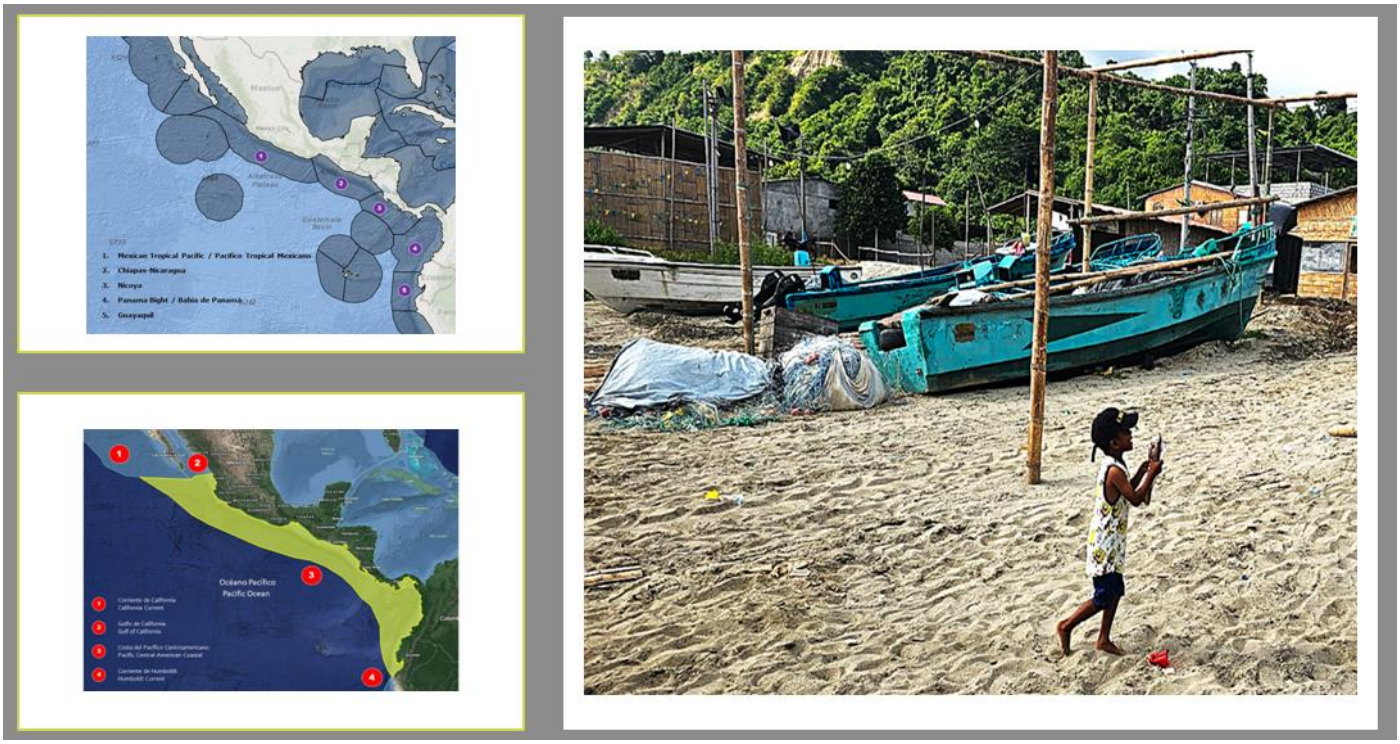
FINAL MTR

Sustainable Pacific Project

Towards an integrated ecosystems-based management approach for the Pacific Central American LME (PACA)



13 June 2025

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COVER PHOTO: Beach MSP Pilot Project in Ecuador (J. Ryan).

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Español	English
ADT	Análisis diagnóstico transfronterizo	Transboundary diagnostic analysis
ARAP	Autoridad de Recursos Acuáticos de Panamá	Panama Aquatic Resources Authority
ATP	Asesor técnico principal	Principal technical advisor
CBD	Convenio sobre la Diversidad Biológica	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCAD	Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo	Central American Commission for Environment and Development
CDR	Informe combinado	Combined delivery report
CENDEPESCA	Centro de Desarrollo de la Pesca y la Acuicultura (El Salvador)	Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Centre (El Salvador)
CIAT	Comisión Interamericana del Atún Tropical	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
CMAR	Corredor Marino del Pacífico Este Tropical	Marine Corridor of the Eastern Tropical Pacific
CMSP	Ordenamiento espacial costero y marino	Coastal and marine spatial planning
CNP	Parque Nacional Coiba	Coiba National Park
CO	Oficina de país	Country office
COI/UNESCO	Comisión Oceanográfica Intergubernamental de la UNESCO	UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
COMMCA	Consejo de Ministras de la Mujer de Centroamérica y República Dominicana	Council of Ministers for Women of Central America and Dominican Republic
CONANP	Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (México)	National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (Mexico)
CONAPESCA	Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca (México)	National Commission of Aquaculture and Fisheries (Mexico)
COVID-19	Enfermedad del coronavirus 2019	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPAP	Plan de acción del programa de país	Country programme action plan
CPD	Costos directos de proyecto	Direct project costs
CPPS	Comisión Permanente del Pacífico Sur	Permanent Commission for the South Pacific
DIGEPESCA	Dirección General de Pesca y Acuicultura (Honduras)	General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (Honduras)
DIPESCA	Dirección de Normatividad de la Pesca y Acuicultura (Guatemala)	Directorate for Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulations (Guatemala)
DIRNEA	Dirección Nacional de Espacios Acuáticos (Ecuador)	National Directorate of Aquatic Spaces (Ecuador)
DPS	Servicios directos de proyecto	Direct project services
EBFM	Manejo pesquero basado en el enfoque ecosistémico	Ecosystems-based fisheries management

Acronym	Español	English
ECM	Especialista en comunicación	Communications specialist
EGP	Especialista en género y participación	Gender and participation specialist
EMC	Especialista en gestión del conocimiento	Knowledge management specialist
EME	Especialista en monitoreo y evaluación	Monitoring and evaluation specialist
EMR	Especialista en el manejo de los Recursos Marinos	Specialist in marine resources management
ENSO	El Niño oscilación del sur	El Niño southern oscillation
ERC	Centro de recursos de evaluación del PNUD	UNDP´s Evaluation Resource Centre
FAO	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FECOP	Federación Costarricense de Pesca	Costa Rican Fishing Federation (FECOP)
FMAM	Fondo para el Medio Ambiente Mundial	Global Environment Facility
GAPI	Indicador del Plan de Acción de Género	Gender Action Plan Indicator
GDO	Gerente de operaciones	Operations manager
GEFSEC	Secretaría del Fondo para el Medio Ambiente Mundial	Global Environment Facility Secretariat
GRT-IEG	Grupo Regional de Trabajo de Igualdad y Equidad de Género en la pesca y acuicultura de OSPESCA	OSPESCA´s Regional Working Group on Gender Equality and Equity in fisheries and aquaculture
HACT	Enfoque armonizado para transferencias en efectivo	Harmonized approach to cash transfers
ID DEL FMAM	Número de identificación de proyecto FMAM	GEF project identification number
INCOPESCA	Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuicultura	Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture
INOCAR	Instituto Oceanográfico y Antártico de la Armada (Ecuador)	Oceanographic and Antarctic Institute of the Navy (Ecuador)
INPI	Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas (México)	National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (Mexico)
IW:LEARN	Red de intercambio de aprendizaje y recursos de Aguas Internacionales del FMAM.	GEF International Waters learning exchange and resource network.
IWC	Conferencia bienal de Aguas Internacionales del FMAM	GEF biennial International Waters Conference
LANCIS	Laboratorio Nacional de Ciencias de la Sostenibilidad de UNAM	UNAM´s National Laboratory for Sustainability Sciences
LOA	Carta de acuerdo	Letter of agreement
M&E	Monitoreo y evaluación	Monitoring and evaluation
MAATE	Ministerio del Ambiente, Agua y Transición Ecológica - MAATE (Ecuador)	Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition MAATE (Ecuador)
MANUD	Marco de Cooperación para el Desarrollo de las Naciones Unidas	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
MiAMBIENTE	Ministerio de Ambiente (Panamá)	Ministry of Environment (Panama)

Acronym	Español	English
MINAE	Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía (Costa Rica)	Ministry of Environment and Energy (Costa Rica)
MOOC	Curso En-línea Masivo y Abierto	Massive Open Online Course
AMPer	Áreas marinas y costeras protegidas	Coastal and marine protected areas
MRE	Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSP	Ordenamiento espacial marino	Marine spatial planning
MTR	Examen de mitad de periodo	Midterm review
NIM	Modalidad de implementación nacional	National implementation modality
NOAA	Administración Nacional Oceánica y Atmosférica	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OPO	Océano Pacífico Oriental	Eastern Pacific Ocean
OSC	Organización de la sociedad civil	Civil society organization
OSPESCA	Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano	Organization of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus
PAE	Programa de acción estratégico	Strategic action programme
PDI	Política sobre divulgación de información del PNUD	UNDP information disclosure policy
PIP	Política sobre participación pública en los proyectos financiados por el Fondo ara el Medio Ambiente Mundial	Policy on public involvement in GEF projects
PIR	Informe de implementación de proyecto FMAM	GEF Project Implementation Report
PNUD	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo	United Nations Development Programme
PNUMA	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente	United Nations Environment Programme
POPP	Políticas y procedimientos de programa y operaciones de PNUD	UNDP programme and operations policies and procedures
PPD	Programa de pequeñas donaciones del FMAM	GEF small grants programme
PPG	Subvención para preparación del proyecto	Project Preparation Grant
PRODOC	Documento de Proyecto	Project document
SAPI	Indicador del plan de involucramiento de actores	Stakeholder Action Plan Indicator
SBAA	Acuerdo básico modelo de asistencia	Standard basic assistance agreement
SEMAR	Secretaría de Marina (México)	Secretariat of the Navy (Mexico)
SEMARNAT	Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (México)	Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (Mexico)
SESP	Procedimiento de Diagnóstico social y ambiental de PNUD	UNDP's Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SG-SICA	Secretaría General del SICA	SICA´s General Secretariat
SICA	Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana	Central American Integration System

Acronym	Español	English
SIG-SICA	Sistema de información geográfica del SICA	SICA´s geographic information system
SINAC	Sistema Nacional de Áreas de Conservación (Costa Rica)	National System of Conservation Areas (Costa Rica)
SRP	Subsecretaría de Recursos Pesqueros (Ecuador)	Undersecretary of fisheries resources (Ecuador)
STAP	Panel de Asesoramiento Técnico Científico del FMAM	GEF Scientific Technical Advisory Panel
STAR	Sistema para la asignación transparente de recursos del FMAM	GEF System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
STM-COMMCA	Secretaría Técnica de la Mujer del Consejo de Ministras de la Mujer de Centroamérica y República Dominicana	Technical Secretariat for Women of the Council of Ministers for Women of Central America and Dominican Republic
TE	Evaluación final	Terminal evaluation
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	National Autonomous University of Mexico
UPL	Lista universal de precios	Universal price list
USD	Dólar de los Estados Unidos de América	United States dollar
ZEE	Zona Económica Exclusiva	Exclusive Economic Zone

Glossary of Terms

The terms used in this MTR are defined below. Regarding the Theory of Change definitions, it should be noted that there is no absolute criterion for right or wrong; this document uses the GEF STAP ToC definitions.

Activity	An action taken in an intervention that leads, independently or in conjunction with other activities, to its results (*outcomes*). At the programme level, activities include the development and coordination of projects, as well as the pursuit of additional actions at the programme level, such as knowledge management or regional and value chain participation.
Adaptive management	Adaptive management (AM) is a structured, iterative process of robust decision making in the face of uncertainty, with an aim to reducing uncertainty over time via system monitoring. In this way, decision making simultaneously meets one or more ecosystem services management objectives and, either passively or actively, accrues information needed to improve future management. Adaptive management is a tool which should be used not only to change a system, but also to learn about the system[1]. Because adaptive management is based on a learning process, it improves long-run management outcomes.
Apex Predators	Apex predators are the top predators in an ecosystem like the PACA LME. They are often referred to as keystone species because of their critical role in maintaining the balance of food webs. They are typically carnivores that feed on other animals, and their presence in an ecosystem has a significant impact on the population dynamics of other species. One of the most notable characteristics of apex predators is their ability to regulate the population of other species in the ecosystem. By preying upon other animals, they prevent overpopulation and help maintain a healthy balance in the food chain. This can be seen in marine ecosystems where apex predators such as sharks, whales, and dolphins play a crucial role in regulating the populations of their prey.
Assumption	A belief that is accepted as true or taken for granted when defining causal links in a causal pathway. Assumptions are sometimes called "preconditions" (assumptions about aspects that must exist for the link to work, such as good governance and the blue economy) or "hypotheses" (plausible but unproven assumptions). More generally, assumptions can also involve complementary activities of other actors, as well as internal and external risks, opportunities, barriers, and facilitators. Assumptions are derived through the Theory of Change process and are key to driving adaptive management and systematically capturing lessons learned[2]
Blue Economy	BE is described as the ensemble of economic activities of ocean-based industries with sustainable vocation, and the assets, goods, and services of marine ecosystems taking place on, below and/or adjacent to ocean ecosystems (Virdin et al., 2021; Sardá et al., 2023).

[1] Holling 1978
[2] Stafford-Smith 2020

Global Environmental Benefits	GEF investments are based on the realization of global environmental benefits in biodiversity, climate change mitigation, international waters, land and forest degradation, and chemicals and waste. According to the proposed funding scenarios, GEF-8 IPs aim to deliver meaningful results across all targets of the headline indicators. Increasingly, the GEF seeks to deliver multiple environmental benefits through integrated investments in the various dimensions of the global environment.
Causal Pathway	A retrospective mapping from an intervention objective, through all the long-term and short-term outcomes, to the outcomes needed to achieve it, identifying a logical arrangement of "causal links" between them. (Also called "impact pathway," "result chain," or "solution tree".[3]
Co-beneficiaries	Co-benefits are broadly defined as any positive effect that a goal-directed intervention may have on other objectives, although in the GEF it is often used to refer to benefits other than the required BGEs (see below). Prerequisite co-benefits are essential to achieving durable BGEs, particularly at transformative levels of ambition.
Ecosystem-based Management (EBM)	Marine ecosystem-based management (EBM) is recognized as the best practice for managing multiple ocean-use sectors, explicitly addressing tradeoffs among them. However, implementation is perceived as challenging and often slow.[4] While there is no agreed definition, here we use the following: EBM is any course of action aimed at improving an ecosystem's ability to stay within critical thresholds, respond to change, or transform itself, so that a new equilibrium or evolutionary trajectory is followed. It recognizes *complex and adaptive Social-Ecological Systems*, d*ecisions reflect societal choice, interdisciplinarity, appropriate monitoring* and a*cknowledges uncertainty and unpredictability, which requires applying adaptive management principles.*[5] Increased political will (high-level leadership vs. bottom-up efforts. Social-ecological systems (SSEs) that need to be analyzed in a holistic and integrated way.Incomplete governance structures, narrow stakeholder engagement processes have been identified as one of the major impediments to the effective implementation of EBM and this is supported by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)[6], which invites Parties and relevant organizations to support community-based monitoring, information systems, and citizen science as key contributions. It requires integrated sector-based planning dominates, limiting integration across fisheries, pollution, and habitat management sectors and inclusive governance mechanisms.
Fisheries comanagement	This is a collaborative arrangement between the government and the local community of resource users, sometimes also linked to actors such as NGOs and research institutions, and other resource stakeholders, to share responsibility and authority in the management of a resource. Ecosystem-based fisheries co-management refers to fisheries co-management measures based on the ecosystem approach that integrate the physical-

