to AZE mainstreaming achievements.	L
Factors Affecting Performance	Lessons learnt can be drawn from these performance factors	S
1. Preparation and readiness	Better preparedness in Chile could have reduced start-up delays for better efficiency.	MU
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Both strengths and weaknesses observed. Multilayer coordination was a challenge, as was staff turnover. MTR was carried out late.	MS
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Effective participation and collaboration occurred locally, nationally and globally, and involving different sectors (government, NGOs, private sector and academia). Contributed to Country ownership and Sustainability.	S
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Project worked with marginalised and indigenous communities and carried out gender-responsive conservation actions.	S
5. Environmental and social safeguards	No safeguards were triggered; the intervention was deemed low risk, even though in practice, risk management was warranted. Was the basis of the work with IFI safeguards and industry standards.	S
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Was high in Brazil and Madagascar, and incipient in Chile, due to prior experience and uptake of AZE in the first two countries.	MS
7. Communication and public awareness	Outreach activities in some countries served to raise awareness of biodiversity issues and increase buy-in to the 6NR process. In those countries, this factor was mutually reinforcing with stakeholder engagement and country ownership. Overall, knowledge management was a key feature of the project that facilitated the flow of data from national to global and vice versa.	HS
Overall Project Performance Rating		S

B. Lessons learned

252. Lessons learnt were drawn from the project's MTR and discussed at the GSC's closing meeting; a number of these were taken into account during the preparation of the GEF-7 AZE proposal and will not be reiterated in this TE.

Lesson Learned #1:	Collaborative arrangements between government and NGOs for protected area management or species conservation can be effective means to achieve both conservation and development objectives, and channel private sector
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	resources, in countries or localities where government capacities are insufficient.
Context/comment:	<p>The project offered an opportunity to showcase how collaboration between NGOs and governments can be effective for area-based management and species conservation.</p> <p>The work of Asity with forest-dependent communities in Madagascar is framed within a protected area co-management arrangement that also contemplates the administering of private sector funding from biodiversity offsets. The role of Fundacao Biodiversitas is relevant to the government of Brazil, not only as the manager of a private reserve (Mata do Passarinho) and receptor of biodiversity offset funding, but also as the coordinator of BAZE, the country's main provider of AZE species data (including spatial data) and a key actor in Brazil's environmental institutionalality.</p> <p>These types of collaborations require trust between the public and civil sectors, and could provide model learning opportunities for other countries.</p>

Lesson Learned #2:	Linking species protection with ecosystem conservation, and vice versa, is a coherent way to maximise resources and consistency with national policies and priorities, and local conservation plans and approaches.
Context/comment:	<p>Species and habitat are inexorably linked. Yet habitats are more relatable to land management issues than individual species, so AZE and the protection of threatened species are best integrated into the management of the wider landscape, rather than treated in isolation.</p> <p>AZE conservation becomes more effective, and sustainable if the emphasis is shifted towards whole-ecosystem strategies and management plans, treating AZE species (and strategies to conserve them) as means to attract funding to the area's critical AZE habitats and as components of these wider strategies and plans (e.g. in the context of the management of protected areas and their surrounding landscapes).</p> <p>The health of the ecosystem can be a proxy indicator for the conservation status of a species, when species data is not available. Consistently recording how and which habitats are being conserved can be key when species populations cannot be monitored.</p>

Lesson Learned #3:	Ensuring a common understanding of project requirements among all executing partners - especially with respect to reporting - is more advantageous if done during the project design or inception phases, as it helps to establish enabling conditions for more efficient project execution and impactful reporting.
Context/comment:	<p>Chile's preparedness and readiness for execution was lower than the other two countries, as no local executing entity had been identified to manage Chile's GEF grant, and local community members whose lands harboured AZE species were not consulted early enough. These oversights delayed project activities and were the main reason behind the need for a no-cost extension.</p> <p>Reporting requirements, and the collecting of evidence to support results monitoring, were not equally explained to all executing partners at project inception. While the reporting responsibilities of BirdLife as the main Executing Agency may have been clear, they were less so with ABC and other executing partners, even though ABC was in charge of the oversight of two project countries. Good practice would have been for UNEP to provide an induction, for all executing partners, on how to report on GEF expenditures, co-financing and technical progress, including human rights and gender issues, and the role of each in the collection of evidence ("means of verification" of project results).</p>

Lesson Learned #4:	Given the challenges entailed in attributing policy achievements to specific conservation projects, and demonstrating the avoidance of species extinctions on-the-ground, it is worth making provisions to build a strong and systematic evidence base for project results that combines primary and secondary sources of information.
Context/comment:	<p>The attribution of results to project efforts can be hampered by the lack of documented evidence, or a communications trail, that could demonstrate how project efforts were conducive to the results achieved. Such evidence is especially relevant when results are only partially achieved (e.g. AZE is not mainstreamed into an NBSAP but is nonetheless being used by government agencies in priority-setting exercises) or when other forces are at play that could also be contributing to the same results.</p> <p>Evidence in the form of official exchanges (letters, emails), meeting minutes, fieldtrip reports, interviews or quotes from key stakeholders /beneficiaries, and photographs, can make the difference between fully attributing the project's results to its actions, and only being able to establish a credible association.</p> <p>In this case, such evidence would have given sustenance to parts of the TOC where causal linkages were weakest (in particular, the pathways involving Output 1.4; and the links from Output 2.6 to Output 2.7 and onto Direct Outcome 2.ii). It would also have given visibility to the project's more social dimensions, and its work with women and marginalised groups, and better supported the claim that community buy-in was crucial for achieving conservation successes.</p>

Lesson Learned #5:	Global project management and oversight structures need to be efficient, well nested and adequately funded in order to be meaningful to the project and bring value addition to its execution.
Context/comment:	<p>Being in charge of project management and coordination, in addition to having a prominent technical role, was an onerous task for BirdLife. Having one Global Project Manager cover all responsibilities, including oversight of global, national and site-level results, was a challenge. It is crucial to have in place a global team that is fit-for-purpose, and this means ensuring sufficient human resources for global project coordination as well as oversight of partner /country execution, in addition to technical support, advocacy and communications.</p> <p>While execution arrangements that aligned with BirdLife's and ABC's existing institutional programmes had built-in efficiency, they did result in a geographical divide that made integration across country teams and project reporting challenging. The main Executing Agency should collate all project files, especially those related to sub-contractual requirements, and maintain a global perspective on project delivery for an integrated narrative on all aspects of the project (not only those in their region of choice).</p> <p>In the absence of funding for in-person meetings, the Global Steering Committee met scarcely, and could have functioned better had it met at inception and used email exchanges to overcome language and time-zone barriers. A clearer role for Committee members in advocating for AZE policy mainstreaming in project countries, CBD processes, and investment decisions, would have been helpful as well as strategic.</p> <p>Likewise with National Project Steering Committees, which seem to have worked best when nested into existing structures, and for which the role needs to combine both the oversight of project management and the achievement of project objectives.</p>

C. Recommendations

253. The Recommendations presented here take into account the fact that a follow-up GEF-7 AZE intervention has already been designed and approved, and is due to begin implementation in Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Madagascar in the first semester of 2022. These Recommendations therefore intend to be relevant to this new effort and avoid pinpointing aspects that this new project has already taken care of. All Recommendations are directed at the GEF-7 global project team comprising ABC, BirdLife and UNEP, and are intended to feed into the project's inception period, which is an important 'check-point' for planning and reviewing the project's design and execution arrangements.

<p>Recommendation #1:</p>	<p>Place special emphasis on M&E practice in the GEF-7 AZE project, in order to lay the foundations for clear attribution of results, internal consistency, transparency in adaptive management decisions, and feedback loops and learning.</p> <p>The new project would benefit from a stronger 'M&E discipline' applied across all project countries, sites and executing partners. The following are key aspects to consider at inception:</p> <p>1. Prepare a Monitoring Plan that specifies:</p> <p>(i) the needs associated with results monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - baselines that lack data and need inputs from particular partners in the first months of project execution. - which information and 'means of verification' are needed to report on the project's Outcome indicators, GEF Core Indicators, Gender Action indicators, Indigenous Peoples Plan indicators, and indicators in the Grievance Redressal Mechanism. (See related POINT 3) - the responsibilities of each partner in collecting and compiling the above information and 'means of verification'. - use a common filing platform that all executing partners can access and use to store project files and information. <p>(ii) the M&E exercises expected to take place at inception, mid-term (MTR) and project-end (TE), so as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have greater clarity in M&E tasks among project partners, especially the contributions expected from them (e.g. obtaining inputs from beneficiaries). - understand the TOC as a "living document" that can be reviewed and revised (in particular the assumptions and drivers) and changes to the Results Framework justified, if needed (and duly recorded). - derive learning opportunities that can help to formulate lessons learnt, or used to guide shifts in project methodologies, which may be linked to a revised TOC. <p>2. Considering language and time-zone differences, set realistic expectations for how the <u>Global Project Steering Committee</u> will function and adaptive management decisions be accounted for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use electronic means to take decisions, and not only rely on actual Committee meetings. - use emails trails to record approvals or consent among Committee members, when decisions (especially adaptive management decisions) are taken via email. - ensure adaptive management decisions taken by agreement between the UNEP Task Manager and the global executing team, or the global team and country teams, are reflected in minutes or notes exchanged via email.
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	<p>- use the opportunity of the MTR to adjust and corroborate the Results Framework and TOC, to bring internal consistency to the project and its reporting, and provide an instance for learning.</p> <p>3. Identify practical and innovative ways to <u>obtain evidence for attribution of results and feedback from beneficiaries</u> on project performance.</p> <p>- story-telling and web-stories can be a good way to answer to specific M&E requirements while also "show-casing" the social elements of the project (e.g., working with women and indigenous peoples, education programmes, etc.)</p> <p>- in support of M&E requirements outlined in POINT 1, greater use should be made of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > photographic material as a means to record progress or change, social mobilization events and important meetings > interviews or quotes from key stakeholders /beneficiaries as a means to obtain feedback and corroborate results. > meeting minutes or notes (that identify attendants) as a clear 'means of verification' for decisions taken, information shared, and feedback, requests or suggestions received. <p>- at large meetings where a wifi connexion is available and attendants have a computer and/or smartphone, consider conducting live polls during presentations as a means to gather instant feedback and gauge levels of awareness or interest.</p>
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project's main weaknesses related to Monitoring and Reporting, Financial Management (specifically Completeness of project financial information) and Preparation and Readiness. For this reason, this Recommendation proposes to pay greater attention to M&E requirements during the project inception phase.
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Project-level
Responsibility:	Global project execution team (ABC and BirdLife), and national execution teams, supported by UNEP.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 6 months of the inception workshop.

Recommendation #2:	Integrate and report on social elements more distinctly in site-based interventions in the GEF-7 AZE project, considering them as factors of success (TOC drivers and assumptions) and developing a narrative for how the project benefitted indigenous, gender and marginalization issues and this in turn favoured conservation outcomes.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	<p>Social aspects proved to be critical factors of success at the site-level; they can represent either risks or drivers of change and make the difference between failed and achieved results. They should therefore be monitored to ensure future project performance stays on track.</p> <p>The drivers described in the TOC of the GEF-7 AZE project should also consider socially-motivated opportunities that can favour the project and be taken advantage of; some will be local, others national. Community-run events, fora, festivals, local associations and schools are good entry points for the project at the site-level and can be critical to mobilize support.</p>

	<p>Capturing how the social dimension plays a role in biodiversity protection can also enhance an intervention's replication potential and offer lessons on key success factors. The MTR highlights the importance of social issues and early exchanges with local stakeholders and recommends to "incorporate insight from behaviour change science to address threats and guide marketing and communication efforts".</p> <p>One way to do this could be through "Pride" campaigns, such as those promoted by AZE member, Rare Conservation. The experience with school children in Chile mirrored the "Pride" methodology and was similarly motivating. Project teams are encouraged to either seek collaborations with Rare, or learn about the benefits of carrying "Pride" campaigns for the purpose of species conservation.</p>
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project-level
Responsibility:	Global project execution team (ABC and BirdLife), and national execution teams
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 12 months of the inception workshop

Recommendation #3:	Render co-finance tracking a meaningful exercise in the GEF-7 AZE project, by seeking firstly, a common understanding of co-finance sources and their relevance to the project and its reporting, and secondly, the means to track which results/Outcome Indicators the co-funding contributes towards.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	<p>Co-finance accounting should be a meaningful exercise, and ideally, trackable, having first agreed where it will come from, what shape it will take, what results it contributes to and who will report on it. Co-finance commitments at project approval need to be followed through with co-finance reports signed by each institution concerned. If a co-financing institution so decides, this reporting could be <u>formally delegated</u> to an executing partner, to report on their behalf, in line with an agreed budget (co-finance breakdown) and reporting approach (e.g. annual prorating).</p> <p>Significant differences were found in the way co-financing was reported by contributing partners. Making co-finance contributions visible has two beneficial aspects: One, it can help to develop a narrative that reflects the incremental nature of the GEF investment and the sustainability of project results, and portray a clearer picture of which co-financier supports which results; and two, it could serve to highlight the strengths of individual co-financiers, especially when these involve the private sector and landowners, through biodiversity offsets, and land donations or other payments and donations. Of particular interest are cases that can be counted as additional co-finance.</p>
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project-level
Responsibility:	UNEP and global project execution team (ABC and BirdLife).
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 6 months of the inception workshop

Annex I. COMPARATIVE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Comparative Results Framework and justification for reformulation of results statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
LONG TERM IMPACT		
<p>DEVELOPMENT /PROJECT GOAL: To contribute to the global achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 by improving the conservation status of AZE listed species.</p>	<p>INTENDED IMPACT: To achieve CBD Aichi Target 12 globally through public and private sector actions. PROJECT GOAL: To prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE.</p>	<p>A switch between the Project Goal and Project Objective is proposed, as the Goal better expresses a higher-order result and the Objective the intention of the project. With this, there is also a better match between the Objective and its indicator.</p>
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
	<p>INTERMEDIATE STATE: Improved conservation status of at least 17 AZE species at a total of five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar</p>	<p>This result statement was originally part of Outcome 1.1 but seems difficult to demonstrate in 3 years and more attainable beyond the project period. It is therefore proposed as an intermediate state that follows from improving AZE habitat conservation.</p>
PROJECT OBJECTIVE		
<p>Project Objective: To prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the AZE.</p>	<p>PROJECT OBJECTIVE: To contribute to the global achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 by improving the conservation status of AZE listed species.</p>	<p>A switch between the Project Goal and Project Objective is proposed – see above.</p>
OUTCOMES (COMPONENT 1)		
<p>Outcome 1.1. Creation and improved management effectiveness of protected areas covering at least 160,000 ha of AZE sites, with improved conservation status of at least 17 AZE species at a total of five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar and at an additional 10 sites globally.</p>	<p>PROJECT OUTCOME 1: AZE habitat conservation is strengthened at five project sites and 10 additional sites covering at least 160,000 ha in total. Direct Outcome 1.i: Management effectiveness of protected areas is improved covering at least 40,000 ha at five AZE sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar, and at least 120,000 ha at an additional 10 sites globally.</p>	<p>The original Outcome 1.1 is being modified to: (a) exclude the reference to “improved conservation status of at least 17 AZE species” (see ‘Intermediate State’ above); (b) introduce Direct Outcomes as a new result layer (derived from the uptake of Outputs) that, combined, achieve a Project Outcome; and (c) better distinguish between results at the five project sites and those at the 10 additional sites (in non-project funded countries).</p>

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
	<p>Direct Outcome 1.ii: Conservation action and community support lead to progress in sustainably addressing threats at the five AZE sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar.</p> <p>Direct Outcome 1.iii: Area of the five AZE sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar under legal protection is increased.</p>	<p>The Direct Outcomes proposed correspond well with the indicators for the original Outcome. The numbering does not correlate with Output numbering, as the causal pathways that lead to these Direct Outcomes are interlinked.</p>
OUTPUTS		
<p>Output 1.1.1. Habitat conservation for <i>Merulaxis stresemanni</i> in Bandeiras, Brazil, strengthened through improved forest protection and restoration with community support to sustain long-term conservation.</p>	<p>Output 1.1: Improved forest protection and restoration with community support to sustain long-term conservation at the Mata do Passarinho Private Reserve, <u>Brazil</u>.</p>	<p>Each of these high-level Outputs (1.1.1 to 1.1.3) can in effect be broken down into a number of sub-Outputs (or specific deliverables). This is avoided in order not to over-complicate the TOC reconstruction exercise. Many of these sub-Outputs are in fact described as Activities in the project workplan.</p>
<p>Output 1.1.2. Chile: at Isla Mocha Reserve for <i>Eupsophus insularis</i> and at Mehuin 1 and Mehuin 2 for <i>Eupsophus migueli</i> and <i>Insuetophrynus acarpicus</i> respectively, habitat conservation enhanced through strengthened protection status and implementation of newly created or existing (Isla Mocha) management plans.</p>	<p>Output 1.2: Strengthened protection status and implementation of new or existing management plans at Isla Mocha Reserve and two Mehuin sites, <u>Chile</u>.</p>	
<p>Output 1.1.3. At Tsitongambarika, Madagascar, habitat of two plant and 11 newly-discovered frog and reptile species is enhanced through a co-managed protected area and the implementation of a management and financing plan with a private sector partner.</p>	<p>Output 1.3: Implementation of co-management arrangements, and a financing plan with a private sector partner, for the Tsitongambarika forest, <u>Madagascar</u>.</p>	
<p>Output 1.1.4. An additional 10 AZE sites covering a minimum of 120,000 ha will gain enhanced protection through additional projects, informed by progress at the three demonstration projects.</p>	<p>Output 1.4: Knowledge of AZE and successful approaches at the five project sites serve to enhance the management of 10 additional AZE sites <u>globally</u>, covering a minimum of 120,000 ha (in non-project countries).</p>	<p>The original Output read more like an outcome and is being revised to better describe what was behind gaining "enhanced protection" at 10 additional sites (in non-project countries).</p>
	<p>Output 1.5: New information and data on target AZE species at the five project sites available to inform national policy and conservation efforts at the five project sites (Brazil, Chile, Madagascar).</p>	<p>A revised Output is proposed to reflect the relevance of AZE species monitoring and ecological research in support of "AZE habitat conservation" (Project Outcome) at the five project sites and for national policies in project countries.</p>
OUTCOMES (COMPONENT 2)		

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
<p>Outcome 2.1. The conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites are mainstreamed into the safeguard policies of key financial institutions, such as Equator Principles Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks to minimize the impact of development projects on AZE sites.</p>	<p>PROJECT OUTCOME 2: The conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites are mainstreamed into government and finance sector policies and decision-making.</p>	<p>Please see above – <u>Outcome 1.1</u> – the same applies here (excepting point i).</p>
<p>Outcome 2.2. AZE site conservation is mainstreamed into national biodiversity strategies, in support of CBD targets.</p>	<p>Direct Outcome 2.i: Awareness of Equator Principles Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks of AZE and its data tools is improved for applying safeguards in financial sector investment screening.</p> <p>Direct Outcome 2.ii: Governments of 3 project and ≥ 9 non-project countries mainstream AZE species, sites and priorities in the review and implementation of NBSAPs, PoWPA Action Plans, CBD National Reports, and/or other relevant national plans or policies, in support of CBD targets.</p> <p>Direct Outcome 2.iii: AZE partnerships and national networks are strengthened and/or consolidated, and AZE members better able to support AZE conservation and mainstreaming into government and finance sector policies and decision-making.</p>	<p>In this case, Direct Outcome 2.iii has been added to accommodate the higher result elements of certain Outputs; while Direct Outcomes 2.i and ii derive directly from <u>Outcomes 2.1</u> and <u>2.2</u>.</p> <p>The TOC assumptions recognise that successful policy mainstreaming can be supported and advocated through the project but is not fully within its control.</p>
OUTPUTS		
<p>Output 2.1.1. Improved awareness of and accessibility to AZE data online for relevant decision-makers to facilitate mainstreaming, including updated global AZE site list and global site status assessment.</p>	<p>Output 2.1: Global online AZE data updated and completed to facilitate mainstreaming of AZE and relevant decision-making at national and international levels.</p>	<p>The original Output combined more than one result level; the higher result elements are now part of Direct Outcome 2.iii. This Output supports both financial sector safeguard policies and government policy processes (Direct Outcomes 2.i and ii).</p>
<p>Output 2.1.2. Technical guidance documents based on 2.1.1, to inform and support the incorporation of AZE species and site considerations into EIA and safeguard policies.</p>	<p>Output 2.2: Technical documents and guidance to inform and support the incorporation of AZE species and site considerations into national biodiversity plans and policies, and financial sector investment decisions.</p>	<p>The scope of this Output has been widened to make it relevant to both financial sector safeguard policies and government policy processes (Direct Outcomes 2.i and ii).</p>
<p>Output 2.1.3. Capacity of AZE members to partner with lending institutions strengthened and national AZE networks enhanced through outreach and training programs.</p>	<p>Output 2.3: Outreach and capacity building directed at AZE members to promote stronger engagement with international finance institutions.</p>	<p>The original Output combined more than one result level; the higher result elements are now part of Direct Outcome 2.iii.</p>
<p>Output 2.1.4. Staff in private financial institutions trained in use of AZE tools and data.</p>	<p>Output 2.4: Staff in international financial institutions informed on the use of AZE tools and data.</p>	<p>The only revisions are word changes: "international" replaces "private"; and "informed" replaces "trained".</p>
<p>Output 2.1.5. Synergies identified and AZE site conservation opportunities mainstreamed with</p>	<p>Output 2.5: Synergies and opportunities identified to further promote AZE conservation with other private sector entities and donors.</p>	<p>The scope of the original Output was unclear, so new wording is proposed based on the Activities planned for this Output.</p>