[3] Stafford Smith 2020
[4] Haugen et al. 2024
[5] Stephenson et al. 2015.
[6] Galparsoro et al. (2025).

	chemical, bioecological and socio-cultural interrelationships that connect fish to the entire ecosystem, placing people at the center of the ecosystem.
Goal	The impact on society and the environment that an intervention aims to achieve. In the context of the GEF, the objectives are described, at least partially, in terms of the overall environmental benefits that the GEF aims to ensure are large-scale and long-lasting.
Governance	The GEF IW defines governance as a decision-making process and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not). The challenge for all societies is to create a governance system that promotes, supports, and sustains human development, especially for the poorest and most marginalized. It can be considered the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage the affairs of a country at all levels and it comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups express their interests, exercise their legal rights, fulfill their obligations, and mediate their differences. Governance processes can be expressed through three key mechanisms: economic, political, and civil society.
Innovation	Innovation is defined as doing something new or different in a specific context that adds value. Broadly speaking, (i) innovation is new in a specific context; (ii) represents an improvement compared to conventional alternatives (e.g., better quality, scale, efficiency, sustainability, replicability, or scalability of results); (iii) catalyzes or produces environmental benefits and may also result in socio-economic benefits related to the intended environmental benefits; and (iv) it could also be associated with risks and a higher probability of failure.[7]
Inputs	Resources, skills, funding, personnel, thinking, etc., provided by an intervention to facilitate its activities and obtain its results.
Intervention	A general term that encompasses activities at the programme and project level made possible by GEF investments and embodied resources.
Marine Spatial Planning	Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a public process that analyzes and maps the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve specified ecological, economic, and social goals through a political process. It is not an end in itself, but a practical way of creating and establishing a more rational use of marine space and the interactions between its uses, to balance the demands of development with the need to protect the environment and to generate social and economic outcomes in an open and planned way. As an interface between land and sea, the coastal zone has become an increasingly important vital system, especially for PACA, as up to 50% of marine species want coastal habitats to fulfill their life cycles.
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	According to the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) International Waters directive and related GEF policies, a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Platform is a structured system designed to systematically track, assess, and share information on the progress, effectiveness, and results of GEF-funded projects and programs. The MEL platform serves multiple purposes: i) Monitoring, which involves the continuous collection and analysis of data on project implementation, outputs, outcomes, and

[7] GEF IEO 2020

	environmental impacts at project, portfolio, national, and global levels. Monitoring provides early information on progress and identifies implementation issues requiring management decisions.; ii) Evaluation, which entails an impartial and systematic assessment of planned, ongoing, or completed activities and programs to determine their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability; iii) Learning:, promoting promotes feedback, knowledge sharing, and capacity building among GEF partners and stakeholders. *It supports adaptive management by integrating lessons learned into project design, policy, and strategy improvements*.
Outcome	Outcomes are the short to medium affects you are looking to have or the 'step changes', which need to occur in order to achieve your long term or ultimate goal. If you are trying to facilitate change within an individual, you can think of this as the journey your beneficiary needs to go on to reach the change you have identified. They are often more difficult to measure than outputs, as they can frequently relate to an individual's perceptions, emotions or other internal state. Outcomes can be short-term or long-term and are increasingly less within the scope of the intervention. In some guidelines, the results are described as "preconditions for achieving the target" or "impacts".
Outputs	Outputs are the tangible or intangible things that an organization or project produces. These could be completed with services, products, interventions or other 'deliverables'. They should act to 'spark change' or act as the catalyst for your identified outcomes. They are normally fairly easy to measure and can often be quantified e.g. how many do we do or the number of outputs you create.
Pilot Project	A learning intervention at the PACA country- and reginal levels, in this case, focusing on MSP at the country level and Whale protection initiatives at the regional level..
Precautionary Principle	Despite no uniform understanding of its meaning, its definition is contained in Principle 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration, which is widely recognized by states and provides practical guidance in the development and application of international law: *In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.* The components of the precautionary principle are still evolving. Some countries avoid using the term "principle," preferring to call it a "precautionary approach," since it carries less legal weight and of course, to escape their responsibilities under Principle 15.[8]
Social-Ecological Systems (SES)	All ecosystem services are embedded in complex and dynamic social-ecological systems, which consist of multiple subsystems. Despite having evolved independently and being difficult to disaggregate, SES subsystems—such as the resource system (e.g., capture fisheries), resource units (e.g., tuna, dorado), users (fishers), and governance systems (organizations and rules governing fisheries)—are inseparable, as humans and the ecosystems that support life on the planet cannot be studied as independent units. These systems are coupled together so that their effective management requires interdisciplinary science, local knowledge,

[8] Pinto-Bazurco, J. (2020)

	and policy analysis. Although scholars and practitioners in resource management have developed simple theoretical models to analyze aspects of resource problems and prescribe universal solutions, the increasingly dynamic physical, ecological, economic, and social environment in which we live makes critical analyses of human-ecological systems and common property resources more valuable than ever.
SMART Indicators	A good theory of change is essential to help assess whether a set of interventions is necessary and sufficient to bring about transformative change. They are specific, ***measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound*** indicators that are used in monitoring and evaluation. SMART indicators help ensure that selected indicators are well-defined and can be effectively measured to track progress toward specific goals and objectives.
STAR	Countries can use their STAR allocations to participate in one or more of the GEF-7 Integrated Programs. These allocations, in turn, will be supplemented by incentive resources (at a rate of $3 of STAR per $1 of incentive window) included in the focal area pools. These incentive resources are essential to ensure that each national project is fully integrated into the program-level objectives and is implementing the large-scale GGEs. Resources from the focal area pools will also be needed to fund global/regional coordination and stakeholder engagement platforms, which are essential for achieving program-level goals.
Triple bottom-line Impacts	It captures the three central pillars of Sustainable Development: environmental protection, social justice and economic development. It can only be achieved when environmental protection, social equity and economic profitability coexist without one area taking over the others. While achieving this balance is unlikely, projects must be designed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Transformative investments	Investments that involve a pathway to lasting change on a scale sufficient to generate a significant improvement in one or more global environmental benefits. Most innovations require scaling to be transformative on a global level. Transformation can happen directly, but it is usually scaled from multiple well-coordinated minor achievements.

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Executive Summary

Table 1. Table 2. Basic Information of the Project

Project title: *Towards joint integrated, ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA).*			
Countries: Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, ~~El Salvador~~ Guatemala, Honduras, México and Panamá.	**Countries included in the MTR:** All	**Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):** WWF Guatemala/ Mesoamerica (CSO)	**UNDP-GEF PIMS ID number:** 6273 **GEF Project ID number:** 10076
Execution Modality: NGO execution	**UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Category:** *Moderate*	**UNDP Gender Marker:** *2*	
Other executing partners: Conservation International (Ecuador), MarViva (Panamá), OET (Costa Rica), LANCIS-UNAM (México)	**MTR Team Members:** Joe Ryan, Roxana García	**MTR execution period:** March – May 2025	**Date of the Draft MTR:** May 26**,** 2025
Project duration in months: 48 months	**Planned start date:** 15 October 2022 **Actual Starting Date:** Feb 2023 **(with the Prodoc signature)**	**Planned end date:** Feb 27, 2027	**Expected date of posting Terminal evaluation report to ERC:** Nov 27, 2026

FINANCING PLAN	
GEF Trust Fund – regional activities	USD 5,795,520
(1) Total Budget administered by UNDP Costa Rica (lead office) [9]	USD 5,795,520
CONFIRMED CO-FINANCING[10]	
Regional — OSPESCA	USD 600,000
(2) Total confirmed co-financing	USD 600,000
(3) Grand-Total Project Financing (1)+(2)	USD 6,395,520

Brief description of the project

The Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA) covers nearly 2 million Km^2 of coastal and marine habitats that extend from southern Mexico to the Gulf of Guayaquil. One quarter of the 250 million people live in coastal provinces, with over 17 million people living in the 228 coastal municipalities bordering PACA. This LME is a prime candidate for developing a circular blue economy in each country and for the region within blue sectors such as shipping, marine tourism, important fisheries that include shrimp, small and large pelagics, as well as massive blue carbon reservoirs in coastal mangrove forests. However, PACA is facing numerous threats and the Transboundary Waters

[9] Total GEF grant is $7,147,209.
[10] This co-financing represents the co-financing provided by regional institutions to the whole project.

Assessment Programme (TWAP) found that PACA´s overall risk factor is high. Biodiversity is threatened mainly by: (1) pollution, (2) degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems and habitats, (3) overuse of fishery resources, (4) direct impacts on fauna and flora, and (5) climate variability and climate change. The area is also impacted by the consequences of poverty, illegal drug trafficking, and illegal migration. To date, efforts to address these diverse issues have been stymied because not only are there multiple barriers to reducing those risks at the national level, but also for the transboundary resources and pollutants that know no borders7.

The project entitled " Towards joint integrated, ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem", better known as PACA, is a bold and first initiative of its kind. It addresses diverse barriers to risk-reducing and resilience-building actions and aims "*to promote ecosystem-based management of the Central American Pacific Large Marine Coastal Ecosystem by strengthening regional governance*". Its focus is to develop the capacities for national and transboundary marine governance and the disarticulated coastal-marine planning and management of shared resources which is. The core element of the proposed theory of change narrative presented in the ProDoc is that improved marine governance will contribute to construct sound seascape-level ecosystem-based management. The project has strategically allocated GEF resources to: (1) develop a participatory process to generate an integrated diagnosis on the current situation of the large marine ecosystem(i.e., TDA) and a formal instrument adopted by the participating countries (i.e., SAP), (2) build human and social capital through training, communication and knowledge transfer, and (3) implement some practical exercises to generate learning on key issues (billfish recreational fisheries, marine spatial planning, and whale watching). PACA is funded through a Global Environment Facility (GEF) grant with in-kind co-financing.

The project is implemented by UNDP and executed regionally by the World Wildlife Fund in Mesoamerica, following the GEF IW Regional Implementation modality. The project started on February 27, 2023, and is in its second year of implementation. According to PRODOC it is a 48 month project whose the Planned Start Date is October, 15th, 2022. According to the 2024 PIR, the project start date is February 27, 2023.

Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The objective of this consultancy is to conduct the mid-term evaluation of the PACA LME project to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, including early signs of project success or failure, with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on track to achieve its intended results. The MTR also reviews the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability. The main purpose of this MTR is to provide UNDP Costa Rica country office (CO) and the other UNDP COs involved in the project, the Project Management Unit (PMU) at WWF Mesoamerica and key PACA stakeholders to improve the project implementation, and modify any aspect that will improve implementation effectiveness and efficiency, thereby improving the likelihood that the results framework can be achieved by the end of the project. This MTR is part of the project monitoring and evaluation plan. The evaluation presented herein analyzes the strategy, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project. It also identifies lessons learned and provides recommendations. The conclusions of the document are based on the review of relevant documentation and interviews with key stakeholders. The evaluation team is composed of two evaluators. The evaluation team has triangulated the data collected to answer the evaluation questions shown in **Annex 2**.

Table 3. Main Findings and Risks PACA if no corrective action is taken.

Finding	Risks of Inaction
PACA's objective and strategic vision are well-formulated.	The formulators are commended for being the first effort to promote a regional approach for ecosystems-based management and governance in a LME with a high risk.
EBM is far from being understood, much less applied. EBM is complex and holistic in that it integrates many dimensions which must not only address issues that threaten marine waters but also threats from the land and coastal areas.	This finding was based on the presentations by the countries at the Antigua workshop (e.g., Resultados Nacionales), all of which are labeled as TDA Country X in the files shared by the PMU. As mentioned in the report, these diagnostics are excellent. This has now been corrected. However, in interviews with the PMU the MTR team raised its concerns that the MSP approach focused mainly on marine ecosystems and did not integrate the coastal ones. This was acknowledged by the PMU, who stated that was just the way the project was designed. Since thee visit to Ecuador, it became evident that that MSP in that country went from the beaches to the 13 mile territorial waters but did not include the marine ecosystems in deep water. These points are now addressed in the Final MTR Report. As indicated in the Findings, there are many gaps regarding the full application of EBM. However, the point that is important to underscore is that in 90% of the interviews, the respondents did not understand EBM, which is surprising at mid-term given that improve understanding of EBM is one of the pillars of PACA. These points are now clarified in the Final Report. These people interviewed are the ones who will sustain PACA, NOT the consultants who produced the Diagnostics. This further supports the finding that communication and knowledge management strategies are inadequate.
Weak Theory of Change – The ToC is poorly designed. It lacks a causative results chain because it is mainly focused on outputs. Of tis five outcomes, most (3/5) are outputs, and those immediate outcomes are not SMART. Furthermore, it lacks robust assumptions that drive results-based management and for applying adaptive management principles.	A poorly designed Theory of Change (ToC) and the absence of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) outcome indicators for the PACA can have several serious implications, particularly if the project is focused only on outputs and lacks clearly stated assumptions. Key risks and consequences include: i) Lack of Strategic Clarity - Without a well-structured ToC, the project lacks a clear roadmap for how its activities (outputs) will lead to meaningful, long-term change (outcomes and impacts); ii) Ineffective Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) - When SMART outcome indicators are missing it becomes impossible to measure real progress beyond the completion of activities (e.g., number of workshops held, reports published). Furthermore, the project cannot assess whether desired changes in policy, behavior, or ecosystem status are occurring, while it hinders Adaptive management because evidence-based feedback loops are missing; iii) Reduced Stakeholder Engagement and Ownership – Stakeholders, including local communities, governments, and partners—may struggle to see their role or the project's relevance. Outcomes often resonate more with stakeholders than outputs do. If the pathway of change isn't clear or participatory, ownership and sustainability suffer; and iv) Weak Justification for Continued Funding - Donors and evaluators increasingly demand evidence of impact and a robust logical framework. Without SMART outcomes, the project may struggle to attract or retain funding due to limited demonstrated value. However, narrowly focusing on outputs can give donors and impression of superficiality or box-ticking.
Inadequate Application of Adaptive Management (AM) – This is an error in redacting by the MTR Team. It has been corrected to read – While the CBD and scientific experts argue that adaptive management is the best process to address these problems, PACA does not use a systematic, proactive approach to apply AM principles, and this is largely related to the weak ToC.	The inadequate ToC, assumptions and outcome indicators prevent the systematic application of AM principles and forces the project to rely on reactive adaptive management, responding to challenges after they occur rather than anticipating and mitigating them. This poses significant risks to PACA's long-term effectiveness. Here's an analysis of the issue and associated risks: This is because Reactive AM generally focuses on short-term fixes to immediate problems (e.g., addressing fishery collapses after overfishing occurs), is often driven by crisis response rather than structured learning or systemic change and lacks mechanisms to test hypotheses, refine strategies, or address root causes of ecosystem degradation. On the other hand, Proactive AM anticipates risks through scenario planning, modeling, and iterative learning. As a result, it integrates continuous monitoring and adjusts strategies based on feedback, prioritizes addressing systemic drivers (e.g., governance gaps, market pressures) before crises

Finding	Risks of Inaction
	emerge. This frequently leads to limited funding, capacity gaps, and fragmented governance hinder long-term planning and experimentation., addresses symptoms (e.g., temporary fishery closures) rather than tackling root causes (e.g., lack of alternative livelihoods) leads to cyclical crises. and results in missed learning opportunities.
The strategic vision for communication adheres to the classical approach	While we recognize that the design of the Communication and KM strategies are provided in the ProDoc, the Inception Phase offers an opportunity to adjust gaps and shortcomings, while further strengthening positive strategies. The comment here raises concerns that the PMU remains attached to the classical approach of capturing knowledge and lessons by relying predominantly on a reactive approach to adaptive management and learning, rather than emphasizing to the greatest extent possible, a proactive approach that requires a robust Theory of Change, SMART indicators and testable assumptions. This continues to raise concerns to the MTR team that the same approach might be repeated for the SAR, which would not only be a mistake, but would create risks for PACA as described in the report. The following response are only a few that we offer to address these 2 comments, but we are happy to provide additional ones and more detail if needed. Lessons are learned every day in a project like PACA. Some are significant, whereas others can be minor. However, Adaptive Management and learning should be carried out to the extent possible in real-time situations. Delaying systematized learning until the final two years of the GEF-funded PACA LME project would introduce significant risks, particularly when contrasted with a continuous adaptive management approach driven by a robust theory of change. These risks include: 1. **Reduced Responsiveness to Emerging Challenges** - namely the Inability to course-correct. Complex projects face dynamic ecological, social, and political uncertainties. Without real-time learning, the project cannot pivot when interventions underperform or external conditions shift (e.g., climate impacts, stakeholder conflicts). Adaptive management is the approach recommended by the CBD, UFF and others deal with these issues **2. Amplified costs of late interventions -** Addressing design flaws or implementation gaps becomes exponentially harder and more expensive in later stages, potentially requiring restructuring beyond the project's scope. **3. Erosion of Transformative Impact -** Missed scaling opportunities: Lessons learned late cannot inform mid-project adjustments to replicate successful interventions across the LME. This limits the project's potential for systemic change. **4. Weakened sustainability -** Delayed learning jeopardizes the handover of effective models to local institutions, risking abandonment of outcomes post-

Finding	Risks of Inaction
Although the TDAs are now completed, there is no evidence that PACA will develop adequate ToCs for the corresponding SAPs at the national or regional levels.	Unless lessons are learned from the poor ToCs produced in the ProDocs, it is likely that this framework will be repeated and the SAPs, which are critical providing solutions to reduce the high risks that the PACA LME, will simply produce another batch of outputs that will prevent the application of a systematic MEL platform. This will not only negatively affect the application of adaptive management and learning processes, but also the systematic capture of lessons from the implementation of the SAP, interviews with UNDP COs expressed their serious frustration with the lack of communication between the pilots and the TDAs and this is a weakness that requires urgent attention in rectifying- The MTR team fully understands that not all countries have pilots and the report will be clarified to ensure that it is clear that the comment refers to those countries with pilots. Regardless of the architecture of the pilots, the issue of poor communication between them and the COs is problematic and requires action. This is a problem because the country offices have a key role in oversight and responsibility to the GEF. UNDP offices complain that while they received reports, they do not feel that they are being integrated into pilot projects and other regional technical issues that WWF is responsible for. Coordination between WWF and UNDP CR is also weak. Poor coordination between the PMU and UNDP offices further strengthens the knowledge and information in less-than-permeable institutional walls acerbate, leading to difficulties in tracking progress and outcomes, jeopardizing adaptive management and accountability. It is also likely to result in fragmented data collection. The efficiency of the project but also is counter to the goal of PACA, namely, to share good practices and replicate them within country-specific contexts. Risks include: i) Failure to Meet GEF IW Objectives; ii) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Breakdowns; iii) missed Opportunities for Synergies caused by the siloed information that is compartmentalized in each partner's realm.
A large communication gap exists between the pilot projects and the TDA consultants,	This mainly is related to the fact that they were contracted separately, but also because there is poor communication between the consultant and the UNDP country office. Although Outcome 3 aims to produce Tangible impacts generated in demonstrative pilot interventions implemented to contribute to the development and buy-in of the SAP..
Incomplete M&E system that has risks of poor performance and sustainability	The results framework and M&E system are weak in measuring outcomes and outputs, with issues related to indicators and data quality; If the PACA LME project relies on a weak MEL platform, the consequences would be significant and directly undermine the project's effectiveness and long-term sustainability: Failure to Address Transboundary Threats: The PACA LME faces complex, cross-border challenges such as overfishing, pollution, and habitat degradation. Without a robust MEL system, the project would lack the coordinated monitoring and response mechanisms needed to tackle these issues at scale, resulting in fragmented and ineffective interventions. Limited Adaptive Management: A weak MEL platform would prevent timely learning and adaptation. The project would be unable to respond effectively to new data, emerging threats, or lessons from pilot actions, reducing resilience to climate change and socio-political shifts. Poor Decision-Making and Resource Allocation: Inadequate monitoring and evaluation would mean decision-makers lack reliable information on what works, leading to inefficient use of resources, missed opportunities for scaling successful approaches, and potential duplication of efforts.
The ProDoc indicates that the main focus of the indicators is to measure state, pressure, However, there is no mention of SMART outcome indicators to measure the effectiveness of the pilot initiative action plans nor the SAPs	The MTR Team's hands are tied in many respects because it is difficult to change a CEO approved ProDoc. However, we recommend two things. First, the PMU and the IA should consult with the GEF IW coordinator to explore the degree of flexibility for improving the inadequate ToC and indicators presented in the ProDoc and followed through mid-term. However the HIGHEST priority is for the PMU to receive hands on applied training to develop a robust ToC for the SAPs, formulate clearly worded SMART outcomes to measure progress and developing explicit assumptions that are akin to clear, testable hypotheses to ensure that systematic AM can be applied throughout SAP implementation and facilitate

Finding	Risks of Inaction
	feedback loops to drive learning and continuous adaptation to help address the complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability of the PACA LEME and the ecosystem services that it provides the countries and the region. There is nothing to be done about the Core indicators presented in the referenced document (2019). However, the problem is related to the project-specific indicators. The GEF has repeatedly tried to get the projects to develop SMART indicators, the STAP has developed guidelines and even the CGEF Council endorsed a recommendation by the TL in a Strategic Evaluation (IEO 2023) to develop more robust ToCs and SMART outcomes. We understand that these came after the ProDoc was developed, but we believe that our recommendations could be useful for PACA to consider the recommendations presented in the MTR report related to these specific Design issues. iii) The MTR team is basing its recommendations on guidelines presented in widely available documentation, including Stafford Smith, M. (2020). Theory of Change Primer: A STAP Advisory Document. Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility, which is a good starting point.
Although Outcome 5.2 aims to use the PACA Website to disseminate lessons and best practices, the present approach for gathering information and data is fragmented and problematic according to interviews, .	Although Outcome 5.2 aims to use the PACA Website to disseminate lessons and best practices, the present approach for gathering information and data is fragmented and problematic according to interviews. The problem is related to the apparent lack of understanding by PACA stakeholders that the existing ToC is problematic, when asked about the robustness of the ToC and the indicators, none of the 60+ people interviewed could find any concerns with them. , the largely output indicators and despite the MTR's attempts to discuss its concern that if the same approach carries over to the TDA
Several countries have yet to make the difficult shift from the classical top-down governability approach to one that is grounded in integrated, participatory, inclusive, and adaptive governance that requires multi-level collaboration with the lowest practical levels of implementation.	Regional cooperation is likely to break down. While PACA has no role in changing a country's governance framework, it is important to highlight that unless all adjustments are presented to address the continued use of outdated top-down governability structures. PACA runs the risk of not meeting its objective, as well as risking the loss of funding opportunities to continue build a regional approach and local support that are fundamental for implementing coastal-marine resilience-building measures. It will likely result in Inconsistent marine policies, enforcement gaps, or conflicting management strategies across shared ecosystems. However, if some countries resist governance in favor of top-down control, it threatens the integrity, equity, and effectiveness of the PACA project. These risks not only jeopardize localized outcomes but also pose a challenge to the project's overall credibility and replicability. Impact on Objective:- One of PCA LME's core principles is participatory governance involving local communities, NGOs, and coastal industries. If governance remains top-down or incomplete regionally, these actors may feel alienated or distrustful; Goal affected: "Inclusive and participatory management of marine and coastal resources." Result at Risk: Expected results like community co-management or behavioral change among fishers may be superficial or absent.

Overall Project Rating

The evaluation concludes that PACA has made ***moderately satisfactory*** progress towards its expected results. Project implementation has been satisfactory, and adaptive management moderately unsatisfactory, while sustainability of project results is moderately likely (Table 1).[11] There are several reasons for assigning PACA's less-than satisfactory rating. For example, over 60 interviews indicated that key PACA stakeholders still have a poor understanding of Ecosystems-based management (EBM) and governance. While there are no pilot study areas in which the regional SAP will be implemented. It will be applicable to the entire PACA LME region, the if the ToC is built on the same inadequate framework, the SAP will face similar problems and risks as those outlined for the ProDoc ToC. The narrow focus

[11] The MTR team adopted the GEF's 6-point scale to rate the project's progress towards the objective and each project outcome: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). More detailed information of the analysis of progress at mid-term is given in Annex 9.

on outputs, incorrectly labelled outcomes (most are outputs) and the absence of a framework that allows for feedback loops to drive adaptive management and learning must not be repeated.

The second impediment is less than optimal coordination between the activities led by an excellent team of technical experts in the executing agency (WWF) and the regional implementing authority (UNDP-Costa Rica). Although most interviewees were content with the information-sharing process, others expressed concern that the information has been siloed due to the absence of a fully operational regional coordination mechanism, diverse national capacities and priorities, complexity of multi-stakeholder involvement, and technical and financial constraints. This notwithstanding, this is a work in progress and there is no reason to believe that it cannot be resolved. For example, the UNDP country office (CO) developed several working sessions and provided support during project implementation and collaborated on key activities such as the kick-off workshop, in-country working sessions, and even coordinated with other UNDP country offices. The present MTR is an example of this coordination. . Another issue is that the knowledge management and communication strategies are based on traditional, static top-down processes, rather than on context-specific strategies that focus on learning by doing. Instead of capturing and disseminating on-the ground experiences in the pilot studies, the knowledge and communication strategy offers pamphlets and guidelines, which in some cases (e.g., mangroves), have nothing to do with the pilot project in Ecuador. Building knowledge management on a flawed approach is counterproductive. Regardless of whether this was presented at a workshop, the MTR finds a serious weakness and is simply trying to alert the PMU that corrective action is required if PACA is going to adopt more modern, innovative approaches to KM.

Table 4: Summary of the MTR ratings of the PACA project.

Measure		MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Global		**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	*Progress in achieving the results framework goals through May 2025," shows that indicators 1, 2, and 5 have a yellow rating relative to their final goal, which means "on target to be achieved." The MTR team finds this response surprising. It has reviewed the root cause analysis presented in the documented evidence and participated in several of the working sessions with the country representatives in Antigua and the same superficial analyses continued. The MTR team had no authority to intervene and therefore said nothing. We hope that the PMU will take these constructive criticisms seriously because not doing so runs a very high risk of presenting a superficial SAP. As mentioned, the MTR offers an opportunity to learn and adapt, and it could benefit the PMU, the IA and the GEF, as well as the entire PACA stakeholders if these findings were viewed as an effort to support PACA and not undermine it.*
Project Strategy		**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	The strategy is well formulated. However the design to implement that strategy has many shortcomings.
Progress Towards Results	Objective	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	Regional governance is and the applications of an ecosystems-based approach to management is far from being achieved.
	Outcome 1	**Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**	*While the % of women involved in formulating the TDAs has doubled since inception, this is not an outcome (Indicator 8). While the evidence shows that a long-term regional agreement to update*

Measure		MTR Rating	Achievement Description
			the PACA status report is underway, No agreement/cooperation framework in place. Consequently, the Midterm target has not been achieved and it is unlikely that the end-of-project target will be achieved. Most countries in the region have not yet designated representatives from their foreign ministries, and the capacity of regional bodies (such as SICA) is limited without clear leadership from the countries.
	Outcome 2	**Unsatisfactory (U)**	*This is a difficult judgment. The TDAs and countries have developed and proposed governance mechanisms. However, there are differences in the definitions and understanding of inclusive governance. Costa Rica's Governance report is excellent and should be shared with other countries. It also lays out very clearly the rationale for including different regional bodies who could help ensure continuity beyond national government commitments, given that there is always a risk that new elections could lead to non-compliance.* (Indicator 10). It is too early to have even a preliminary SAP, given that the TDAs were only recently completed (Indicator 11).
	Outcome 3	**Satisfactory (S)**	While these are not impacts they offer some excellent tools that could lead to impacts provided that a more robust indicator an ToC are developed (indicator 13). Level of development of regional guidelines for marine spatial planning in PACA are in general, excellent as are the national diagnostics (indicator 14).
	Outcome 4	**Satisfactory (S)**	Project specific-Level of adoption of a set of key indicators about the condition of PACA and SAP implementation are being developed, but they are OUTPUTS, and not SMART outcomes. This is largely due to the weak foundation that is problematic with the ToC. The MTR is surprised that for a GEF 7 project there is still resistance in developing SMART outcomes that do not measure transformative outcomes. While it is likely to be difficult to change the ProDoc outcome indicators, this is a lesson of the utmost importance when indicators are formulated for the SAP. Failure to address this shortcoming will not only jeopardize the intended effects of the SAP but also presents a high risk that the project will not be sustained for the reasons explained in the text. Although the Prodoc has many good elements.. However, the TOC and indicators are not up to international standards, including those developed for the GEF by STAP. The MTR TEAM recommends that the PMU and the IA consult with GEF IW on how to address this situation. Normally, these indicators cannot be changed at mid ter. However, because it is such a critical issue and eaves a major gap that could present the project ith many risks, we

Measure		MTR Rating	Achievement Description
			recommend that this is best addressed by GEF IW office for LAC.
	Outcome 5	**Satisfactory (S)**	Indicator 17: project specific number of people (men and women, by country) who have participated in events for dissemination of lessons and best practices (e.g., workshops, IWC) 977 people (54.60% women)... Indicator 18: project specific Number of visitors per month (annual average) recorded in the network of electronic platforms used to disseminate project´s learnings and best practice Visits: 18,837 (may-dec 2024); Users reached on social networks (annual average): 210,591 (average considering period Jan-March, 2025)
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management		**Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**	While project implementation is moving ahead, there is poor communication among the responsible agencies, The systematic application of Adaptive management is inadequate, largely because the Theory of change is poor.
Sustainability		**Moderately Likely (ML)**	To date, the available evidence indicates that there is no exit strategy that addresses the financial and institutional issues that are fundamental for sustaining the project. The institutional aspects are especially of concern, given the risks that the election year turnovers of governments represent a high risk for sustaining the project. While SICA and OSPESCA offer some continuity, the key institutions for sustaining PACA are informal ones like the local communities, fishery associations, CSOs and NGOs.

In summary, PACA has a set out to achieve a comprehensive set of activities and outputs aligned with ecosystem-based management goals. The evidence is solid for demonstrating the commitment the countries have shown to support the project. The Executing Agency and the Regional Implementing Agency are highly professional and have solid technical expertise for facilitating the implementation process and their work and commitment are rated as being highly satisfactory. However, communication and coordination gap between the EA and the RIA that must be addressed immediately.

While there are some good Knowledge Management and Learning tools that the PMU has developed, including actions such as webinars, courses, exchanges, and meetings. These are the places where lessons learned and best practices are extracted, the approach is based on traditional methods that focus on top down dissemination through bulletins and guidelines, some of which are not pertinent at this early stage of PACA. This results from insufficient integration of participatory, and culturally sensitive knowledge sharing practices that could better capture and utilize the rich, diverse knowledge needed for effective regional coastal marine ecosystem management. While the MTR team understands that the focus during this stage of PACA is on top-down governability and not inclusive governance, the pilot projects offer a model for governance offers invaluable lessons on incipient inclusive governance mechanisms and shows unexpected positive outcomes that address the MTR's concerns regarding inclusive governance. Except for the bottom-up process adopted by Conservation International for the MSP pilot in Ecuador, there is little transversal governance feedback to higher level stakeholders at the national and regional levels.