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
existing and planned donor/agency and private sector financing programs.		
Output 2.2.1. Development and implementation of at least three pilot National AZE Strategies (Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar) mainstreamed into NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans, and plans developed and adopted for long-term financing and sustainability.	Output 2.6: Development and implementation of at least three pilot National AZE Strategies (Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar) with plans for long-term sustainability.	This Output can represent an early step in policy mainstreaming and a stage towards Direct Outcome 2.ii and Project Outcome 2. This causal pathway is further supported by the choice of <u>Outcome 2.2</u> Indicators.
Output 2.2.2. Technical guidance documents (based on the strategies developed under 2.2.1) inform and support incorporation of AZE priorities in the development of further NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans globally.	Output 2.7: Communication materials and advocacy on AZE in order to influence the development and updating of further NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans <u>globally</u> (in non-project countries).	Given the changes made (above) to Output <u>2.1.2</u> , this revised Output no longer refers to "Technical guidance documents".
Output 2.2.3. Consolidated and strengthened national AZE partnerships use project outputs to support NBSAP and PoWPA processes, national CBD reporting and enhanced AZE site conservation through targeted capacity development and outreach programs.		This Output has now been elevated to Direct Outcome 2.iii.

Annex II. GEF BUDGET & EXPENDITURES

GEF expenditures (planned vs. actual) by UNEP budget line of GEF funds

		Original (planned) Budget (USD)	Final (actual) expenditures (USD)	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
PERSONNEL COMPONENT				
1100	Global policy manager	53 383	50 053	0,94
1101	Global safeguards officer	61 574	61 576	1,00
1102	Species conservation manager	9 921	10 920	1,10
1103	Science coordinator	7 692	15 385	2,00
1105	Information manager	29 231	29 232	1,00
1108	Conservation strategy advisor	10 015	10 016	1,00
1199	Sub-total	171 816	177 182	1,03
1600	Project Travel	24 000	20 133	0,84
1699	Sub-total	24 000	20 133	0,84
cost category total		195 816	197 315	1,01
SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT				
2001	AZE	363 283	363 463	1,00
2002	IUCN	101 000	101 048	1,00
2003	Develop WBDB to manage AZE data	25 000	31 608	1,26
2004	AZE site identification for new species	6 000	0	reallocated
2005	Brazil subcontract	400 973	400 973	1,00
2006	Chile subcontract	235 757	235 757	1,00
2007	Madagascar subcontract	403 893	403 936	1,00
2399	Sub-total	1 535 906	1 536 785	1,00
Component total		1 535 906	1 536 785	1,00
TRAINING COMPONENT				
3300	Meetings/Conferences (no per diem)	25 950	25 950	1,00
3399	Sub-total	25 950	25 950	1,00
cost category total		25 950	25 950	1,00
MISCELLANEOUS COMPONENT				
5201	Annual audits	16 000	15 294	0,96
5202	Final audit	8 000	5 891	0,74
5203	Mid-term review/evaluation	15 000	14 620	0,97
5204	Terminal evaluation consultancy	30 000	24 240	0,81
5299	Sub-total	69 000	60 045	0,87
5301	Project management cost (5%)	96 141	96 141	1,00
5302	Bank Charges	0	438	new item
5399	Sub-total	96 141	96 579	1,00
cost category total		165 141	156 624	0,95
TOTAL COST		1 922 813	1 916 673	1,00

Actual co-financing (cash and in-kind) for all contributing partners

From:	October 2015	In cash Co-finance		In-kind Co-finance		ALL Co-finance	
		US\$		US\$		US\$	
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
To:	June 2019						
BirdLife International		748 244	837 766	645 187	561 132	1 393 431	1 398 898
ABC		300 000	276 701	1 200 000	1 677 793	1 500 000	1 954 494
Asity MG		-	-	250 000	327 309	250 000	327 309
Biodiversitas BR		-	400 000	385 000	252 000	385 000	652 000
Rio Tinto		300 000	317 663	95 000	87 084	395 000	404 747
UNEP		-	-	200 000	280 000	200 000	280 000
Govt Brazil		-	13 400	300 000	336 659	300 000	350 059
Govt Chile - MMA		93 040	94 042	112 560	107 095	205 600	201 137
Govt Chile - CONAF		7 700	6 064	10 440	9 470	18 140	15 534
Govt Madagascar		-	-	150 000	150 000	150 000	150 000
		-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL COSTS		1 448 984	1 945 636	3 348 187	3 788 542	4 797 171	5 734 178

Financial assessment table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's/GEF's policies and procedures:		S	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	But gaps were noted
2. Completeness of project financial information:		MU	
Provision of <u>key documents</u> to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)			
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Consolidated and final co-finance reports available
B.	Revisions to the budget	No	No evidence.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Partial	Countersigned Project Cooperation Agreement available, without annexes.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Partial	Cash advance request files held by BirdLife and UNEP differed, and some had incomplete signatures.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Co-financing reports signed and submitted by most but not all partners
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	Consolidated final reports are available
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	Yes	Audits available
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	No	ABC lacked file management in line with its project management duties.
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		S	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		S	
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		S	
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.			Unknown
Contact/communication between Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during preparation of financial and progress reports			Unknown
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the evaluation process		S	
Overall rating		MS	

Annex III. People consulted during the Evaluation

#	Name	Location	Institution	Position / Role	Male/ Female	GSC	Interview
PROJECT TEAM (GLOBAL)							
1	Ersin Esen	Switzerland	UNEP	GEF Task Manager (Biodiversity portfolio)	M	✓	✓
2	Pooja Bhimjiani	Kenya	UNEP	Fund Management Officer	F		✓
3	George Saddimbah	Kenya	UNEP	Finance Assistant (at the time of the project)	M		✓
4	Noëlle Kümpel	UK	BirdLife Int.	Head of Policy (Global Project Manager)	F		✓
5	Melanie Heath	UK	BirdLife Int.	Director of Science, Policy and Information (project supervisor)	F		✓
6	Roger Safford	UK	BirdLife Int.	Senior Programme Manager	M		✓
7	Ian Burfield	UK	BirdLife Int.	Global Science Coordinator - Species	M		✓
8	Amy Upgren	USA	American Bird Conservancy	AZE Program Officer (Project Management Team)	F		✓
PROJECT COUNTRIES - GOVERNMENT PARTNERS							
9	Bianca Chaim-Mattos	Brazil	MMA	Environmental Analyst	F	✓	X
10	Ugo Vercillo	Brazil	MMA	Director of Conservation and Species Management Dept.	M		X
11	Charif Tala Gonzalez	Chile	MMA	Head of Species Conservation Dept	M	✓	✓
12	Leonardo Alarcon Olivares	Chile	MMA (Los Rios Region)	Natural Resources Officer, Los Rios Region	M		✓
13	Cristian Cornejo Moraga	Chile	MMA (Bio Bio Region)	Natural Resources Officer, Bio Bio Region	M		✓
14	Alberto Bordeu Schwarze	Chile	CONAF	Head of Protected Areas Dept., Bio Bio Region	M		✓
15	Paul Olivier Ralison	Madagascar	MEDD	General Director of Ecology	M	✓	X
16	Fara Mihanta Andriambelo	Madagascar	MEDD	Principal Natural Resources Officer	F		X
17	Sahobyivy Randriamahaleo	Madagascar	MEDD	Officer	M		X
PROJECT COUNTRIES - NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS							
18	Glaucia Drummond	Brazil	Fundacao Biodiversitas	General Superintendent - National Project Manager	F		✓
19	Gabriel Lobos	Chile	RECH	President of RECH (University of Chile)	M		✓
20	Montserrat Lara	Chile	RECH	National Project Manager	F		✓
21	Voninavoko Raminoarisoa	Madagascar	Asity Madagascar	Executive Director	F		✓
22	Andriamandranto Ravoahangy	Madagascar	Asity Madagascar	Forest Programme Coordinator	M		✓
OTHER							
23	Jane Nimpamy	Kenya	UNEP	GEF Task Manager - involved in NBSAP support projects	F		✓
24	Sarat Babu Gidda	Canada	CBD Secretariat	Programme Officer	M	✓	X
25	Patrick Gannon	Canada	CBD Secretariat	Biodiversity Officer	M		X
26	Lori Anne Conzo	USA	IFC	Global Biodiversity Lead	F		✓
27	Craig Hilton-Taylor	UK	IUCN	Head Red List Unit	M		✓
28	Janet Scott	UK	IUCN	Programme Officer	F		✓

Annex IV. Key documents consulted

PROJECT AT APPROVAL:

- PIF and PPG Request Document
- PPG documentation (workshop reports, agreed country workplans, PPG reports)
- GEF review sheet
- GEF-approved Medium-Sized Project proposal (GEF ID: 5201) – GEF and UNEP formats
- Appendices of project proposal, specifically:
 - Appendix 1: Budget by project components and UNEP budget lines
 - Appendix 2: Co-financing
 - Appendix 3: Incremental cost analysis
 - Appendix 4: Results Framework
 - Appendix 5: Workplan and timetable
 - Appendix 6: Key deliverables and benchmarks
 - Appendix 7: Costed M&E plan
 - Appendix 8: Summary of reporting requirements and responsibilities
 - Appendix 9: Decision-making flowcharts and organizational charts
 - Appendix 10: Terms of Reference
 - Appendix 11: Co-financing commitment letters from project partners
 - Appendix 12: Endorsement letters of GEF National Focal Points
 - Appendix 13: BirdLife International procurement policies and procedures (*not reviewed*)
 - Appendix 14: GEF BD1 (METT) and BD2 Tracking Tools
 - Appendix 15: Site Profiles
 - Appendix 16: Environmental and Social Checklists
 - Appendix 17: PPG Workshop Reports
 - Appendix 18: Supporting information on Protected Area Systems