PACA's Theory of Change lacks the clarity and specificity for its outcomes and assumptions needed to effectively guide adaptive management and learning, and in summary, it is extremely poorly developed. This shortcoming runs a high risk of hindering the project's ability to respond dynamically and adaptively to multiple challenges and barriers, while creating new barriers for measuring progress toward transformative outcomes. Although the Knowledge Management and Information System are fundamental for any project like this one, the approach being implemented by PACA is inadequate, largely because there is no ToC foundation upon which to connect and provide feedback from building upon PACA's successes and correcting its mistakes. The strong emphasis on Output performance indicators versus having developed robust SMART Outcome indicators is a major weakness for the KM and Information System. While the strategy for facilitating knowledge management and learning (KM&L) exchange and dissemination of best practices is relevant, especially through dedicated websites and south-south cooperation platforms, an interactive MEL (or KM&L) platform is another viable option that might be considered.

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PACA's weak assumptions compromise the project's effectiveness by increasing risk, reducing planning accuracy, undermining stakeholder engagement, and limiting the project's ability to adapt and succeed. The implications of superficial assumptions in the ProDoc underscore the need for stronger baseline assessments, stakeholder integration, and mid-term financial planning in future LME projects to avoid repeating systemic weaknesses. Proactively identifying, validating, and managing assumptions throughout the project lifecycle is essential to mitigate these negative impacts.

Implications: A poorly designed ToC and lack of SMART outcome indicators risks turning PACA into a mechanistic, output-driven initiative that fails to drive or demonstrate real change in marine ecosystem governance and sustainability. It undermines effectiveness, learning, accountability, and long-term impact. Consequently, the weak ToC represents an example of a lost opportunity for PACA drive an adaptive management process at the regional and national levels, enhance the project's efficiency and its effectiveness, as well as sustain PACA's good practices after funding ends.

Conclusions

1) **Highly satisfactory quality of project execution** by the implementing partner, WWF Guatemala/Mesoamerica, has been generally positive, with notable strengths and significant areas for improvement.
2) **Three quarters of Targets achieved** - The project has achieved 14 midterm targets, representing 78% of the total, and, as evidence suggests, is likely to achieve 13 end-of-project targets, corresponding to 72% of the total.
3) **The creation of the PMU, the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee** has been a major achievement for improving coordination and participatory decision-making. This has been a significant achievement as it has resulted in modifications of the results framework indicators, the Gender Action Plan, and budgetary changes, among others.
4) **Weak Management arrangements for Component 2** - national diagnostics (where consulting firms were hired) with the parties responsible for the pilots (which are only 4 entities has resulted in fragmented siloing of information and may result in information gaps for developing a regional vision due to high level of outsourcing in execution used to hired multiple consulting firms without adequate integration of the products generated. Most of the parties responsible for the pilots pointed out a disconnect between the regional project and what is happening at the local level, with many alluding to the fact that they have felt like islands and isolated in decision-making.

5) **The EBM approach is incomplete**. EBM is one of the key pillars of PACA's Strategic Vision and inaction will not only undermine PACA's environmental, economic, and social objectives, but also the effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy of the PACA initiative.6) **Theory of Change is weak and deficient** in many aspects and while it may be difficult to change it at this late stage, the ToC developed for the regional SAP should learn from the ProDoc's ToC mistakes. ~~*. This cannot be repeated for the national and Reginal SAPs.*~~

7) **Inadequate M&E system** - PACA's proposed Regional M&E system is built on a design that has failed in other GEF projects.
8) **Communication gaps** - There is a large communication gap between the pilot projects and the TDA consultants. While the PMU does not see this as an issue, the MTR team considers not doing so represents a lost opportunity for sharing, something that is considered to be one of PACA's pillars and outcomes.
9) **Static Communication & KM strategy** - PACA's communication and knowledge management strategies follow classical approaches to communication in coastal-marine projects, which has often been top-down, one-way, and heavily focused on information dissemination rather than engagement or behavior change.
10) **Cost-effectiveness** - on a purely economic level, the project is being executed cost-effectively. The project is considered to have adequate financial controls at the regional level to be able to make informed management decisions regarding the budget.
11) **Co-financing** - At mid-term, the project has significantly exceeded the amount of in-kind co-financing. The project is considered to have adequate financial controls at the regional level to be able to make informed management decisions regarding the budget, *but there is no way to corroborate the actual amount that has been implemented to date by co-financing institutions*.
12) **Financial execution** - The levels of financial execution for each Component are uniform. Based on the global amount established in the ProDoc, disbursements for components 1 and 2 (50% and 48%) are satisfactory, while component 3 is low (34%).

Recommendations

1) **The PMU and Regional Implementation partner should immediately revise and adjust the ToC to comply with GEF Council recommendations.**
2) **With urgency, the PMU, Steering and Technical Committees should revise the approach to EBM to ensure that it meets international standards,** as the EBM approach is incomplete.
3) **The PMU must not only ensure that land-sea interactions and connections are included but also ensure that they include all foundational elements of the most recently recommended approaches to EBM cited herein, ensuring that** they not only addresses ecological health, but also social equity, and climate resilience.[12] It should also strengthen key elements of Ecosystem-based management, including more inclusive governance that adheres to best EBM practices cited in the bibliography.
4) **The PMU and Steering Committee must revisit and integrated the STAP report recommendations on knowledge management plans** to ensure that they would benefit from an elaboration of mechanisms to promote exchange of lessons beyond documentation and online distribution of lessons, particularly with regard to the function of the proposed "working groups" at regional scale.
5) **The PMU and UNDP should act immediately to integrate information and knowledge management** so that communication of results and lessons are significantly improved. Communication should evolve into a strategic, inclusive, and adaptive process.
6) **Communication, information and knowledge-sharing must be immediately improved at all levels**, with the PMU and Regional Implementing Agency taking the lead.
7) **Communication, information and knowledge-sharing must be immediately improved at all levels**, with the PMU and Regional Implementing Agency taking the lead. **The PMU should assess the degree to which PACA governments meet the conditions for inclusive and adaptive governance and develop a strategic plan** to ensure more inclusive national and regional

[12] See Quierós et al. 2025, which is highly relevant for the TDA, SAP and MSPs.

governance, as well as the integrity, equity, and effectiveness of the PACA project, which is currently a major weakness.

8) **National diagnostics should be re-examined and in those cases where symptoms vs. root causes are presented**, the TDAs should be revised to ensure that the primary root causes are presented, rather than symptoms,
9) **The PMU, Steering and Technical Committees should carefully examine the M&E system that is being developed** because as proposed the Regional M&E system is built on a design that has failed in other GEF projects. **The TDA and SAP should examine the feasibility of including economic valuation of the most critical ecosystem services in the PACA LME studie**s (.
10) **The TDA and SAP should examine the feasibility of including economic valuation of the most critical ecosystem services in the PACA LME studie**s (e.g., Total Economic Value of marine ecosystems and the services they provide), develop tools for natural capital accounting and ecosystem service integration into national decision-making.
11) **Communications officers of the parties responsible (CI, MarViva, LANCIS-UNA, and OET) should not only contribute toward increasing the project's visibility, but they could create synergies to form a coordinated strategy that could foster an improved the level of ownership of the products generated by institutions and organizations.** The importance of establishing a concrete strategic action aimed at political decision-makers cannot be overemphasized.
12) **Build capacities to carry out participatory M&E, a highly effective tool for tracking changes and applying adaptive management and hands-on learning to capture lessons systematically is surprisingly absent.** This is not only innovative, but it has the effect of building ownership, local capacities and creating social resilience and capital. In this regard, the weak ToC is actually a barrier to such an innovative approach.
13) **It is urgent to work towards building a shared vision among all stakeholders that this is a regional project that goes beyond national boundaries. To achieve this, the project management must embrace a regional strategic vision** and take on a more active role in the coordination and oversight of all project components—including Component 2, which is currently being administered by UNDP country offices.
14) In line with the above, **it is urgent to identify and strengthen the ownership of the PACA project by a regional body that can help ensure its long-term sustainability**. Entities such as SICA or CIAT could potentially assume this role;
15) **In order to address the finding by the evaluation team regarding discrepancies in the reported amounts, particularly in Component 2 (which includes the pilot initiatives) and in the PMC**, given that the UNDP country offices also have an assigned budget, it is recommended that:
    a) The PMU works jointly with the UNDP Costa Rica Country Office to define an audit cycle plan for the PACA project.
    b) That WWF coordinate with the UNDP RTA to establish a mechanism that includes a template for consolidating and cross-checking financial information on a quarterly basis. A calendar should be established so that, prior to the submission of the quarterly financial report, the UNDP country offices implementing national pilots send their information to the RTA, where it is consolidated and then shared with WWF for feedback and to maintain an up-to-date record.

1. Project Description and Background Context

1.1 Overview

The GEF-funded project "Towards Joint Integrated, Ecosystem-Based Management of the Pacific Central American Coastal (PACA) Large Marine Ecosystem (LME)"—also known as the Sustainable Pacific Project—covers nearly 2 million km² of coastal and marine habitats across nine countries and five distinct ecoregions: Mexican Tropical Pacific, Chiapas-Nicaragua, Nicoya, Panama Bight, and Guayaquil (Figure 2). Each ecoregion features unique ecological and oceanographic characteristics.

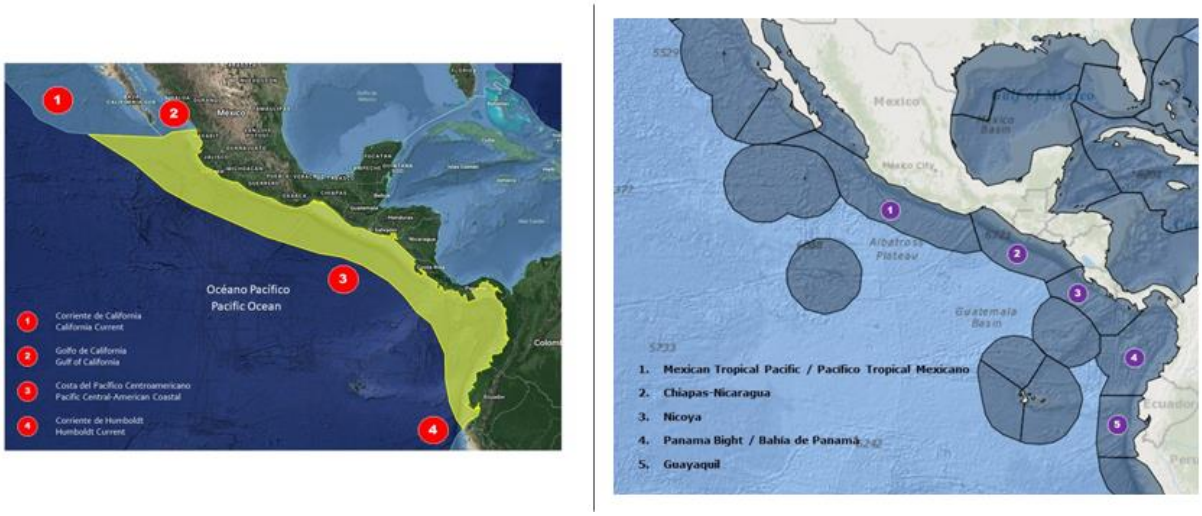


Figure 1: The PACA LME[13]

The PACA region delivers essential ecosystem services, including maritime shipping, tourism, and fisheries (notably shrimp, small pelagics, and tunas). It also contains significant carbon reservoirs in mangrove forests and wetlands, representing billions in potential sustainable financing.

Despite its importance, PACA faces escalating threats from environmental degradation, overfishing, and climate change. These pressures endanger biodiversity, coastal protection, food security, and the livelihoods of millions. As such, PACA is an ideal candidate for advancing a circular blue economy that balances equitable benefit-sharing with ecosystem resilience.

1.1.1 Project Objective

The project's main objective is to promote ecosystem-based management of the Central American Pacific LME by strengthening regional governance. This involves building collaborative, cross-boundary governance to address root causes of declining ecosystem resilience and overcome barriers to effective action.

Guided by a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and a forthcoming Strategic Action Program (SAP), PACA seeks to deliver practical solutions for sustainable economies, biodiversity conservation, and improved regional governance. National marine and coastal diagnostics in the seven participating countries have laid the groundwork for this regional integration, emphasizing local realities, cross-border collaboration, and inclusive stakeholder participation. In summary, PACA seeks to: i) Develop a

[13] From the PACA ProDoc.

participatory process for an integrated diagnosis (TDA) and a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) adopted by participating countries; ii) build human and social capital through training, communication, and knowledge transfer. This includes endorsement and implementation of a regional SAP for sustainable management of the PACA LME by participating countries; and iii) implement practical learning exercises on key issues such as billfish recreational fisheries, marine spatial planning, and whale watching..

1.1.2 Key Project Components

PACA's 40-month program (2023–2027), funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNDP with WWF Mesoamerica, is structured around three main components:

1. Strengthened Collaborative Governance: Establishing joint management mechanisms across national boundaries.
2. Enhanced Stakeholder Participation and Capacity: Building capacity among public and private sectors for ecosystem-based management.
3. Demonstrated Environmental Improvements: Implementing pilot interventions to address overfishing, habitat degradation, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

Key interventions include participatory development of the TDA and SAP, capacity-building through training and knowledge transfer, and practical learning exercises on issues such as billfish fisheries, marine spatial planning, and whale watching.

1.1.3 Intervention Sites

Project activities are distributed across critical habitats in the seven participating countries, including mangroves, coral reefs, shelf edges, pelagic and artisanal fisheries zones, and coastal wetlands—all vital for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

1.1.4 Implementation and Stakeholder Arrangements

PACA's institutional and implementation arrangements are overseen by Project Board, which is the central decision-making body for the project, providing strategic direction, oversight, and guidance. It includes representatives from UNDP, WWF Mesoamerica, participating country governments, and key stakeholder groups (Table 5). The Principal Technical Advisor (PTA) provides technical oversight and ensures the project adheres to GEF methodologies, particularly for the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) processes. A Marine Resources Management Specialist (MRS) not only leads the development and implementation of pilot interventions, but also coordinates the TDA/SAP process, ensuring output delivery according to the Project Document. The MRS works closely with the Gender and Participation Specialist and the wider WWF network.

Table 5: PACA's main stakeholders.

Implementing and Executing Partners	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Project implementing agency overseeing compliance and reporting, while WWF Mesoamerica is the Regional executing agency responsible for day-to-day coordination and technical implementation.
National Governments and Agencies	Ministries and agencies responsible for fisheries, environment, tourism, agriculture, and maritime security in the participating countries. These entities are central to project implementation, policy alignment, and national-level coordination.
Regional Organizations	Institutions such as the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), UNEP, and FAO provide technical support, policy guidance, and facilitate regional coordination and integration.
Coastal Communities	Approximately 17 million people living in coastal municipalities bordering the PACA LME, including artisanal fishers, tourism operators, and local households who depend on marine resources for livelihoods, food security, and employment
Industrial and Artisanal Fisheries Sectors	Both large-scale (industrial tuna, shrimp) and small-scale (artisanal) fishers and related businesses, which are directly affected by, and contribute to, the management and sustainability of marine resources.

Tourism Sector	Businesses and workers in marine and coastal tourism, including those involved in whale and dolphin watching, hospitality, and guiding services.
Civil Society and NGOs	Local, national, and regional non-governmental organizations engaged in environmental protection, community development, and advocacy for sustainable resource use.
Scientific and Academic Institutions	Universities and research centers that contribute to biodiversity assessments, monitoring, and capacity-building activities.
Vulnerable Groups	Populations particularly affected by poverty, environmental degradation, and limited economic opportunities, including women, youth, and marginalized coastal communities.

National Agencies

Each participating country (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador) is represented by national agencies responsible for fisheries, environment, tourism, agriculture, and maritime security. These agencies coordinate national implementation and contribute to regional governance and governability processes.

The project also leverages regional bodies such as the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), UNEP, and FAO for technical support and policy guidance. At the lowest practical levels, PACA emphasizes participatory processes, with a strategy for awareness-raising, stakeholder participation, and training of public and private sector actors on ecosystem-based management. The stakeholders shown in Table 4 collectively contribute to, and benefit from, the project's efforts to strengthen marine governance, promote ecosystem-based management, and enhance the resilience and equitable sharing of benefits from the region's marine resources.
PACA emphasizes participatory processes, awareness-raising, and training for public and private sector actors.

1.2 Environmental context and global significance

PACA is a dynamic and productive LME that encompasses five marine ecoregions[14] covering nearly 2 million Km^2, with each ecoregion possessing characteristic ecological and oceanographic features. PACA supports exceptional biodiversity, including over 6,700 recorded species between Costa Rica and Ecuador alone. The most diverse taxa include polychaetes, fishes, crustaceans, and mollusks, which together account for nearly half of the known biota. This includes 383 gastropods, 354 fishes, and 263 crustaceans, as well endemic species that have been the focus of extensive scientific research that reveal new species and rich marine life. Specific areas like the Gulf of Tehuantepec report 24 cephalopod species and 161 demersal fish species. Coastal and marine protected areas have expanded significantly, from 204,000 hectares in 1983 to about 2.9 million hectares by 2014. The creation of the Deep Mexican Pacific Biosphere Reserve in 2016 further increased protection, covering deep-sea habitats and raising total MPA coverage in PACA to about 30%.

The region is home to iconic marine mammals (blue and humpback whales) and endangered sea turtles, with extensive marine protected areas now covering about 30% of the LME. Charismatic marine mammals such as blue whales and humpback whales abound, with blue whales over-winter in the Costa Rican Thermal Convection Dome, while humpback whales from both hemispheres use the region's warm waters for breeding and calving. Unsurprisingly, whale and dolphin watching is an important and growing tourism activity along the coast. Key habitats include mangroves, coral reefs, and biodiversity hotspots like Isla del Coco. PACA also provides habitats, nesting beaches and feeding grounds for endangered sea turtles, including the critically endangered hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) with some of the largest nesting aggregations in Costa Rica, while green turtles also extensively use the region for nesting and feeding, with individuals migrating between distant rookeries such as Mexico, Galapagos, and Colombia.

[14] Spalding et al., 2007.

The region is influenced by coastal upwelling driven by wind jets through geographic passages, contributing to high biological productivity, which is largely responsible for PACA's high primary productivity (class 4)[15], due to enhanced nutrient availability and biological productivity. Oceanic water within he PACA LME are warmer conditions than the neighboring Gulf of California LME is to the north and the Humboldt current LME to the south, and the northern and southern extremes are transition areas with seasonal subtropical conditions.[16]

Threats to this globally important biodiversity comes from: (1) pollution, (2) degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems and habitats, (3) overuse of fishery resources, (4) direct impacts on fauna and flora, and (5) climate variability due to ocean warming and acidification, both of which pose serious threats to coral reefs within the LME, many of which are already near environmental thresholds. Eutrophication and harmful algal blooms (HABs) are frequent in several coastal areas, causing fish kills, coral inhibition, and threats to marine life and human health. Seven major eutrophic zones have been identified, including Golfo de Nicoya (Costa Rica) and Golfo de Guayaquil (Ecuador).

1.3 Social and economic context

The social and economic dimensions of the PACA LME are shaped by its ecological richness, human and economic development that depend on marine resources, and persistent challenges in balancing the maintenance of ecosystems resilience and sustainable development. One quarter of the 250 million people live in coastal provinces, with over 17 million people living in the 228 coastal municipalities bordering PACA and these coastal communities in the Pacific Central American LME face interconnected socioeconomic challenges rooted in poverty, environmental pressures, limited opportunities, and weak governance. Addressing these issues (Table 6) requires integrated approaches that combine sustainable resource management, economic diversification, improved social services, and strengthened regional cooperation.

Table 6: Main social issues within the PACA LME.

PROBLEM AREA	KEY ISSUES
Poverty & Vulnerability	High poverty rates, economic inequality, limited diversification
Resource Dependence	Overreliance on fisheries and tourism, unsustainable practices
Environmental Degradation	Overfishing, habitat loss, pollution
Service & Infrastructure	Lack of basic services, poor market access
Social & Security Risks	Illegal activities, violence, migration/displacement
Climate Change	Storms, sea-level rise, ocean warming and acidification
Governance	Weak, fragmented management, low stakeholder participation

Fisheries—dominated by tuna (big-eye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna) and billfish[17] —generate an estimated $2 billion annually, with industrial and artisanal fleets also targeting valuable shrimp stocks. Although shrimp catches are modest in volume, their high market value provides substantial benefits to coastal communities through employment and income. Specific shrimp catch volumes for Panama, a key PACA country, are estimated around 1,000 tons, indicating shrimp is a smaller but important part of the fisheries portfolio. The region's shrimp fisheries contribute significantly to the local economies, supported by both industrial and artisanal sectors. American shrimp market is projected to grow from $5.7 billion in 2025 to $13.2 billion by 2035. Small-scale fisheries provide livelihoods for coastal communities, targeting species like mahi-mahi (*Coryphaena hippurus*). However, artisanal fleets are taking high-value species like sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) as bycatch, which has led to governments taking regulatory measures to reduce overexploitation.

[15] Average primary productivity is c. 407 g C m^{-2} yr^{-1}

[16] Aquarone & Adams, 2009; Heileman, 2009; Heileman et al., 2009; Wilkinson et al., 2009

[17] https://www.iattc.org/GetAttachment/e6fe3d41-6985-4921-acc0-39a60cb3d72c/SAC-15-01_The-tuna-fishery-in-the-Eastern-Pacific-Ocean-in-2023.pdf; IATTC Tuna Fishery Report 2023; Western and Central Pacific Tuna Fishery Overview 2023.

1.4 Institutional context and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope[18]

Balancing marine resource use with resilience-building in the PACA LME requires adaptive and inclusive governance, equitable economic alternatives and effective transboundary cooperation. While the PACA initiative is incipient, it faces persistent challenges—including poverty, narcotrafficking, unsustainable fishing practices and biodiversity loss, coupled with climate change— that require necessitate urgent, integrated solutions, including cross-sectoral and regional cooperation. It includes diverse national agencies responsible for fisheries, environment, tourism, agriculture, and maritime security, as well as country specific legislation, policies and strategies, as well as national monitoring systems and indicator frameworks. Not surprisingly, PACA's central aim faces multiple barriers and challenges in strengthening collaborative governance arrangements that transcend national boundaries to enable ecosystems-based management of the LME is a challenge that PACA is addressing. While the project is primarily focused on engaging national and regional entities responsible for governability, with the exception of several MSP pilot projects, PACA pays much less attention to inclusive governance that integrates the lowest practical levels of planning and implementation.

Regional governance structures in PACA LME provide the institutional and collaborative foundation necessary for ecosystem-based management by enabling joint planning, stakeholder participation, sectoral coordination, adaptive decision-making, and policy integration across national boundaries. These governance structures operate at multiple levels—from local to regional to national—allowing for decentralized decision-making that is responsive to local conditions while maintaining regional coherence and the adaptive governance approach supports flexibility in managing complex social-ecological systems and responding to emerging challenges like climate change.

As part of the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) provides a platform for regional environmental cooperation and policy coordination, including marine ecosystem management. Other Regional Bodies: The project leverages technical support and policy guidance from UNEP, FAO, and other intergovernmental organizations with mandates in fisheries management, pollution control, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation. These organizations facilitate coordination and knowledge exchange among countries.

1.5 Problems that the project aims to address: threats and barriers targeted

The PACA project faces several significant barriers that challenge its objectives of strengthening regional marine governance and promoting ecosystem-based management, as summarized in Table 7.

[18] Sources: GEF PACA LME ProDoc on — strengthening regional governance for ecosystem-based Management; Principles and Practice of Ecosystem-Based Management (SPREP Guide); IW:LEARN Project Document on PACA LME Governance

Table 7: The main barriers to PACA's effective implementation.

MAIN BARRIERS	
Fragmented and Disarticulated Governance	The region's coastal-marine planning and management are fragmented across national boundaries and sectors, leading to inconsistent policies and management approaches. This fragmentation makes it difficult to coordinate actions for shared resources and implement effective transboundary governance.
Transboundary Environmental Threats	Multiple threats include pollution, overfishing, and habitat degradation—are transboundary in nature, with pollutants and marine resources moving freely across borders. This complicates mitigation efforts and requires high levels of regional cooperation that are often lacking. Ocean warming and acidification from climate changes are another serious threat to habits like coral reefs.
Institutional and Policy Gaps	There are gaps in legal, policy, and institutional frameworks that hinder the adoption of integrated, ecosystem-based management. These gaps impede the development and enforcement of coordinated management strategies across countries.
Capacity Constraints	Limited human and institutional capacity in participating countries restricts effective governance, monitoring, and enforcement. Building the necessary skills and knowledge for ecosystem-based management remains a challenge.
Environmental Degradation and Climate Change	Ongoing habitat loss, pollution, overfishing (including bycatch of CITES-listed species), and the impacts of climate change (e.g., ocean warming, acidification, and harmful algal blooms) threaten ecosystem resilience and undermine project objectives.
Socioeconomic Pressures and Poverty	High poverty rates, economic vulnerability, and overdependence on marine resources in coastal communities drive unsustainable practices and increase resistance to regulatory measures that might restrict resource use in the short term.
Security Risks and Illegal Activities	Illegal migration, drug trafficking, and associated violence in coastal areas pose direct threats to fishers and destabilize communities, making it more difficult to implement and enforce conservation measures.
Data and Knowledge Gaps	Insufficient scientific data and monitoring systems hinder the ability to assess ecosystem health, track progress, and make evidence-based decisions based on evidence-based or adaptive management.

2. Objectives, approach and Methodology of the MTR

The overall objective of this consultancy is to conduct the midterm review (MTR) of the Pacific Central American (PACA) Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) project in accordance with UNDP and GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policies and procedures.[19] The team's Terms of Reference are presented in Annex 1.

The MTR presented herein examines the progress made toward achieving PACA's objectives and outcomes, as laid out in the Project Document. The MTR team acknowledges that PACA is a foundation-laying project and no impacts (long-term outcomes) are expected when it ends. The MTR also focuses on assessing the progress that has been made toward laying a foundation for transboundary/trans-zonal coastal-marine governance and ecosystems-based management to address the inadequate regional and national policies, as well as gaps in governance and coastal-marine spatial planning and management of shared resources, which are one of the root causes of declining resilience of the PACA Large Marine Ecosystem (LME). This includes identifying any additional challenges and assessing the degree to which barriers in the ProDoc have been addressed, to measure results and evaluate early signs of success or weaknesses, while defining corrective actions and with recommendations that will help ensure that the project is on track to achieve its results upon completion. To these ends, the MTR aims to provide recommendations on how the Executing Agency, Regional Implementing Agency and their partners can optimize the continued engagement, planning and technical support during the final months of the project.

[19] All full-size UNDP-supported, GEF-funded projects must undergo a midterm review.

The MTR also analyzes the project strategy and design, including the indicators used to develop the Theory of Change (ToC), the relevance of the assumptions, risks and their contribution to driving adaptive management principles. Finally, it examines the risks that could prevent the continued learning and implementation process after funding ends. The MTR's findings will be used by the UNDP Country Office in Costa Rica and the other UNDP Country Offices involved in the project, the WWF Mesoamerica Project Management Unit, and key stakeholders to improve project implementation and modify any aspects that ensure compliance with the results framework. The outline of this report follows the GEF's guidelines for MTRs.

2.1 The Scope, Design and Evidence Collection used in the MTR's Methodology

Methodology

PACA was designed around the Theory of Change (ToC), often referred to as the pathway toward impacts presented in the ProDoc. One of the first steps in the consulting team's evaluative approach was to review the robustness of the ToC, which lays the foundation for knowledge management, testing assumptions and if required, adapting PACA's path toward outcomes based on the systematic lessons that are captured throughout implementation.

The MTR team used a combination of tools to triangulate the available evidence, including a thorough review of key project-related documents and scientific literature relevant to the project context. Gathering stakeholder perceptions of the project is essential, and additional evidence was gathered through Zoom/Team interviews or direct phone calls. This also helped to refine key evaluation questions and further analyze the extent to which risk-mitigation measures were adequately addressed.

In qualitative evaluations, all perceptions are valid, but not all carry the same weight as evidence for constructing findings and recommendations. It is important to clarify that the evaluation team does not operate from a "true/false" logic regarding perceptions, but rather uses a combination of techniques to triangulate the available evidence. Thus, if a statement appears only in an interview, without documentary support or corroboration by other stakeholders, it is considered an unconfirmed individual perception. This does not invalidate its existence, but limits its use in substantiating a finding. On the other hand, sometimes a minority perception may reflect an emerging problem or an important marginal experience. In the latter case, it is important to consider the type of stakeholder they are, and their level of power and influence in the project. Stakeholders who are in the minority in number and have low power, but are key to implementation due to their work, may express perceptions that other stakeholders (due to their position in the project) do not experience, and it is valuable for evaluation exercises to reflect these voices. This does not imply that their opinion has greater weight or validity, only that its particular qualities and context should be reviewed and specified.

The extent to which the PACA project addressed the aforementioned criteria was examined through a series of Evaluation Questions (EQs) formulated for each criterion (Annex 2). Each EQ was answered through a series of Judgment Criteria (JCs) and Indicators. The consulting team has reviewed the evaluation criteria suggested in the ToR and while they were adequate and thus maintained to ensure consistency, the MTR team developed additional questions to ensure greater robustness. Annex 3 presents the evaluation matrix.

Finally, the MTR Team formulated JCs that could provide standardized, objective, and evidence-based answers, analyzed through interviews, field visits, and existing information from relevant project reports. Furthermore, the EQs and JCs will help identify gaps that may require further investigation. Each EQ will

likely have more than one evaluation criterion and indicator, with the goal of providing as much information as possible to answer the key question.

Data Collection

Typically, there are two types of data: primary data (collected from interviews, field visits, and direct observations) and secondary data (extracted from existing documents). Primary data collection will be conducted both virtually and in person. In person, field visits, interviews, focus groups, or group interviews, and meetings were conducted at the regional workshop in Antigua and during site visits in Ecuador. Interviews (via Zoom, Teams, etc.) were conducted at the local, national, and regional levels, as well as surveys of key PACA stakeholders (see Annex 4 for the Interview protocol). Focus group interviews were used to collect qualitative data aiming to give a voice to stakeholder groups that may be positively or negatively affected by the project and to examine PACA's impact on specific groups, such as women, Indigenous populations, people with disabilities, and other relevant vulnerable groups. The mission schedule and list of people interviewed are presented in Annexes 6 and 7, respectively. All interviews are confidential and therefore, none of the names of the interviewees are revealed. Secondary data were analyzed through reports, plans, budgets, evaluation reports, or other relevant sources. The conclusions of the document are based on the review of relevant documentation and interviews with key stakeholders, which are summarized in Figure 2. The evaluation team is composed of two evaluators. The evaluation team triangulated the primary and secondary data to answer the evaluation questions.