PROJECT IN IMPLEMENTATION:

Contractual, planning and reporting documents

- Signed PCA
- Signed No-cost Extensions (2)
- Inception workshop documents (2015) - UNEP, BirdLife International and ABC
- Technical progress reports:
 - Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) (2016-2019)
 - Half-yearly Progress Reports (2015-2019)
- GEF expenditure reports (2016-2019)
- Annual co-finance reports - consolidated for all partners (2016-2019)
- Audit reports (2017-2019)
- Minutes of Global Steering Committee meetings (Feb 2017 and June 2019)
- Sub-contracts for global and national executing partners: ABC, IUCN, Fundacao Biodiversitas, Asity-Madagascar and RECH.
- Mid-Term Review (MTR) documentation (inception report, preliminary findings, final report)
- Completed GEF Tracking Tools
- UNEP terminal reporting:
 - Final Report
 - Final financial report and budget revision
 - Final co-finance reports (for each project partner and consolidated)
 - Equipment inventories and transfer letters

Output documents

- Technical outputs and documents for Brazil, Chile, Madagascar and IFIs (maps, workshop reports, factsheets, plans, studies, presentation, agendas)
- IFI capacity development programme
- IFI engagement strategy
- IFI safeguard policies (IFC, World Bank, Equator Principles)
- World Bank Group's EHS Wind Energy Guidelines
- IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining
- Press Releases
- AZE and KBA websites
- BirdLife, CBD and project partner websites
- UNEP web-story on project's work in [Chile](#)
- UNEP web-story and video on project's work in [Madagascar](#)
- Memorandum of Cooperation between AZE and CBD Secretariats
- CBD Notification on AZE: [SCBD/SSSF/SBG/PG/88220](#)
- Information paper to SBSTTA-22: [CBD/SBSTTA/22/INF/23](#)
- COP Decision [CBD/COP/DEC/14/1](#).
- Scientific publications on AZE species
- NBSAP Forum – [webinar](#) on AZE
- Brazil's NBSAP
- Madagascar's NBSAP
- Chile's NBSAP

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

- GEF-7 AZE project concept (GEF ID 10581)
- GEF-7 AZE project document
- [GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies](#)
- [GEF-5 Programming Document](#)
- [GEF Guidelines](#) on Project & Program Cycle Policy (2020 Update)
- [UNEP Medium-Term Strategy](#) 2014–2017
- [UNEP's Partnership Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Financial Rules and Regulations of the United Nations](#).
- [UNEP Gender Equality and the Environment Policy and Strategy](#) (2015)
- [UNEP Governing Council – Bali Strategic Plan](#) for Technology Support and Capacity-Building (2005)

Annex V. OUTCOME INDICATOR PERFORMANCE

COMPONENT 1

Project Outcome 1	AZE habitat conservation is strengthened at 5 project sites and 10 additional sites covering ≥ 160,000 ha.				
	End-of-Project Targets	Actual result	Target achievement		Note
Indicator 1.1.1: Improved management effectiveness, as seen by increased METT scores	Brazil. (Baseline 69%) Mid-term: 75% End-of-proj: 91%	Brazil. Mid-term: 78% End-of-proj: 81%	89%	Came close	
	Chile (IM): (Baseline 62%) Mid-term: 65% End-of-Proj: 70%	Chile (IM): Mid-term: 64% End-of-Proj: 70%	100%	Met	
	Chile (M1) End-of-Proj: baseline expected to double	Chile (M1) End-of-Proj: x1.56 (from 41% to 64%)	78%	Came close	1
	Chile (M2): End-of-Proj: baseline expected to double	Chile (M2): End-of-Proj: ?? (from 23% to ? %)	? %	Unreported	2
	Madagascar: (Baseline 58%) Mid-term: 65% End-of-Proj: 73%	Madagascar: Mid-term: 65% End-of-Proj: 77%	105.5%	Exceeded	
Indicator 1.1.2: Increased area of 5 target AZE sites under improved legal protection	Brazil: 1,041 ha as Private Reserve (RPPN) and CAR compliant	Brazil: 951 ha as Private Reserve (RPPN) but no info on CAR compliance	91.4%	Came close	3
	Chile: Isla Mocha declared National Park (2,905 ha)	Chile: National Park status not achieved for Isla Mocha. Technical dossier presented	50%	Lesson learnt	
	Chile (M1+M2): Participatory conservation (management) plan for Mehuin approved and under implementation	Chile (M1+M2): Plan approved and under initial implementation.	100%	Met	
	Madagascar: Protected Area status achieved (60,509 ha)	Madagascar: Protected Area status achieved (60,509 ha)	100%	Met	
Indicator 1.1.3: Measurable progress in addressing key threats at each AZE site	Brazil: 40,000 trees of 27 species planted and 40 ha of habitat restored in and surrounding Reserve	Brazil: Came close to 40,000 trees planted for restoration of 40 ha. Use of 27 native species reported. 50% success rate in reforestation	90%	Came close	4
	Chile (IM): Zones established within the protected area for exclusion of wood harvesting activities	Chile (IM): Map produced for CONAF to use in permitting for wood harvesting.	75%	Came close	

	Chile (M1+M2): Access to amphibian habitat restricted and impact from illegal logging and cattle minimized [revised target]	Chile (M1+M2): Access restricted across 8,1 ha of four streams with the presence of <i>E. migueli</i>	100%	Met	
	Madagascar: 35% reduction in deforestation rate in project area	Madagascar: 100% reduction in deforestation rate in project area	285%	Exceeded	5
Indicator 1.1.4: Improved conservation status achieved for 10 additional AZE sites covering a minimum of 120,000 ha, as seen by increased METT scores	Measurable improvements in conservation status achieved for 10 additional target AZE sites covering a minimum of 40,000 ha based on repeat METT scores	10 additional sites: 3 METT scores stay the same, 7 METT scores increase by 6% - 13%. Total coverage: almost 190,000 ha	70% show improvements in METT score. Area covered is 58% higher than target	Met	6

COMPONENT 2

Project Outcome 2		Conservation of threatened species and AZE site protection mainstreamed into government and finance sector policies and decisions.			
Mainstreaming AZE into IFI policy					
Outcome Indicators	End-of-Project Targets	Actual result	Target achievement		Note
Indicator 2.1.1: Number of comprehensively assessed taxonomic groups for which AZE sites systematically identified	15 taxonomic groups	17 taxonomic groups	113.3%	Exceeded	
Indicator 2.1.2: Number of mapped and documented AZE sites	750 sites	853 sites	113.7%	Exceeded	
Indicator 2.1.3: Number of visitors to website presenting site factsheets	100,000 visitors /year	> 50,000 visitors /year	50%	Lesson learnt	1
Indicator 2.1.4: Number of MDB and EPFI policies referring specifically to AZE following project guidance and consequent reviews of safeguard policies	10 policies	7 policies (6 + 101)	100%	Met	2
Indicator 2.1.5: Number of financial institutions engaging and working with AZE member staff to use tools, data and guidance, and/or making this available for borrowers' due diligence/initial screening processes	10 IFIs	30 IFIs	300%	Exceeded	3
Indicator 2.1.6: Number of AZE sites with conservation enhanced or threats averted by participating IFIs through avoidance, mitigation and/or compensation related to development project impacts	10 sites	> 8 named sites with threats averted	100%	Met	4
Mainstreaming AZE into government policy					
Outcome Indicators	End-of-Project Targets	Actual result	Target achievement		Note
Indicator 2.2.1: Number of endorsed and launched pilot national AZE Strategies in project countries	3 National AZE Strategies endorsed & being implemented	2 strategies (Brazil + Madagascar)	67%	Came close	5

<p>Indicator 2.2.2: Number of project countries including AZE site protection in NBSAPs/CBD National Reports, and/or PoWPA Action Plans, and other relevant national planning documents</p>	<p>3 project countries include AZE site protection in key documents</p>	<p>2 project countries (Brazil + Madagascar)</p>	<p>67%</p>	<p>Came close</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>Indicator 2.2.3: Number of [non-project] countries explicitly including AZE sites and species among strategic priorities in at least one of NBSAPs, CBD National Reports, and/or PoWPA Action Plans</p>	<p>9 countries with AZE referenced in at least one key document</p>	<p>16 countries</p>	<p>178%</p>	<p>Exceeded</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>Indicator 2.2.4: Number of countries with national AZE partnerships strengthened through AZE mini-workshops and national strategy development workshops</p>	<p>5 countries (mini-workshops + >2 national strategy workshops in 4-6 countries)</p>	<p>7 countries (6 mini-workshops + 1 national strategy workshop)</p>	<p>140%</p>	<p>Exceeded</p>	<p></p>

Annex VI. Brief CV of the evaluator

Name: Téa García-Huidobro C.

Profession	Biochemist
Nationality	Chilean / British
Country experience (professional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Europe</u>: Switzerland • <u>Americas</u>: Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Sep 1998–Aug 1999) Master of Science (MSc) in Environmental Technology • (Sep 1992–Aug 1995) Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Biochemistry

Short biography

Ms. Téa García-Huidobro, a biochemist, began her professional life as a researcher in molecular and cell biology. After obtaining a Masters in Environmental Management (Imperial College, London, 1999), she began working for the Government of Chile on sustainable natural resource management and has dedicated herself to environmental issues ever since. In her time with the Chilean Government, she focused on public policies, regulations and tools for biodiversity conservation and institutional capacity development. She widened her project management and oversight skills after joining the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Panama to manage a portfolio of Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded projects, mainly for Latin American and Caribbean countries. Téa was then Regional Programme Coordinator for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), where she continued to drive the conservation and sustainable development agenda from IUCN's Regional Office in Costa Rica. In 2017, she became an international consultant, specialising in project drafting, reporting, compilation analyses and independent evaluations. After a period at IUCN headquarters in Switzerland, in the temporary position of Special Advisor to the Acting Director General, she returned to consulting and is now undertaking external evaluations for UNEP's Evaluation Office.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Policy-making in biodiversity-related issues and under international conventions
- Multi-stakeholder governance, coordination and consultations
- Strategic and operational planning
- Portfolio management, oversight, and fundraising
- Analytical skills, quality control, capacity for synthesis

Selected assignments and experiences

Only independent international consultancies:

Dates	Location	Contractor	Position - Role	Description
Jul. 2021 – Mar. 2022	home-based	UNEP Evaluation Office	International consultant - <i>External Evaluator</i>	Terminal Evaluation of UNEP-GEF project in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar ("Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity"), executed by BirdLife International.
May – Dec. 2021	home-based	UNEP Evaluation Office	International consultant - <i>External Evaluator</i>	Terminal Evaluation of UNEP-GEF project in 73 countries ("Support to Eligible Parties to Produce the Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD"), executed by UNEP.