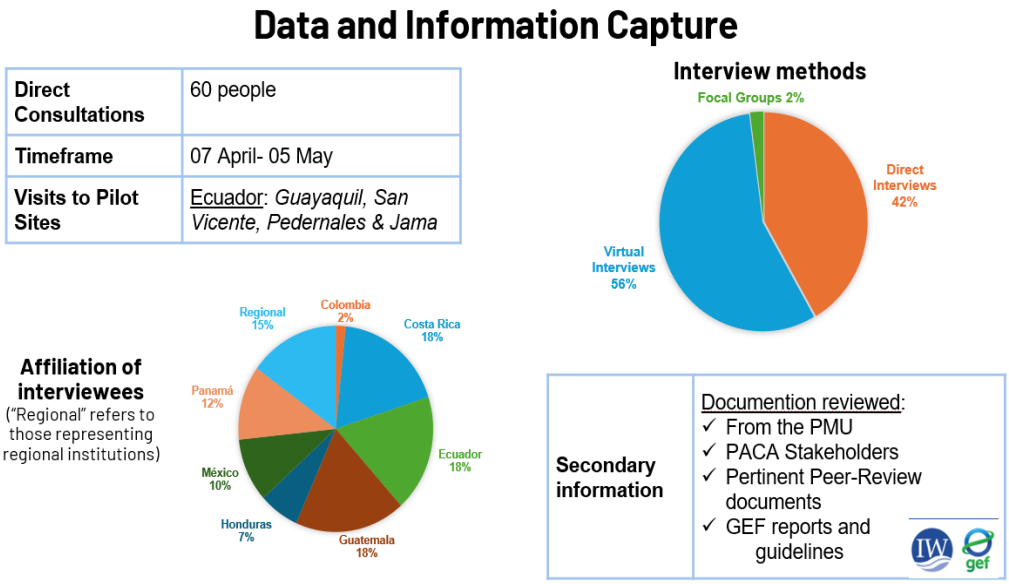


Figure 2: Summary of sources of data and information for the MTR.

The MTR team conducted interviews with the GEF focal points, the PSC/IPCU, and relevant stakeholders in each of the PACA participating countries. However, time constraints specified in the Terms of Reference limited the consulting team's ability to further collect primary data with beneficiaries and it was only possible to visit three pilot sites in Ecuador.

3. Findings

The importance of PACA to the region cannot be underestimated, as it involves a bold effort to address critical environmental, social and economic challenges in a region that is rich in biodiversity, but vulnerable to overexploitation and global warming. The central element of the project's theory of change is that improved marine governance will contribute to building ecosystem-based management at the oceanscape level. Consequently, the effectiveness of building exclusive governance and applying

EBM are the key elements for the MTR to examine. Achieving these two foundational processes is strategically linked to three actions:

1. **Develop a participatory process that generates an integrated assessment of the status** of the large marine ecosystem (i.e., the Transboundary Diagnostic Assessment, TDA) and a formal instrument adopted by participating countries (i.e., the Strategic Action Programme, SAP).
2. **Strengthen human and social capital** through training, communication, and knowledge transfer.
3. **Implement practical exercises to generate learning on key topics** that include marine and coastal spatial planning, sportfishing, and gathering information to improve whale protection.

The MTR team recognizes that this initial effort carefully chose to focus on relatively easy-to-achieve results from pilot studies, as well as more complex, but fundamental instruments that include the TDAs and the SAPs, recognizing that other more difficult challenges can only be addressed in subsequent phases. At mid-term, there is solid evidence that several key elements of PACA's foundation are solidly in place:

- **Commitment** - Overall, there is a strong commitment from the 7 countries to foster cooperation with each other, to work towards managing shared resources more sustainably and to reduce potential conflicts over fisheries and environmental issues. Two countries have designated representation through their Foreign Ministry.
- **Contributions to priorities** The PACA project not only to contributes to the Priorities of the countries, UNDP and the GEF, but also to SDG 14.

Furthermore, Technical Leadership and implementation are *highly satisfactory*. The professional at the PMU have extensive experience in working with environmental issues in the marine environment of the region and each one injects key knowledge aspects to the project. Additionally, the organizations and consultants that carry out the pilot projects and the ADTs have considerable experience in the region and they are highly competent in their fields and professional.
The subsections that follow examine the MTR findings that address the Evaluation Questions, the Judgment Criteria and the evaluation matrix presented in Annexes 2 and 3.

3.1 Project Strategy

PACA's objective and strategic vision[20] are well-formulated and to be commended for being the first effort to promote a regional approach for ecosystems-based management and governance in a LME with a high risk. [21]However, challenges such as the continued degradation of coastal and marine habitats, overuse of fishery resources, threatened biodiversity and climate change impacts are impossible to address at this early stage and PACA has set out to improve regional planning and governance while strengthening human and social capital across the 7 countries. The approach is highly relevant for laying a foundation that can help bring the countries together for building the first regional approach for coordinating resilience-building actions with in the PACA LME.

[20] PACA's Strategic Vision: *To achieve the sustainable use and conservation of the Pacific Central American Large Marine Ecosystem by strengthening regional governance, promoting integrated and ecosystem-based management, and enhancing the resilience of coastal communities and marine biodiversity to climate change and human pressures.*

PACA's core strategy and intervention logic (Figure 3) aim to advance ecosystem-based management (EBM) of the region's marine and coastal resources by building and strengthening regional governance frameworks. This involves coordinated action among participating countries to address trans-zonal/transboundary environmental challenges and promote sustainable use of PACA's ecosystem services. Component 1 aims to develop the regional governance instruments for joint management of PAC, and this includes generating common understanding of the current situation of the LME (*vis a vis* the TDA) and the necessary collaborative arrangements and tools (the SAP). Component 2 will generate *on-the-ground learning* to address three common issues: (i) conservation and management of billfishes; (ii) marine spatial planning, and(iii) cetacean conservation. Component 3 focuses on generating and sharing lessons and practical experiences.

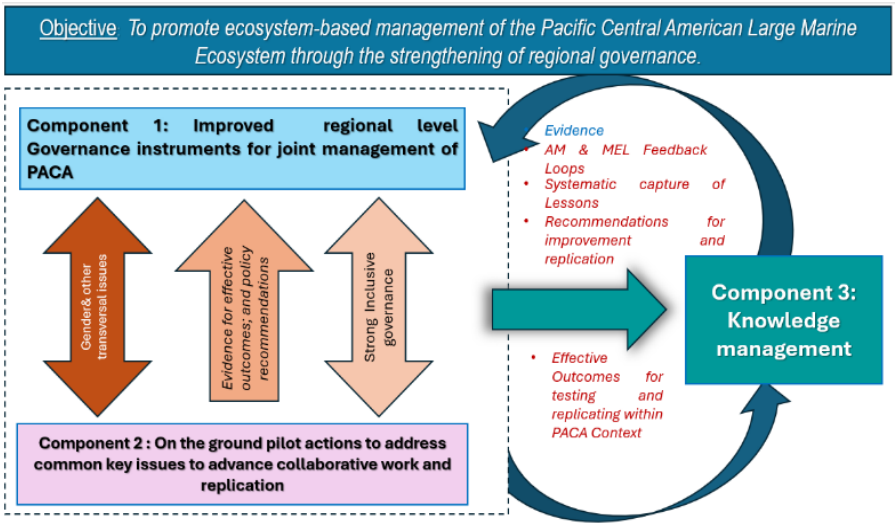


Figure 3: PACA's Intervention Logic

The Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) are important initial steps for identifying and prioritizing threats, as well as their immediate and root causes within the LME. The strategy to develop and implement country-endorsed SAPs focus on legal, policy, and institutional reforms and it is well formulated. Investments in the TDAs and pilot projects are not only relevant, but the project outputs are in line with national priorities and plans at mid-term. The project is also consistent with the needs of the UNDP-LAC and GEF IW, as well as UNDP, SICA and OSPESCA. PACA fully aligns with the priorities and UNDP Costa Rica.

As mentioned previously, the MTR team could only visit the three MSP pilot sites in Ecuador. Like Ecuador. each pilot has developed a context-specific methodology, so it is difficult to generalize from only one country visit. Although the Ecuador pilot is an excellent example of building capacities for implementation at the lowest practical levels, which include CSOs, local NGOs and municipal government staff in the three municipalities where the pilots are located, training and capacity building focuses on using generic pamphlets and guides to raise awareness and build capacities, rather than learning by doing. This approach appears to have ignored the STAP report recommending that knowledge management plans would benefit from an elaboration of mechanisms to promote exchange of lessons beyond documentation and online distribution of lessons, particularly with regard to the function of the proposed "working groups" at regional scale. If done well, these could potentially provide an additional track for transboundary cooperation beyond the more formal intergovernmental links. While it is unclear whether these kinds of traditional, unidirectional approaches to capacity building explain why such a large number of interviewees had little understanding of EBM, even though PCA is at its half-way point, the approach should be scrutinized.

Although the three Ecuador MSP pilot projects only extended to the 12 nautical mile territorial waters, pilot projects in Panamá and Mexico extended out to shelf edges, pelagic fisheries and billfish recreational fisheries that extend into each country's EEZ. These interventions address the management

of highly migratory and transboundary species and habitats that cannot be effectively managed within the limits of territorial waters alone.

The strategy for coordination of the Implementing and Executing Partners (UNDP and WWF, respectively) is cumbersome and inefficient and is set up in a way that is likely to create communication and coordination barriers, mainly because there are too many moving pieces and neither agency has full control. This outcome could have been predicted, as it not only creates bottlenecks in the flow of information and knowledge between these agencies, but also among the UNDP country offices, national governments, research institutions, and civil society organization. The arrangement for UNDP Regional and WWF to contract consultants independently of each other with limited communication is another serious shortcoming of the project's strategy.

3.1.1 Project Design

From a broad perspective, the MTR finds that PACA is well-designed and it checks off the requirements outlined in the GEF's guidelines for designing GEF-7 projects, and PACA's design was eventually approved by the GEF CEO. Furthermore, it aligns well with the PACA countries' national development priorities and plans. However, while the outputs and activities are coherent with the overall objective across, the causative results chain breaks down because the outcomes are poorly formulated. At mid-term, it is difficult to adjust poorly formulated indicators, but the MTR has made a specific recommendation at the end of this report for the PMU and IA to explore the possibility, at the end of this report. outcomes This has major implications for adaptive management, as well as the communication and knowledge management aspects of PACA. A ToC is not only the foundation for a project's design, but it is the motor for adaptive learning and management that is driven through feedback loops that measuring the effectiveness of incremental changes along a causative results chain. Although recent recommendations and guidelines from the GEF Council emphasized the importance of developing robust ToCs[22], and more recently, the GEF's STAP report[23] highlighted the importance for PACA to incorporate the lessons from earlier projects (within the region and in other LMEs) more fully to guide the design of PACA's ToC, neither recommendation was adopted. Not surprisingly that PACA's ToC is weak and this makes it impossible to objectively measure the effectiveness of PACA's critical outputs that among others, include enhancing EBM applications, governance frameworks, knowledge-sharing systems.

3.1.1.1 Alignment with national development priorities and plans.

The objectives and outcomes of the PACA project are aligned with the interests and priorities of the seven participating countries, both at the project's inception and mid-term. In this regard, stakeholders interviewed stated that this project is important for the marine-coastal region of the Pacific, as it is not only an area affected by a wide range of challenges, but in some countries, it has historically received limited attention. Moreover, the project represents a significant step toward the understanding and coordinated management of international waters. While there are other initiatives that have worked on a bi-national or multilateral basis in the area, this is the first project exclusively focused on the Central American Pacific Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA), involving Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador as a whole. As such, it lays the foundation for the work and challenges that the PACA region demands.

In addition to stakeholder input, the MTR team conducted a review of national development plans and other relevant public policies for each country to determine the level of alignment with national

[22] GEF IEO (2022)
[23] STAP 2023

development priorities. While none of the reviewed National Development Plans contain specific references to the PACA LME, there is a clear, shared vision across all countries regarding the importance of marine and coastal zones. This vision encompasses both the conservation and protection of natural resources and the promotion of economic and productive sectors linked to the coast and sea. In sum, the project addresses a geographically extensive area of high value, richness, and potential for the participating countries (Table 8).

Table 8: Country-specific policies and plans with which PACA aligns

Country	PACA alignment with national policies and plan
Colombia	Colombia's National Development Plan 2022–2026 aims to improve governance and comprehensive management of marine, coastal, insular, and border territories. Under the Transformation Axis on Productive Development, Internationalization, and Climate Action, the plan prioritizes international cooperation resources for conservation in the Pacific region. It also promotes technologies for sustainable fishing to increase productivity and foster conservation-focused aquaculture practices. Colombia has several relevant public policies, including the National Ocean and Coastal Spaces Policy (PNOEC) 2016–2030, the National Environmental Policy for Sustainable Development of Oceanic, Coastal, and Insular Areas (PNAOCI), and CONPES 3990: Colombia as a Sustainable Bi-oceanic Power 2030.
Costa Rica	Costa Rica's National Development and Public Investment Plan (PNDIP) 2023–2026 does not specifically mention the PACA LME but it does include several initiatives related to marine-coastal areas. Among public interventions in the Productive Sector and Regional Development is the promotion of sustainable fishing and aquaculture, including "marine spatial planning for aquaculture development considering biological and oceanographic characteristics" and "formalization of mollusk extractors along the Pacific coast." Within the Environment and Energy Sector, one objective is to protect, conserve, and manage marine, coastal, and terrestrial biodiversity through integrated planning. Another goal is to reactivate coastal zones via a "blue recovery" strategy for sustainable development in harmony with marine and continental biodiversity. Additionally, the Foreign Affairs Sector prioritizes negotiating international cooperation projects for sustainable and inclusive development of coastal, border, and rural areas, acknowledging the vulnerability of coastal zones. Costa Rica also has various relevant public policies, including the National Ocean Policy 2013–2028, the National Biodiversity Policy 2015–2030 and Strategy 2016–2025, the National Wetlands Policy 2017–2030, and the National Climate Change Adaptation Policy 2018–2030.
Ecuador	Ecuador's Development Plan for the New Ecuador 2024–2025 includes explicit references to border, Amazonian, coastal, and insular territories. It also highlights the strategic importance of maritime areas. Under National Objective 7—ensuring the responsible use of natural resources in an environmentally sustainable context—Guideline 3 includes management of the natural heritage, including marine-coastal spaces. Ecuador's public policy framework includes the National Ocean and Coastal Policies (PONC), the Marine-Coastal Spatial Planning Plan (POEMC) through 2030, and the Intersectoral Marine Agenda.
Guatemala	Guatemala's National Development Plan *K'atun: Our Guatemala 2032* includes specific references to the Pacific area within the context of marine and coastal ecosystems, although there are no dedicated sections on the PACA LME. The plan addresses marine and coastal ecosystem management under the axis *Natural Resources Today and for the Future,* which prioritizes the "Sustainable management of marine-coastal systems, Ramsar sites, and lacustrine and river systems, considering ethnic, cultural, and age relevance." Specific goals include implementing integrated management plans in marine-coastal areas (Goal 1.a), where governance has been improved, and achieving reductions in degradation and promoting conservation and sustainable management (Result 1.1). Relevant public policies include the Policy for the Integrated Management of Marine-Coastal Zones of Guatemala and the National Maritime Policy 2023–2043.
Honduras	The Government Plan for Rebuilding Honduras 2022–2026 does not specifically mention the PACA LME but includes actions related to marine-coastal ecosystems, applicable to Honduras' Pacific coast. Within an alternative economic model, Line 6.2 on environmental protection and agroforestry development mentions promoting responsible engagement with blue bond financing to support sustainable projects for protecting marine-coastal ecosystems and mangroves along the coastline, lakes, and reservoirs. In terms of public policy, Honduras has the