May – Aug. 2019	home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Compilation analysis</i>	Preparation of project closure documents that met donor requirements and provided an impact narrative for Ecosystem-based Adaptation interventions in six Mesoamerican countries.
Feb. – May 2019	Cuba & home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Project formulation</i>	Formulation of a GEF-funded project concept under GEF-7 for Cuba ("Strengthening synergies between conservation and livelihoods on the north-eastern coast") in Spanish and English.
Dec. 2018 – Apr. 2019	Guatemala & home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Project formulation</i>	Strategic advice, technical inputs and facilitation of consultations for the preparation of a GEF-7 project concept for Guatemala ("Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration").
Sep. 2018 – May 2019	El Salvador & home-based	UNEP Evaluation Office	International consultant - <i>External Evaluator</i>	Terminal Evaluation of UNEP-GEF project in El Salvador ("Contributing to the Safe Use of Biotechnology"), executed by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.
Jun. - Oct. 2018	home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Compilation analysis</i>	Preparation of 12 case studies on Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Governance for Adaptation, covering 7 transboundary pilot sites across 6 Mesoamerican countries (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico and Panama).
Feb. – Jul. 2018	Guatemala & home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Project formulation</i>	Strategic advice and technical review and revision of a project proposal to the Green Climate Fund ("Adaptation in the Guatemalan Highlands") with budgetary adjustments to raise cost-efficiency.
Aug. – Oct. 2017	home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Project formulation</i>	Preparation of a project concept for 6 countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) to present to the BMUB- Iki 2018 call.
Apr. – Jun. 2017	home-based	IUCN	International consultant - <i>Compilation analysis</i>	Preparation of the final Technical Overview and Completion Report for a project ("Governance, Forests and Markets") funded by DFID, spanning 5 Mesoamerican countries: Guatemala, Honduras Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.
Oct. 2005	Costa Rica + home-based *	Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock, Govt. of Costa Rica	International consultant - <i>External Reviewer</i>	Strategic review of the draft National Biosafety Framework of Costa Rica (regulatory policy and analysis), requested by the State Phytosanitary Service's Biotechnology Programme and facilitated through UNEP.

* home-based in Chile. All other references to home-based are in Costa Rica.

Annex VII. Evaluation TORs (without annexes)

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Project General Information

Table 1: Project Summary

GEF Project ID:	5201		
Implementing Agency:	UNEP	Executing Agency:	Birdlife International
Relevant SDG(s) and indicator(s):			
GEF Core Indicator Targets (identify these for projects approved prior to GEF-7)			
Sub-programme:	Ecosystem Management	Expected Accomplishment(s):	use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased" and " services and benefits derived from ecosystems are integrated with development planning and accounting, and the implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem related multilateral agreements"
UNEP approval date:	15 May 2015	Programme of Work (2014 – 2017) Output(s):	(a) (1) Methodologies, partnerships and tools to maintain or restore ecosystem services and integrate the ecosystem management approach with the conservation and management of ecosystems and output (c) (5) Synergies between tools, approaches and multilateral initiatives on biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster prevention identified and integrated with development planning, poverty reduction measures, strategic investment partnerships along with the ecosystem approach and national obligations for biodiversity related MEAS.
GEF approval date:	22 July 2015	Project type:	MSP
GEF Operational Programme #:		Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity
		GEF Strategic Priority:	BD1, BD2
Expected start date:	September 2015	Actual start date:	10 Oct 2015
Planned completion date:	30 Sept 2018	Actual operational completion date:	June 2019
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 6,719,984	Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 June 2019:	
GEF grant allocation:	USD 1,922,813	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 31st July 2019:	USD 1,877,820
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	-	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	
Expected Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 4,797,171	Secured Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 5,734,177
Date of first disbursement:		Planned date of financial closure:	
No. of formal project revisions:		Date of last approved project revision:	
No. of Steering Committee meetings:		Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: Next:
Mid-term Review (planned date):	Sept 2017	Mid-term Review (actual date):	May 2019

Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	April 2020	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	
Coverage - Countries:	Brazil, Chile and Madagascar	Coverage - Region(s):	Global
Dates of previous project phases:		Status of future project phases:	

Project Rationale

1. The Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) is a joint initiative of biodiversity conservation organizations around the world, aiming to prevent extinctions by identifying and safeguarding key sites, each one of which is the last remaining refuge of one or more Endangered or Critically Endangered species. These key sites are amongst the top priorities if global biodiversity loss is to be halted and reversed. In 2015, there were 587 AZE sites identified globally containing the entire populations of at least 920 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, conifers and reef-building corals. AZE sites, in addition to biodiversity conservation, also provide ecosystem service benefits for people disproportionate to their area, such as climate change mitigation, freshwater, the future "option value" of biodiversity and cultural services.
2. The key global policy areas for species and site conservation and sustainable management are included in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to which nearly all the world's countries are contracting parties. The principal instruments for planning the implementation of the Convention at national levels is through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPAs). As of 2015, 95%(184) Parties had developed NBSAPs in line with CBD and under Aichi Target 17, each party was to have developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.
3. In 2012, following a resolution in support of AZE, passed at the General Assembly of World Conservation Congress, members of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) requested CBD focal points to include a gap analysis of AZE sites in their NBSAPs. As a result, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AZE and CBD was signed to provide "assistance to CBD Parties with integrating the zero extinction target into national biodiversity strategies and action plans".
4. A lack of access to the data on AZE sites as well as other threats to the AZE sites and species worldwide – habitat loss caused by small scale deforestation, and the presence of invasive species, climate change impacts characterized by increased/decreased temperature, floods, droughts and more severe cyclones, pollution and overexploitation through uncontrolled hunting –resulted in the design of this project.
5. Although this is a global project, three countries – Brazil, Chile and Madagascar – were selected for intervention activities with specific outputs and outcomes detailed in the Section 3 below.
6. Brazil, is well documented, as a nation with high biodiversity with the highest number of endemic species on a global scale with six major terrestrial biomes (Amazon, Atlantic Forest, Caatinga, Pampas and Pantanal). She has been a global leader as the first signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the first nation to adopt AZE nationally as well as include AZE in its NBSAP.
7. Chile's biological diversity is important for various reasons including the existence of unique species, ecosystems and territories with high ecological value, presence of global biodiversity hotspots, available environmental services, high biological productivity and the important economic value of its natural resources as the basis of the country's development, according to its National Biodiversity Strategy 2003. At the time of the project's design, nine AZE sites had been identified but there were no national plans to address AZE site conservation as a whole.
8. Madagascar has been isolated from other land masses for 88 million year and as a result has an exceptional biological diversity and endemism the fauna and flora unequalled by any comparably sized landmass. Endemism reaches 98% or more in reptiles, amphibians and non-flying mammals, 80-90% in the flora (which is also highly species-rich) and 50% in birds; moreover, very many (even most) species are endemic to parts (often very small parts such as single mountains or catchments) of the island. There are also extensive freshwater wetlands with many endemic species, especially of fish. This biodiversity is highly threatened, placing Madagascar (together with associated oceanic archipelagoes) among the 'hottest' of the world's biodiversity hotspots, which are identified by a combination of rich biodiversity and high level of threat. Twenty one AZE sites have been identified for 28 species – very many endemic species are restricted to very small areas, and it has also long been clear that the threats to biodiversity are very severe. Accordingly, large numbers of highly threatened species are restricted to single sites (particularly among terrestrial or non-flying fauna and flora), and, as such, many of these are AZE trigger species. The AZE concept thus has the potential to contribute greatly to conservation in Madagascar.

Project Results Framework

9. The Project Development Goal was to contribute to the global achievement of CBD Aichi Target 12 by improving the conservation status of AZE listed species. The Project Objective was to prevent species extinctions at priority sites identified through the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE).
10. The project's intervention was organised into two components: i) Protected areas and AZE site-level management at globally important sites, and ii) Mainstreaming of AZE site conservation in national policy and regulatory frameworks, and into safeguard policies of financial institutions. **Error! Reference source not found.** below summarises the outcomes and outputs that were presented in the Prodoc (2015):

Table 2: Project Component, Outcomes and Output (Prodoc, 2015)

Component 1: Protected areas and AZE site-level management at globally important sites	
Outcome 1.1 Creation and improved management effectiveness of protected areas covering at least 160,000 ha of AZE	Output 1.1.1 Habitat conservation for <i>Merulaxis stresemanni</i> in Bandejas, Brazil, strengthened through improved forest protection and restoration with community support to sustain long-term conservation

sites, with improved conservation status of at least 27 AZE species at a total of five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar and at an additional 10 sites globally.	Output 1.1.2 Chile: at Isla Mocha Reserve, for <i>Eupsophus insularis</i> and at Mehuin 1 and Mehuin 2 for <i>Eupsophus migueli</i> and <i>Insuetophrynus acarpicus</i> respectively, habitat conservation enhanced through strengthened protection status and implementation of newly created or existing (Isla Mocha) management plans.
	Output 1.1.3. At Tsitongambarika, Madagascar, habitat of two plant and 11 newly-discovered frog and reptile species is enhanced through a co-managed protected area and the implementation of a management and financing plan with a private sector partner.
	Output 1.1.4 An additional 10 AZE sites covering a minimum of 120,000 ha will gain enhanced protection through additional projects, informed by progress at the three demonstration projects.
Component 2. Mainstreaming of AZE site conservation in national policy and regulatory frameworks, and into safeguard policies of financial institutions	
Outcome 2.1. The conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites are mainstreamed into the safeguard policies of key financial institutions such as Equator Principles Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks to minimize the impact of development projects on AZE sites.	Output 2.1.1. Improved awareness of and accessibility to AZE data online for relevant decision-makers to facilitate mainstreaming, including updated global AZE site list and global site status assessment.
	Output 2.1.2. Technical guidance documents based on 2.1.1, to inform and support the incorporation of AZE species and site considerations into EIA and safeguard policies.
	Output 2.1.3. Capacity of AZE members to partner with lending institutions strengthened and national AZE networks enhanced through outreach and training programs.
	Output 2.1.4. Staff in private financial institutions trained in use of AZE tools and data.
	Output 2.1.5. Synergies identified and AZE site conservation opportunities mainstreamed with existing and planned donor/agency and private sector financing programs.
Outcome 2.2: AZE site conservation is mainstreamed into national biodiversity strategies, in support of CBD targets.	Output 2.2.1. Development and implementation of at least three pilot National AZE Strategies (Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar) mainstreamed into NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans, and plans developed and adopted for long-term financing and sustainability.
	Output 2.2.2. Technical guidance documents (based on the strategies developed under 2.2.1) inform and support incorporation of AZE priorities in the development of further NBSAPs and PoWPA Action Plans globally.
	Output 2.2.3. Consolidated and strengthened national AZE partnerships use project outputs to support NBSAP and PoWPA processes, national CBD reporting and enhanced AZE site conservation through targeted capacity development and outreach programs.