Country	PACA alignment with national policies and plan
	National Policy on Wetlands and Marine-Coastal Spaces 2019–2029, aims toward guiding integrated and sustainable management of these areas.
Mexico	The 2025–2030 National Development Plan does not explicitly mention the PACA LME, it broadly addresses the protection and management of marine and coastal ecosystems, primarily Sustainable Development (under General Axis 4), Governance with Justice and Citizen Participation (General Axis 1). Axis 4, Objective 4.5, Strategy 4.5.5 specifically seeks to halt the degradation of coastal and marine zones through conservation, sustainable management, and restoration programs, addressing anthropogenic impacts in coastal basins and marine ecosystems. Under Axis 1, Objective 1.6, Strategy 1.6.3 aims to consolidate a strong national maritime authority to strengthen sovereignty, security, and protection of marine areas, coasts, ports, port terminals, marinas, and port facilities. Besides the National Development Plan, Mexico has public policies focused on maritime-coastal zones, such as the National Policy on Seas and Coasts, the National Maritime Policy, and Mexico's Strategic Action Plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030.
Panama	Panama's National Strategic Plan with a State Vision "Panama 2030" highlights the country's strategic geographic location and global logistics system, including maritime ports in both the Atlantic and Pacific. Under the Environmental Sustainability Axis, Strategy 6.3.1.7 focuses on conserving oceans, seas, and marine resources, referencing Panama's policy on regulating marine-coastal ecosystem use. Additionally, Section 6.3.1.5 proposes a cooperation agreement with countries along migratory routes for terrestrial and marine-coastal species, grounded in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor and OSPESCA/SICA agreements. The plan emphasizes the importance of strengthening participation in regional initiatives. Panama's public policy framework includes the National Ocean Policy, which emphasizes governance and multisectoral participation, and the Sectoral Climate Change Plan for Marine-Coastal Systems.

3.1.1.2 Extent to which PACA contributes UNDP Costa Rica and UNDP LAC Priorities

The project is aligned with the priorities of the United Nations System and UNDP in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador, as well as with UNDP's regional strategy. As reflected in the ProDoc, the project design was consistent with the expected outcomes outlined in the cooperation frameworks and the Country Programme Documents (CPDs) in force at the time of formulation. All CPDs have subsequently been updated. Consultations with country offices, along with a comprehensive review of the updated CPDs, confirm that the project remains aligned with UNDP's current strategic priorities. Table 9 provides a country-specific breakdown of PACA's contribution to the priorities and outcomes with UN LAC country offices.

Table 9: Country-specific breakdown of PACA's contribution to the priorities & outcomes with UN LAC COs.

Country	PACA alignment with policies and plan
Colombia UNDP	Outcome 3 of the Cooperation Framework, which states that by 2027, Colombia will have made substantive progress in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and degradation, and pollution. *(Country Programme Document for Colombia, 2025–2027)*
Costa Rica UNDP	Outcome 1 of the Cooperation Framework, which stipulates that by 2027, individuals, communities, and institutions will have developed the capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change, ensuring the sustainable and efficient use of ecosystem resources, halting degradation and pollution, and safeguarding natural systems. *(Country Programme Document for Costa Rica, 2023–2027).*
Ecuador UNDP	Outcome 2 of the Cooperation Framework, under which, by 2026, the State and society will have advanced towards an ecological transition and a sustainable, inclusive, decarbonized economy that is resilient to climate change impacts, safeguards biodiversity, and prevents land and ecosystem degradation and pollution. These efforts will be guided by a gender-sensitive, inclusive, and diversity-focused approach. *(Country Programme Document for Ecuador, 2023–2026).*
Guatemala UNDP	Outcome 1 of the Cooperation Framework, which states that by 2025, state institutions will improve democratic governance, and the efficient and transparent management of resources, and will base

Country	PACA alignment with policies and plan
	decision-making on empirical evidence, including the use of information and communication technologies. Of particular relevance is Output 1.4: Knowledge products available to State institutions and the public that support strategic decision-making for the country's integral development. The project also aligns with Outcome 3, which foresees that by 2025, the Guatemalan State will have strengthened its policies, strategies, and programmes aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation, territorial governance, and the management of natural resources and ecosystems. These measures aim to enhance integrated risk management related to environmental, climatic, health, hydrological, and geodynamic threats, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable populations and territories *(Guatemala Country Programme Document, 2022–2025).*
Honduras UNDP	Outcome 3 of the Cooperation Framework, which aims for the Honduran State to implement policies, strategies, and programmes that enhance the sustainability and resilience of development. Within this outcome, Product 3.2 is of particular relevance: The Honduran population, public institutions, and the private sector benefit from sustainable practices and strengthened governance mechanisms that foster biodiversity conservation and optimal use of ecosystem assets and services. *(Country Programme Document for Honduras, 2022–2026).*
Mexico UNDP	Direct Outcome 6 of the Cooperation Framework, which states that by 2025, the Mexican State will implement policies, strategies, and programs that promote a green economy focused on climate change mitigation and strengthening the institutional framework. This includes energy efficiency, promotion of clean and renewable energy, and sustainable production, consumption, transport, cities, and agriculture, with a focus on health, human rights, gender, interculturality, life cycle, and territory. Within this outcome, Output 6 highlights supported strategies aimed at consolidating conservation policy and the sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity from an ecological economy and inclusive development perspective. *(Country Programme Document for Mexico, 2021–2025).*
Panama UNDP	Outcome 2 of the Cooperation Framework, which establishes that by 2025, the country will have achieved participatory governance and inclusive, effective, transparent, and equitable national and local institutions that serve the population and operate in coordination with non-governmental actors, applying a territorial, human rights, intercultural, gender, and life cycle approach, ensuring that no one is left behind. The project is also aligned with Outcome 3, which aims for Panama to be a resilient nation with public policies in place for climate change adaptation and mitigation, land degradation neutrality, biodiversity protection, integrated environmental management, and the reduction of disaster and health-related risks. Of particular relevance is Output 3.2: Integrated water and coastal zone management incorporates climate resilience and good practices within ecological supply chains. (Country Programme Document for Panama, 2021–2025).

3.1.1.3 Perspectives of stakeholders during project design

Based on the MTR team's review of available documentation and interviews, the evidence indicates that the project design broadly considered stakeholders. It is important to underscore the particular context of this project: while the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase was carried out in 2018, while actual implementation did not commence until 2023. The five-year interval resulted in a change in personnel, meaning that most individuals consulted during this evaluation were not involved in the original design process.

Among those who did participate in the PPG phase, most indicated that the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders were indeed considered. This was done with due regard to the geographic scope of the PACA region and the constraints imposed by the availability of funding. Among those who felt that the consultation process was insufficient, countries without a pilot project were especially vocal. Representatives from these countries reported that the consultation lacked adequate coverage at the governmental level, which ultimately contributed to their exclusion from pilot implementation. Despite the above, the PACA project includes a regional pilot, which could serve as a basis for strengthening the sense of ownership among countries that do not have a national pilot.

According to the Stakeholder Analysis included in the ProDoc, three regional workshops were conducted during the PPG phase with the participation of designated focal points from each country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment, as well as the GEF focal points from all seven participating countries (Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and Panama). This implies that *at least* 14 governmental institution stakeholders (seven Ministries of Foreign Affairs and seven Ministries of Environment) must be involved.

In addition, national consultation workshops were conducted to inform and engage the most relevant national stakeholders regarding project implementation. A total of 11 national workshops were held in two segments, each attended by approximately 20 individuals. However, no further details are provided regarding the organizations represented by the participants, nor is it clear whether different individuals took part in each segment. As a result, the representativeness of the participants remains uncertain.

Nonetheless, based on the numbers presented, it is estimated that between 220 and 440 individuals were consulted during the national workshop phase of the PPG process. Considering that the stakeholder analysis identified 206 actors as relevant to the PACA project across the seven participating countries, it can be concluded that the consultation process captured a significant portion of stakeholder perspectives.

An important exception is Colombia, which did not take part in the PPG phase and as a result, Colombian perspectives were not included in the original project design. However, Colombia joined the PACA project in 2025.

3.1.1.4 Relevant social and environmental aspects considered in project design

PACA not only applied UNDP's Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), but it continued to integrate it into the formulation of the components and expected results. The project design considered the relevant environmental and social aspects. For these, the ProDoc proposed concrete measures in nearly all areas. Given that this is a project focused on laying the foundation for improved transboundary marine governance, the majority of identified stakeholders are organizational in nature (including government institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia) and this is a key aspect considering social measures.

In this regard and considering that the core of the project is the preparation and adoption of the TDA and SAP, the project design includes measures to ensure that the processes for developing these instruments are participatory, inclusive, and transparent. To that end, the ProDoc states that the teams responsible for developing the TDA and SAP will be composed of at least 30% women and 30% representatives from non-state entities. Moreover, the draft SAP will be submitted for consultation with key stakeholders in each of the participating countries. During these consultation meetings, the project aims to ensure that at least 50% of participants are women and 50% represent non-state actors.

Additionally, the project includes the development of one regional pilot and five national pilot interventions. These interventions in its designed are meant to be highly participatory, ensuring that all stakeholders have the opportunity to voice their opinions, raise concerns, and contribute to their experiences, lessons learned, and ideas.

Importantly, the ProDoc highlights that twenty-four Indigenous Peoples are located in the coastal states of the Mesoamerican Pacific, and eight of these are associated with the pilot intervention on marine spatial planning in Mexico and Panama. As such, the most relevant social measures were expected to be defined in the Indigenous Peoples Plan, to be developed at the beginning of project implementation. The implementation began in 2023 and commissioned in 2024 a consultancy that delivered, in March

of the same year, the Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants Participation Plan (PPIA). The plan was designed with the objective of promoting the participation of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples' organizations in decision-making and in the implementation of actions for the joint and integrated management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA). PPIA remarks that this is to be done in full respect of the principles, norms, and ancestral practices (sustainable management systems) of Indigenous peoples, as well as in alignment with the UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards and the safeguards of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and WWF.

Regarding the most relevant environmental aspects, the project aims to promote ecosystem-based management (EBM) within the PACA Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) by strengthening regional governance. The global environmental problem the project seeks to address is biodiversity loss. Key biodiversity (e.g., marine turtles, humpback whales, coral reefs, and endemic marine fauna) is currently threatened by: (i) ecosystem and habitat degradation, (ii) pollution, (iii) overexploitation of fisheries resources, (iv) direct impacts on flora and fauna, and (v) climate variability and climate change. However, the project design acknowledges that it is not feasible to address all of these issues at the national level alone, and that no regional agreement currently exists for marine environmental conservation in this region. Consequently, the TDA/SAP process aims to contribute to foundational governance frameworks for collaborative management of the PACA LME. In doing so, the ProDoc proposes that the project will support the mainstreaming of ecosystem-based management within this large marine ecosystem, alongside an inclusive and participatory blue growth approach. Accordingly, the project does not involve direct environmental interventions.

3.1.1.5 Gender Issues in project design

Gender-related issues were thoroughly incorporated into the project design, which included the development of a gender analysis, a corresponding Gender Action Plan (GAP) with specific indicators, and the mainstreaming of gender issues across all project activities. The gender analysis revealed that women are key stakeholders in many of the activities carried out within PACA LME. These activities range from the direct collection of cockles in mangroves and invertebrates in tidal pools, to operating restaurants and hotels, administering marine protected areas, and leading local governments and public institutions. However, despite their significant role in the fishery sector, women's contributions remain largely invisible and unrecognized. Furthermore, women continue to be marginalized within national and regional decision-making bodies.

On this basis, the Gender Action Plan integrated actions aimed to promote multi-level participation, gender equity, and women's empowerment. These actions include among others, affirmative measures to promote women's participation in the TDA and SAP development teams, ensure adequate regional representation of women in the project's decision-making bodies, support the formulation of regional guidelines to enhance women's participation in the governance of the PACA LME, and document and better understand women's contributions and involvement in the pilot interventions.

Additionally, a substantial number of indicators from the Gender Action Plan are embedded within the project's results framework[24]. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan also identifies key regional platforms—such as COMMCA (Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic)—to be integrated into the project. As a result, the project has GEN2 Gender Marker, indicating that it is

[24] Gender Action Plan Indicators (GAPI) 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 13 correspond to Results Framework Indicators 1, 2, 8, 11, 12 and 17 respectively

gender responsive, not merely gender sensitive. A gender-responsive project is one that implements actions to establish enabling conditions for transformative gender change.

During implementation, and as reported in stakeholder interviews, *the Gender Action Plan has been updated only onc*e. Specifically, GAPI 3 (which corresponds to indicator 6 in the Results Framework) was revised to increase the target percentage of women participating in the TDA Development Team by 20 percentage points. This adjustment has the potential to strengthen the gender perspective significantly at both the national and regional TDA development processes.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 PACA's Strategic approach

The above notwithstanding, there are shortcomings in PACA's strategy for strengthening regional governance, joint management and decision-making and to create a cooperation framework capable of sustaining coordinated actions among the PACA countries include the strategy for knowledge-sharing, awareness-raising and inclusive governance that includes the public and private sectors. For example, the proposed strategy aims to employ 'pre-packaged' and generic products for stakeholders to enhance regional capacity to understand ecosystem-based management. With few exceptions (e.g., the Ecuador beach spatial planning pilot project), it employs traditional, unidirectional training methods instead of one that promotes learning by doing. This finding is supported by the high percentage of interviewees who have no clue about EBM, even though PCA is at its half-way point. This approach ignored the STAP report recommending that knowledge management plans would benefit from an elaboration of mechanisms to promote exchange of lessons beyond documentation and online distribution of lessons, particularly with regard to the function of the proposed "working groups" at regional scale. If done well, these could potentially provide an additional track for transboundary cooperation beyond the more formal intergovernmental links.

On-the-ground pilot actions, which were strategically designed to address priority issues and demonstrate collaborative management approaches are relevant and the pilots focusing on Marine Spatial Planning, are highly relevant. However, with the MSP conceptual and operational frameworks used for Mexico, Panamá and Ecuador integrate critical coastal ecosystems that integrate marine waters, and vice-versa, although only they only extend to the 3-mile territorial waters limits. While the strategy for Conservation and Management of billfishes it does not explicitly address widespread IUU of Apex predators such as sharks, killer whales and turtles, despite regional agreements through CIAT.[25] The mechanisms for sharing lessons and best practices shared regionally is relevant but there is a large gap in the MEL platform, as discussed later in this report.

The strategy for coordination of the Implementing and Executing Partners (UNDP and WWF, respectively) is cumbersome and inefficient and is set up in a way that is likely to create communication and coordination barriers, mainly because there are too many moving pieces and neither agency has full control. This outcome could have been predicted, as it not only creates bottlenecks in the flow of information and knowledge between these agencies, but also among the UNDP country offices, national governments, research institutions, and civil society organization. The arrangement for UNDP Regional

[25] **Resolución C-24-051**: Medidas de Conservación para la Protección y Ordenación Sostenible de los Tiburones: Plan de Acción Nacional. COMISIÓN INTERAMERICANA DEL ATÚN TROPICAL 102a REUNIÓN Ciudad de Panamá, Panamá.
2- 6 de septiembre de 2024

and WWF to contract consultants independently of each other with limited communication is another serious shortcoming of the project's strategy.