Executing Arrangements

11. UNEP was the GEF Implementing Agency and was to provide project oversight to ensure that the project meets its objectives and achieves expected outcomes; monitor project progress and performance; ensure technical quality of products, outputs and deliverables, including disbursement of GEF funds. The UNEP Task Manager was also served as a member of the Global Steering Committee.
12. Birdlife International was the GEF Executing Agency and was in charge of implementation of project outputs and outcomes. BirdLife was to be in daily contact with AZE over implementation of outcomes 2.1 (led by BirdLife) and 2.2 (led by AZE), and subcontract as follows:
 - i. To Asity Madagascar (its Partner NGO in Madagascar), to cover output 1.1.3 (Madagascar site work) and Madagascar components of outcome 2.2 (mainstreaming AZE into national biodiversity plans).
 - ii. To AZE, to cover Outputs 1.1.1 (Brazil site work) and 1.1.2 (Chile site work) and outcome 2.2 (global elements of the work to mainstream AZE into national biodiversity plans);
 - iii. In turn, AZE was to subcontract its Partners in Brazil and Chile to implement outputs 1.1.1. and 1.1.2 under AZE's supervision.
 - iv. To IUCN, to cover elements of the data update (output 2.1.1) related to non-bird species.
13. Global Steering Committee (GSC): comprising of UNEP, the Brazil, Chile, Madagascar Government focal points, one or more members of the independent AZE steering committee, and a representative of the CBD Secretariat was to provide strategic guidance for the project. The GSC was to meet every 6 months with the Project Manager (Birdlife International) and one AZE staff member to attend the meetings, but not as members of the committee. The Project Management Team was to report to the GSC.
14. A Global Management Structure with nested National project Management arrangements was to be made up of senior staff members of Birdlife International and AZE staff, headed by the Project Manager, Birdlife's Head of Policy.
15. Implementation arrangements in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar were identified during the national consultation of the Project Preparation Grant phase. National Coordinators, supported by National Directors, in each country were to ensure alignment with other relevant projects in their countries, both those supported by GEF and also those by other donors. They were to establish contact with the relevant national and international institutions at the outset of the project and make periodic visits to report progress (without direct accountability) as appropriate. Nationally, annual work plans and

targets were to be proposed by the National Project Coordinator to their National Steering Committee, and when approved will be passed to the designated contact points in the (global) Project Management Team.

16. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the decision making and organisational flow chart of the project.

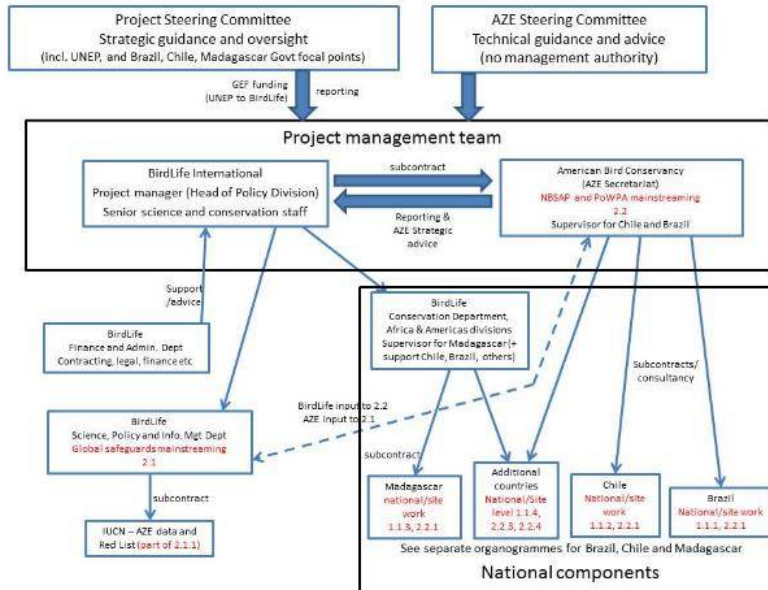


Figure 1: Global management structure (Prodoc, 2015)

Project Cost and Financing

17. The total estimated project cost at design was USD 6.7 million of which USD 1.9 million was requested from GEF, and USD 4.8 million was to be leveraged from co-finance, both cash and in-kind from Birdlife International, American Bird Conservancy (AZE Secretariat), Asity Madagascar, Fundaco Biodiversitas, Rio Tinto QMM, Governments of Madagascar, Brazil, Chile – NMA, Chile – CONAF, and UNEP.
18. The tables below shows the budget of the project broken down by GEF, co-finance and component:

Table 3: Project budget broken down by GEF fees, co-finance & components (adapted from the Prodoc, 2015)

Project Component	Budgeted (USD)	GEF	Budgeted Co-finance (USD)	Total Budget (USD)
Component 1: Protected areas and AZE site-level management at globally important sites	1,010,664		2,624,790	3,635,545
Component 2. Mainstreaming of AZE site conservation in national policy and regulatory frameworks, and into safeguard policies of financial institutions	816,008		1,932,809	2,748,817
Project Management	96,141		239,572	335,713
Total				

Implementation Issues

19. In 2018, the Global Steering Committee approved the following changes to the workplan and budget:
- i. Output 1.1.2 Mehuin, Chile: Remove land tenure study from work plan in response to community feedback;
 - ii. Output 1.1.2 Chile: Extend timeframe for delivery of selected activities from September 2018 to January 2019;
 - iii. Output 1.1.3 Madagascar: Extend time for evaluation of community-based organisations; and
 - iv. Output 2.1.1. Data update: Extend timeframe for database, site reassessment and website.
20. Two no cost extensions were granted. The first in April 2018, extending the project to 31 January 2019 and the second in 14 February 2019 extending the project's technical completion to 31 June 2019 and extending project's agreement to June 2020 to allow receipt of all terminal reporting and audit reporting.
21. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) that was concluded in May 2019 suggested three recommendations:
- i. Recommendation 1: Improve communication and collaboration among country teams. (accepted);
 - ii. Recommendation 2: Focus on sustainability and long-term goals (accepted); and
 - iii. Recommendation 3: Incorporate insight from behaviour change science (partially accepted).

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Objective of the Evaluation

22. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy¹⁴ and the UNEP Programme Manual¹⁵, the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, Birdlife International, American Bird Conservancy (ABC) (AZE Secretariat), Ministry of Environment (Brazil), Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (Chile), and Ministry of Environment, Ecology, Sea and Forests (Madagascar). Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially where a second phase of the project is being considered.

Key Evaluation Principles

23. Evaluation findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the evaluation report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.
24. **The "Why?" Question.** As this is a terminal evaluation and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the "Why?" question should be at the front of the consultants' minds all through the evaluation exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) needs to go beyond the assessment of "what" the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "why" the performance was as it was. This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.
25. **Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association:** In order to attribute any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for evaluations. Establishing the contribution made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A credible association between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.
26. **Communicating evaluation results.** A key aim of the evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant(s) should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all evaluation deliverables. Draft and final versions of the main evaluation report will be shared with key stakeholders by the Evaluation Manager. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant(s) will plan with the Evaluation Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some, or all, of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an evaluation brief or interactive presentation.

Key Strategic Questions

27. In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the evaluation will address the **strategic questions** listed below. These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution. Also included are five questions that are required when reporting in the GEF Portal and these must be addressed in the TE
- (a) **What evidence is available that the project activities regarding creation of AZE Sites and improved management of protected areas have contributed to prevent species extinctions? To what extent are biodiversity benefits being demonstrated in demonstration sites?**
 - (b) **What evidence is present to suggest that the project's interventions in mainstreaming conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites into the safeguard policies of key financial institutions, and Multilateral Development Banks have minimized the impact of development projects on AZE sites?**
 - (c) **What evidence is available that the project activities have helped countries to mainstream AZE site conservation into their national biodiversity strategies?**
 - (d) **To what extent and in what ways is the Project considered an important initiative for the conservation of threatened species and the protection of AZE sites, by the targeted communities, the Government partners, and the financial institutions?**
 - (e) **What potential follow up initiatives would be needed to sustain the Project's impact, replicate and upscale this experience?**

14 <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

15 <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

(f) To what extent was UNEP able to facilitate the integration of AZE priorities within NBSAPs through the NBSAP forum and through the specific NBSAP revision projects for which UNEP currently serves as the GEF Implementing Agency (global project titled "Support to GEF Eligible Countries for achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 17 through a globally guided NBSAPs update process) as a result of this project?

28. Address the questions required for the GEF Portal in the appropriate parts of the report and provide a **summary of the findings in the Conclusions section of the report:**

(g) Under Monitoring and Reporting/Monitoring of Project Implementation:

What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided).

(h) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation:

What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? (This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)

(i) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality:

What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? (This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)

(j) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Environmental and Social Safeguards:

What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed. (Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)

(k) Under Factors Affecting Performance/Communication and Public Awareness:

What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)

Evaluation Criteria

29. All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria and a link to a table for recording the ratings is provided in Annex 1). A weightings table will be provided in excel format (link provided in Annex 1) to support the determination of an overall project rating. The set of evaluation criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance. The evaluation consultant(s) can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

A. Strategic Relevance

30. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The evaluation will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy¹⁶ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

31. The evaluation should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building¹⁷ (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

ii. Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partner Strategic Priorities

32. Donor, including GEF, strategic priorities will vary across interventions. GEF priorities are specified in published programming priorities and focal area strategies. The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

33. The evaluation will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will be considered. Examples may include: national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no one behind.

iv. Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence¹⁸

34. An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization¹⁹, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The evaluation will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include UN Development Assistance Frameworks or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity
- Country ownership and driven-ness

B. Quality of Project Design

35. The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the evaluation inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established (www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/our-evaluation-approach/templates-and-tools). This overall Project Design Quality rating is entered in the final evaluation ratings table as item B. In the Main Evaluation Report a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage is included, while the complete Project Design Quality template is annexed in the Inception Report.

Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage):

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity

C. Nature of External Context

36. At evaluation inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval²⁰). This rating is entered in the final evaluation ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the evaluation consultant and Evaluation Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

¹⁶ UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

¹⁷ <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

¹⁸ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

¹⁹ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

²⁰ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management by the project team.

i. Availability of Outputs²¹

37. The evaluation will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and achieving milestones as per the project design document (Prodoc). Any formal modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the Prodoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the TOC. In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The evaluation will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision²²

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes²³

38. The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed²⁴ Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary. The evaluation should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity
- Communication and public awareness

iii. Likelihood of Impact

39. Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the evaluation will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project evaluations is outlined in a guidance note available on the Evaluation Office website, <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation> and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

40. The evaluation will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

41. The evaluation will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic²⁵ role or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change and as factors that are likely to contribute to longer term impact.

42. Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-term or broad-based changes. However, the evaluation will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partners.

²¹ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

²² In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP.

²³ Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behavior, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

²⁴ All submitted UNEP project documents are required to present a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an evaluation will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any formal changes made to the project design.

²⁵ A catalytic effect is one in which desired changes take place beyond the initial scope of a project (i.e. the take up of change is faster than initially expected or change is taken up in areas/sectors or by groups, outside the project's initial design). Scaling up refers to an initiative, or one of its components, being adopted on a much larger scale, but in a very similar context (e.g. a small scale, localized, pilot being adopted at a larger, perhaps national, scale). Replication refers more to approaches being repeated or lessons being explicitly applied in new/different contexts e.g. other geographic areas, different target groups etc. Effective replication typically requires some form of revision or adaptation to the new context. It is possible to replicate at either the same or a different scale.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of Project Management and Supervision (including adaptive management)
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

E. Financial Management

43. Financial management will be assessed under three themes: adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, completeness of financial information and communication between financial and project management staff. The evaluation will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output level and will be compared with the approved budget. The evaluation will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The evaluation will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The evaluation will assess the level of communication between the Project/Task Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision

F. Efficiency

44. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The evaluation will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The evaluation will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

45. The evaluation will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities²⁶ with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

46. The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. As management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to implementing parties.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness)
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders participation and cooperation

G. Monitoring and Reporting

47. The evaluation will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

48. Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART²⁷ results towards the provision of the project's outputs and achievement of project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the evaluation will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The evaluation will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for mid-term and terminal evaluation/review should be discussed if applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

49. The evaluation will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups (including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities) in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The evaluation should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

²⁶ Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

²⁷ SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

50. The performance at project **completion** against Core Indicator Targets should be reviewed. For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided.

iii. Project Reporting

51. UNEP has a centralised project information management system (Anubis) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Evaluation Consultant(s) by the Evaluation Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team (e.g. the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool for GEF-funded projects). The evaluation will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Quality of project management and supervision
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. disaggregated indicators and data)

H. Sustainability

52. Sustainability²⁸ is understood as the probability of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (ie. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

53. The evaluation will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the evaluation will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

54. Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new resource management approach. The evaluation will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where the project's outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

55. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the evaluation will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

Factors affecting this criterion may include:

- Stakeholders participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined)
- Communication and public awareness
- Country ownership and driven-ness

I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Evaluation Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above. Where the issues have not been addressed under other evaluation criteria, the consultant(s) will provide summary sections under the following headings.)

i. Preparation and Readiness

56. This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The evaluation will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the evaluation will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. (Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).

²⁸ As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

57. In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP.
58. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

59. Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the Executing Agency. The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups should be considered.
60. The progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program occurring since the MTR should be reviewed. (This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval).

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity

61. The evaluation will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the evaluation will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment²⁹.
62. In particular the evaluation will consider to what extent project-implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially those related to gender) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.
63. The **completed** gender-responsive measures and, **if applicable, actual** gender result areas should be reviewed. (This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent).

v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

64. UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, minimization, mitigation or, in exceptional cases, offsetting) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The evaluation will confirm whether UNEP requirements³⁰ were met to: review risk ratings on a regular basis; monitor project implementation for possible safeguard issues; respond (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned are evaluated above under Quality of Project Design).
65. The evaluation will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.
66. **Implementation of the management measures against** the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval should be reviewed, the risk classifications verified and the **findings of the effectiveness** of any measures or **lessons learned** taken to address identified risks assessed. Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant should be shared with the Task Manager.

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

67. The evaluation will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, ie. either a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The evaluation will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes

²⁹The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

³⁰For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gendered and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

68. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The evaluation should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the evaluation will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability as appropriate.
69. The project's **completed** Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions should be reviewed. This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

Section 3. EVALUATION APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

70. The Terminal Evaluation will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the evaluation findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) will provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)
71. The findings of the evaluation will be based on the following:

(l) A desk review of:

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia UNEP MTS 2014-2017, Programmes of Work, GEF policies, Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
- Project outputs, including but not limited to: production of maps; research studies, publications or technical guidance documents; workshop and training programmes; socio-environmental assessments; datasets; national strategy documents and policies; website <http://www.zeroextinction.org/> (the AZE Alliance site), the updated data set at <https://globally-threatened-bird-forums.birdlife.org/2017/07/aze-consultation/> ;
- Mid-Term Review of the project;
- Evaluations/reviews of similar projects.

(m) Interviews (individual or in group) with:

- UNEP Task Manager (TM);
- Project management team, including the Project Manager within the Executing Agency;
- UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
- Portfolio Manager and Sub-Programme Coordinator for Healthy and Productive Ecosystems;
- Project partners, including Birdlife International, AZE Partnership and Secretariat (American Bird Conservancy - ABC), Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (Chile), Ministry of Environment, Ecology, Sea and Forests (Madagascar), Other partners: Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (Chile), Ministry of Environment, Ecology, Sea and Forests (Madagascar), Ministry of Environment (Brazil), Local communities in Brazil, Chile and Madagascar;
- Relevant resource persons;
- Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).

(n) Surveys as deemed necessary and designed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

(o) Field visits these will be determined during the inception phase of the evaluation together with the restrictions on international and national travel plans due to COVID-19.

(p) Other data collection tools as deemed necessary and designed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

72. The evaluation team will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for links to all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, evaluation framework and a tentative evaluation schedule.
 - **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings. In the case of highly strategic project/portfolio evaluations or evaluations with an Evaluation Reference Group, the preliminary findings may be presented as a word document for review and comment.
 - **Draft and Final Evaluation Report:** (see links in Annex 1) containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the evaluation findings organised by evaluation criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.
73. An **Evaluation Brief**, (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and key evaluation findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the Evaluation Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report. **This evaluation brief will include the following sections:**
 74. Information on progress, challenge and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the Project start
 75. Information on completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas as documented in the Project document including (if any) gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent as well as lesson learned if available
 76. Information on the project's completed KM Approach that was described in the Project document
 77. Main Findings of the Terminal Evaluation
 78. **Review of the draft evaluation report.** The evaluation team will submit a draft report to the Evaluation Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Evaluation Manager will share the cleared draft report with the Task Manager and Project Manager, who will alert the Evaluation Manager in case the report contains any blatant factual errors. The Evaluation Manager will then forward revised draft report (corrected by the evaluation consultant(s) where necessary) to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Evaluation Manager for consolidation. The Evaluation Manager will provide all comments to the evaluation consultant(s) for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.
 79. Based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the evaluation consultants and the internal consistency of the report, the Evaluation Manager will provide an assessment of the ratings in the final evaluation report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and the Evaluation Manager on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.
 80. The Evaluation Manager will prepare a **quality assessment** of the first draft of the main evaluation report, which acts as a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultants. The quality of the final report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in template listed in Annex 1 and this assessment will be appended to the Final Evaluation Report.
 81. At the end of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Office will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the Task Manager. The Evaluation Office will track compliance against this plan on a six-monthly basis for a maximum of 18 months.

The Evaluation Consultant

82. For this evaluation, the evaluation team will consist of an Evaluation Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the Evaluation Office represented by an Evaluation Manager (Neeral Shah), in consultation with the UNEP Task Manager (Ersin Esen), Fund Management Officer (George Saddimbah) and the Sub-programme Coordinator of the Ecosystems Sub-programme (Marieta Sakalian). The consultant will liaise with the Evaluation Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the evaluation. It is, however, each consultant's individual responsibility to arrange for their visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Task Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.
83. The Evaluation Consultant will be hired over a period of 9 months [01 June 2021 to 28 Feb 2022] and should have the following: a university degree in environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a minimum of 10 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; and a good/broad understanding of [species assessments, databases and/or decision support tools such as the IUCN Red List, Key Biodiversity Areas and Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs)] is desired. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement and knowledge of French, Spanish or Portuguese is desirable. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

FOR SINGLE CONSULTANTS

84. In close consultation with the Evaluation Manager, the evaluation consultant will be responsible for the overall management of the evaluation and timely provision of its outputs, data collection and analysis and report-writing. More specifically:

Inception phase of the evaluation, including:

- preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
- draft the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project;
- prepare the evaluation framework;
- develop the desk review and interview protocols;
- draft the survey protocols (if relevant);
- develop and present criteria for country and/or site selection for the evaluation mission;
- plan the evaluation schedule;
- prepare the Inception Report, incorporating comments until approved by the Evaluation Manager

Data collection and analysis phase of the evaluation, including:

- conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with project implementing and executing agencies, project partners and project stakeholders;
- (where appropriate and agreed) conduct an evaluation mission(s) to selected countries, visit the project locations, interview project partners and stakeholders, including a good representation of local communities. Ensure independence of the evaluation and confidentiality of evaluation interviews.
- regularly report back to the Evaluation Manager on progress and inform of any possible problems or issues encountered and;
- keep the Project/Task Manager informed of the evaluation progress.

Reporting phase, including:

- draft the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that the evaluation report is complete, coherent and consistent with the Evaluation Manager guidelines both in substance and style;
- liaise with the Evaluation Manager on comments received and finalize the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that comments are taken into account until approved by the Evaluation Manager
- prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted by the evaluation consultant and indicating the reason for the rejection; and
- (where agreed with the Evaluation Manager) prepare an Evaluation Brief (2-page summary of the evaluation and the key evaluation findings and lessons)

Managing relations, including:

- maintain a positive relationship with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence;
- communicate in a timely manner with the Evaluation Manager on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

Schedule of the evaluation

85. The table below presents the tentative schedule for the evaluation.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the evaluation

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Evaluation Initiation Meeting	June 2021
Inception Report	August 2021
Evaluation Mission	There will be no field trips due to COVID-19 pandemic
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	September – November 2021
Powerpoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	December 2021
Draft report to Evaluation Manager (and Peer Reviewer)	January 2022
Draft Report shared with UNEP Project Manager and team	January 2022
Draft Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	February 2022
Final Report	February 2022
Final Report shared with all respondents	March 2022

Contractual Arrangements

86. Evaluation consultants will be selected and recruited by the Evaluation Office of UNEP under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a "fees only" basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP /UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

87. Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Evaluation Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment for the [Evaluation Consultant/Principal Evaluator]:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (as per annex document 7)	30%
Approved Draft Main Evaluation Report (as per annex document 13)	30%

Approved Final Main Evaluation Report	40%
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88. Fees only contracts: Air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Evaluation Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.
89. The consultants may be provided with access to UNEP's Anubis information management system and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the evaluation report.
90. In case the consultants are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Evaluation Office, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Director of the Evaluation Office until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.
91. If the consultant(s) fail to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the Evaluation Office to bring the report up to standard.

Annex VIII. Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

"Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity"
GEF ID 5201

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the evaluation product (i.e. evaluation report) and is dependent on more than just the consultant's efforts and skills. Nevertheless, the quality assessment is used as a tool for providing structured feedback to evaluation consultants, especially at draft report stage. This guidance is provided to support consistency in assessment across different Evaluation Managers and to make the assessment process as transparent as possible.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Substantive Report Quality Criteria		
<p>Quality of the Executive Summary:</p> <p>The Summary should be able to stand alone as an accurate summary of the main evaluation product. It should include a concise overview of the evaluation object; clear summary of the evaluation objectives and scope; overall evaluation rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria (plus reference to where the evaluation ratings table can be found within the report); summary of the main findings of the exercise, including a synthesis of main conclusions (which include a summary response to key strategic evaluation questions), lessons learned and recommendations.</p>	<p>The executive summary is well developed providing the key findings against the evaluation criteria, including even the response to key strategic evaluation questions, recommendations, and lessons. Only minor improvements were needed on the formulation of lessons learned are.</p>	5.5
<p>I. Introduction</p> <p>A brief introduction should be given identifying, where possible and relevant, the following: institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, regions/countries where implemented) and coverage of the evaluation; date of PRC approval and project document signature); results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. Expected Accomplishment in POW); project duration and start/end dates; number of project phases (where appropriate); implementing partners; total secured budget and whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, part of a synthesis evaluation, evaluated by another agency etc.)</p> <p>Consider the extent to which the introduction includes a concise statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the findings?</p>	<p>The introduction section is complete with all the required elements are covered satisfactorily</p>	6
<p>II. Evaluation Methods</p> <p>A data collection section should include: a description of evaluation methods and information sources used, including the number and type of respondents; justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; electronic/face-to-face); any selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited; strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation; details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.).</p> <p>Methods to ensure that potentially excluded groups (excluded by gender, vulnerability or marginalisation) are</p>	<p>The methods are described in great detail; it is clear and well presented. All the required elements are covered satisfactorily</p>	6

<p>reached and their experiences captured effectively, should be made explicit in this section.</p> <p>The methods used to analyse data (e.g. scoring; coding; thematic analysis etc.) should be described.</p> <p>It should also address evaluation limitations such as: low or imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; extent to which findings can be either generalised to wider evaluation questions or constraints on aggregation/disaggregation; any potential or apparent biases; language barriers and ways they were overcome.</p> <p>Ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected and strategies used to include the views of marginalised or potentially disadvantaged groups and/or divergent views. Is there an ethics statement?</p>		
<p>III. The Project</p> <p>This section should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context: Overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses). Results framework: Summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) Stakeholders: Description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics Project implementation structure and partners: A description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners Changes in design during implementation: Any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order Project financing: Completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing 	<p>The section is complete, and all the items are covered in sufficient detail. The narrative is clear and concise</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>IV. Theory of Change</p> <p>The TOC at Evaluation should be presented clearly in both diagrammatic and narrative forms. Clear articulation of each major causal pathway is expected, (starting from outputs to long term impact), including explanations of all drivers and assumptions as well as the expected roles of key actors.</p> <p>This section should include a description of how the TOC at Evaluation³¹ was designed (who was involved etc.) and applied to the context of the project? Where the project results as stated in the project design documents (or formal revisions of the project design) are not an accurate reflection of the project's intentions or do not follow UNEP's definitions of different results levels, project results may need to be re-phrased or reformulated. In such cases, a summary of</p>	<p>TOC is presented in both diagrammatic and narrative forms. The intervention logic has been described clearly and systematically, as are the causal pathways, results, assumptions and drivers. The reconstruction process is also well described and a comparison table of the TOC vs the prodoc results framework is presented (annex). Some adjustments to the section have been made to improve the flow of information</p>	<p>6</p>

³¹ During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a TOC at Evaluation Inception is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the TOC at Evaluation.

<p>the project's results hierarchy should be presented for: a) the results as stated in the approved/ revised Prodoc logframe/TOC and b) as formulated in the TOC at Evaluation. The two results hierarchies should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.</p>		
<p>V. Key Findings</p> <p>A. Strategic relevance:</p> <p>This section should include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. An assessment of the complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation³²), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups should be included. Consider the extent to which all four elements have been addressed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW) ii. Alignment to Donor/GEF Strategic Priorities iii. Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities iv. Complementarity with Existing Interventions 	<p>Section on Relevance has been covered comprehensively under all four elements. The narrative is presented in a clear and concise manner</p>	6
<p>B. Quality of Project Design</p> <p>To what extent are the strength and weaknesses of the project design effectively <u>summarized</u>?</p>	<p>The assessment of project design has been summarized very well</p>	6
<p>C. Nature of the External Context</p> <p>For projects where this is appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval³³), and how they affected performance, should be described.</p>	<p>This section summarises the main conflicts, man-made disaster, and social upheaval that were experienced during implementation, and summarises how these affected the project</p>	6
<p>D. Effectiveness</p> <p>(i) Outputs and Project Outcomes: How well does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the a) availability of outputs, and b) achievement of project outcomes? How convincing is the discussion of attribution and contribution, as well as the constraints to attributing effects to the intervention.</p> <p>The effects of the intervention on differentiated groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation, should be discussed explicitly.</p>	<p>The report presents a very well thought-through assessment of output delivery and achievement of outcome. The information provided is comprehensive. Factors affecting performance, in each case, are well considered. A notable effort has been made to provide evidence of attribution and/or contribution of the project to the results observed</p>	6

³² A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

³³ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

<p>(ii) Likelihood of Impact: How well does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact?</p> <p>How well are change processes explained and the roles of key actors, as well as drivers and assumptions, explicitly discussed?</p> <p>Any unintended negative effects of the project should be discussed under Effectiveness, especially negative effects on disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p>The section on impact assessment is just as thorough in its coverage. Linkages to the TOC are clear and consistent. Assumptions and Drivers are well considered in the analysis. Unintended/unplanned effects have also been appropriately mentioned</p>	6
<p>E. Financial Management This section should contain an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table. Consider how well the report addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • completeness of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used • communication between financial and project management staff 	<p>All the key aspects of financial management have been assessed satisfactorily. One gets a reasonably good sense of the project's performance under this criterion.</p> <p>The 'Completeness' sub-criterion could only be assessed to a limited extent on account of some unavailable financial reports that the consultant had requested for.</p>	5
<p>F. Efficiency To what extent, and how well, does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency under the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications of delays and no cost extensions • Time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • Discussion of making use during project implementation of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. • The extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint. 	<p>This section presents several examples to demonstrate the ways in which the project was able to increase its efficiency. The effects of delays on the project are described, and the additional factors that affected performance under Efficiency criterion are also discussed.</p>	6
<p>G. Monitoring and Reporting How well does the report assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring design and budgeting (including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.) • Monitoring of project implementation (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) • Project reporting (e.g. PIMS and donor reports) 	<p>The report assesses all three aspects of monitoring to a satisfactory level. Some minor amendments were required in the assessment to ensure consistency with TOR guidelines</p>	5
<p>H. Sustainability How well does the evaluation identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved project outcomes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-political Sustainability • Financial Sustainability • Institutional Sustainability 	<p>All the facets of sustainability have been covered in-depth; supporting evidence has been presented to corroborate the findings; the information provided is clear and very informative about the likelihood that project results will be sustained. Differences in the results between the three main project countries and globally, are also clearly described.</p>	6

<p>I. Factors Affecting Performance These factors are <u>not</u> discussed in stand-alone sections but are integrated in criteria A-H as appropriate. Note that these are described in the Evaluation Criteria Ratings Matrix. To what extent, and how well, does the evaluation report cover the following cross-cutting themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and readiness • Quality of project management and supervision³⁴ • Stakeholder participation and co-operation • Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity • Environmental and social safeguards • Country ownership and driven-ness • Communication and public awareness 	<p>The consultant has opted to have a stand-alone section to discuss these factors. They are also discussed under various criteria based on their relevance. All factors have been given due consideration throughout the assessment.</p>	5
<p>VI. Conclusions and Recommendations</p> <p>i. Quality of the conclusions: The key strategic questions should be clearly and succinctly addressed within the conclusions section. It is expected that the conclusions will highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project and connect them in a compelling story line. Human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) should be discussed explicitly. Conclusions, as well as lessons and recommendations, should be consistent with the evidence presented in the main body of the report.</p>	<p>The conclusions are anchored on the findings in the main body of the report. Key strategic questions are adequately addressed.</p>	5
<p>ii) Quality and utility of the lessons: Both positive and negative lessons are expected and duplication with recommendations should be avoided. Based on explicit evaluation findings, lessons should be rooted in real project experiences or derived from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future. Lessons are intended to be adopted any time they are deemed to be relevant in the future and must have the potential for wider application (replication and generalization) and use and should briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful.</p>	<p>The quality and utility of the lessons learned statements in the report are considered to be satisfactory</p>	5
<p>iii) Quality and utility of the recommendations: To what extent are the recommendations proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results? They should be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when. At least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions, should be given. Recommendations should represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations.</p>	<p>The recommendations are SMART and anchored on the actual findings presented in the report. They are for the most part quite relevant and feasible because they refer to an implementation time frame coinciding with a follow-on GEF project.</p>	5

³⁴ In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP.

<p>In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.</p>		
<p>VII. Report Structure and Presentation Quality</p>		
<p>i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?</p>	<p>The report is complete and captures the requirements and guidelines in the TOR very well</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>ii) Quality of writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information? Does the report follow Evaluation Office formatting guidelines?</p>	<p>The writing and tone of language is professional; the grammar is good, and the language is clear. Visual aids have been used to support the narrative. Formatting has been improved during the report review</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING</p>		<p>Highly Satisfactory (5.7)</p>