4.2 Assessment of the Results Framework and the Theory of Change

From a broad perspective, the MTR finds that PACA is well-designed and it checks off with the requirements outlined in the GEF's guidelines for designing GEF-7 projects, and PACA's design was eventually approved by the GEF CEO. However, while there is coherence across the outputs and activities the overall objective, the causative results chain breaks down because the outcomes are poorly formulated. This is one of the reasons that the Theory of Change (ToC) presented in the ProDoc has **serious deficiencies** and this not only has major implications for results-based management but also for adaptive management, as well as the communication and knowledge management aspects of PACA. A ToC is not only the foundation for a project's design, but it is the motor for adaptive learning and management that is driven through feedback loops that measuring the effectiveness of incremental changes along a causative results chain. The importance of a ToC in development projects focusing on SDGs and sustainable development are abundant[26] and as such, the GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) has developed an excellent guidelines for GEF projects to follow.[27] Furthermore, among the approved recommendations by the GEF Council at its annual meeting in Brazil[28], future GEF projects must develop more robust ToCs, SMART outcomes and more pertinent assumptions in results chains that can drive systematic adaptive management.

STAP's Guidelines for developing ToCs[29] and more recently, the GEF's STAP report[30] highlighted the importance for PACA to incorporate the lessons from earlier projects (within the region and in other LMEs) more fully to guide the design of PACA's ToC. However, neither recommendation was adopted. Not surprisingly that PACA's ToC is weak and this makes it impossible to objectively measure the effectiveness of PACA's critical outputs that among others, as well as enhancing EBM applications, governance frameworks, and knowledge-sharing systems.

Figure 4 shows PACA's abstract and misleading ToC as it was presented in the ProDoc. Not only does it mistakenly mis-represent outcomes and outputs, but also incorrectly implies that the mis-labeled outcomes are capable of measuring the effectiveness of PACA outputs,

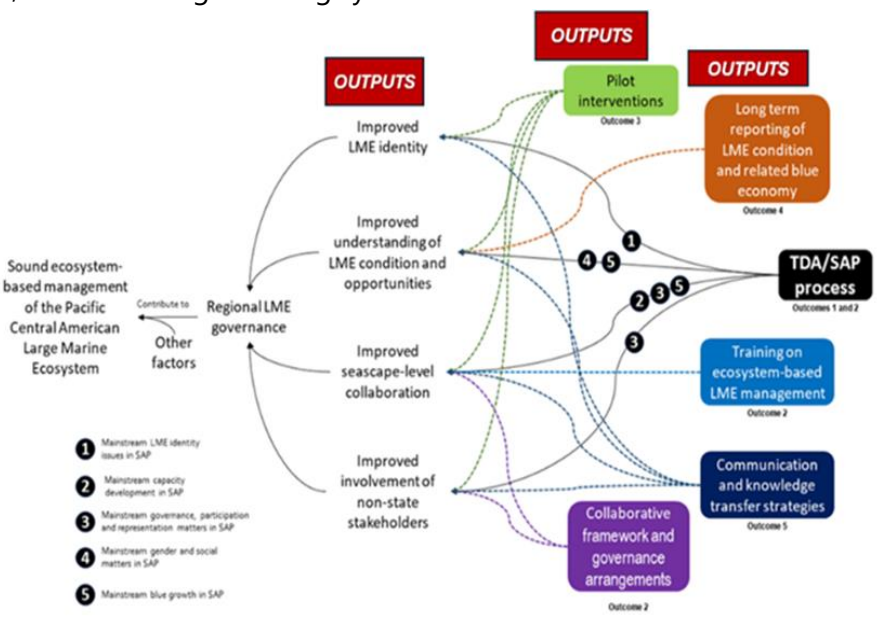


Figure 4: *Analysis of the weaknesses in the ToC by the evaluation team.*

[26] Leisher et al. (2024).; Wendt (2021).
[27] Stafford Smith (2020).
[28] GEF Council (2023); GEF IEO (2022)
[29] Stafford Smith (2020).
[30] STAP 2023

changes that the PACA LME urgently needs to reduce the serious risks it faces. The ToC lacks explicit pathways and feedback loops for communicating how the stated outputs will reduce the threats to the PACA LME. The regional plans for managing sailfish and marlin recreational fisheries is a rudimentary immediate outcomes, as there are many examples in other GEF projects where well-intentioned guidelines still remain as Draft documents waiting approval more than a decade after they were formulated.[31] Summarizing, PACA's pathway toward impacts is moving along a dead-end path because the ToC mainly measures processes and outputs, rather than effects that those elements produce. For the few outcomes, the assumptions are inadequate to allow for testing them and driving adaptive management and develop feedback loops to inform stakeholders about their effects. For example, Indicator 8 measures the *Percentage of women and people from non-state entities[32] in the TDA Development team*. While it meets some of the SMART criteria, [33] the indicator fails to measure effects of using gender balance as an effect for developing the TDA, and it is not a transformative outcome. Furthermore, the evidence is clear than few of the stakeholders who participated in the early stages of the project are no longer around. Most importantly it does not measure any effect and is therefore not transformative. Other examples are included elsewhere in this final report.

Another limiting factor of PACA's design that appears to be affecting the efficiency and overall effectiveness of the pilots is that the allocated budget is insufficient to fund a full-time technical expert to be present in the pilot implementation areas, something that interviews highlighted as being critical. Although the project design did not include a budget for full-time expert technical staff in the pilots, the PMU argues that the success of Costa Rica's national MSP pilot demonstrates that this is not necessary. There are 6 other countries besides Costa Rica and therefore, the MTR team disagrees with this argument because the evidence is solid for the MSP pilot in Ecuador that not having an on-site coordinator was a major weakness, as confirmed by CI and by stakeholders. Also, interviews for other sites, who raised the same concern because of the lack of staff in the pilot area. Had an assumption been formulated to test whether this would be a problem, this might have been addressed through the necessary proactive, adaptive actions. However, it is unclear whether this is due to budgetary limitations within the PACA budget, WWF or the country organization responsible for the pilot.

The MTR team has reconstructed the ToC with the aim of providing an overview of the weaknesses in the TOC presented in the ProDoc and followed by the PMU and other stakeholders through Mid-term (Figure 5). It presents the casual chain of results leading to PACA's objective, highlighting Component-specific Outputs, the expected Effects (Outcomes) and the degree to which those stated outcomes the are SMART. The question that should be asked by stakeholders is whether those outcomes are formulated in a way that clearly produce the kinds of transformative effects that PACA urgently requires to meet its objective and address the barriers and threats that it presently faces?

[31] GEF IEO 2022.

[32] i.e., Entities that are independent of the government such as civil society organizations, farmers associations or community groups.

[33] SMART Indicators: **Specific** - clearly defined, with a clear meaning and scope, and not too broad or vague. **Measurable -** quantifiable and measurable, with a clear unit of measurement, such as percentages, numbers, or rates. **Achievable** – feasible and realistically measured given the available resources and data. **Relevant** - to the goals and objectives of the program or project. **Time-bound**- with a clear timeframe for measurement.

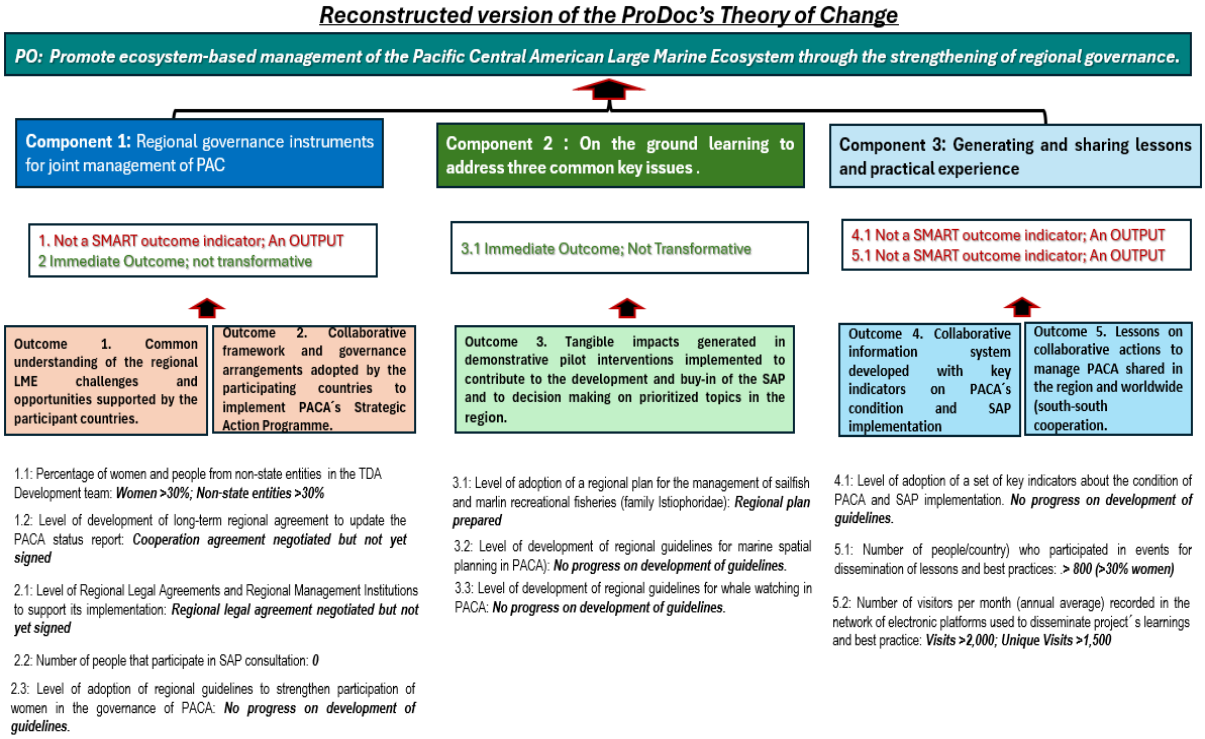


Figure 5: *Reconstructed causal chain of results aims to demonstrate the weakness of the ProDoc's Theory Change and the degree to which the stated outcomes are SMART and transformative.*

4.2.1 ToC's Assumptions and the Risks they create

Assumptions in a theory of change represent beliefs about how change occurs (e.g., "Community engagement will increase adoption of sustainable fishing practices"). These assertions are like hypotheses that underpin the logic of PACA's interventions, and they are fundamental for defining the expected causal pathways.[34] For example, a capacity-building activity might assume that training local leaders will lead to behavioral changes in a community. Adaptive management treats assumptions similar to hypotheses to be systematically evaluated during implementation. This involves i) Monitoring context shifts (e.g., political instability, environmental changes) that may invalidate assumptions; ii) Rapid feedback loops to evaluate whether assumptions hold true, using data from the field; iii) Adjusting strategies if monitoring reveals flawed assumptions (e.g., pivoting from training to incentivizing participations with 'doing-by doing' activities if engagement remains low). By grounding adaptation in assumption-testing, programs maintain relevance and efficacy despite uncertainty. This approach balances structured planning with the flexibility needed to navigate complexity. Consequently, evaluating the validity of a Toc's assumptions is the fuel that drives adaptive learning and management.

However, the MTR team finds that many of the assumptions presented in the ProDoc are superficial, or non-existent in others. Without assumptions and linkages between outputs and outcomes, it is impossible to apply adaptive management principles that can provide feedback loops for correcting mistakes, strengthening good practices and systematically capture lessons and new knowledge throughout implementation. Specific examples of weak assumptions include the unmentioned, but implicit assumption that the pathway toward impacts presented in the ProDoc will translate into behavioral or systemic changes in the region's governance or ecosystem management, without outlining the assumptions along the results chain.

[34] https://eba.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/WP-November-2021_Adaptive-ToC-webb.pdf

Proper risk mitigation measures and measuring their effectiveness are also important drivers of adaptive management and learning. While the risk-reducing (mitigation) measures presented in the ProDoc are much stronger than the assumptions, they could be greatly improved. Unvalidated or incomplete Assumptions and weak risk-reducing mitigation measures can divert the project from achieving its intended results. For example, weak or inadequate assumptions have serious implications (Table 10).

Table 10: The implications of weak assumptions and risks for PACA.

MISSING ASSUMPTION	IMPLICATIONS FOR PACA
Institutional arrangements are aligned with regional structures & their approaches to governance are harmonized	Regional institutional capacity for governance within PACA countries is inexistent and this raises serious governance challenges. Unless country-specific governance frameworks are not fully anchored within existing regional structures (e.g., Regional Seas, CCAD, SICA, OSPESCA, etc.) it can create overlaps and reduced buy-in from some stakeholders.
Pilot Project Objectives are not overly ambitious	The evidence suggests that PACA's broad scope (e.g., simultaneous pilots for marine spatial planning and billfish conservation) may be spreading resources too thinly. Similar GEF projects struggled with unrealistic and overambitious targets, leading to underperformance in outcome achievement.
Monitoring & Evaluation system is sufficiently robust to provide feedback loops and drive adaptive management & learning	The Monitoring Plan described in the ProDoc directly focuses on monitoring project results, while the and the Collaborative Information System (CIS) for monitoring the SAP is a project outcome, subject to development and implementation during the project's lifespan. However, when examining stakeholders' perceived indifference and lack of concern about the serious risks created by poorly formulated ToC, the weak assumptions and questionable outcome indicators that have hindered adaptive management, There is concern that both the Monitoring system and the CIS will simply repeat these critical mistakes. This represents a serious risk to PACA and also building a robust CIS with feedback loops that can drive adaptive management and learning. This also runs the risk that it will repeat similar mistakes in other GEF initiatives, where poor M&E design limited changing the course of corrections through feedback loops. The STAP recommendation for the PU and IA to review lessons from other projects is especially pertinent here. re appears to be confusion between.
The project design and the ToC promote adaptive management to deal with uncertainty and complexity within the PACA LME	PACA's unvalidated assumptions are based on incomplete or outdated information, which introduces significant uncertainties. If these assumptions prove false, the project may face delays, cost overruns, or even fail to meet its objectives. For example, assuming that all stakeholders will cooperate or that funding will remain stable without contingency plans can derail progress if these conditions change. Furthermore, the project is not applying the principles of adaptive management, which are recommended by the CBD and UNFCC to address uncertainty, complexity and unpredictability on marine ecosystems.
Decision-Making & Planning is well-coordinated between the RIA and the EA and the pilots.	Weak Decision-Making & Planning between the RIA and the EA and the pilots is a problem the MTR team identified. This can not only lead to inaccurate estimates of project scope, cost, time, and resource needs, but it results in flawed planning and resource allocation, making it difficult to achieve project goals and increasing the likelihood of rework and inefficiency.
Risk Management and mitigation measures are adequate	PACA's weak assumptions are not explicitly identified or documented, and therefore, they cannot be effectively managed as risks. This leaves the project vulnerable to unforeseen issues, which results in reactive, versus proactive management while hidden or implicit assumptions may go unchallenged until they cause problems. The paragraph at the end of this subsection offers some examples for PACA's stakeholders to consider.
The project design promotes Adaptability to unforeseen issues that can arise	The evidence suggests that assumptions have not been updated, much less actively monitored as the project progresses, resulting in a situation in which the team may fail to adapt to changing circumstances like knowledge management,

MISSING ASSUMPTION	IMPLICATIONS FOR PACA
	coordination and communication, which compounds problems and reduces the project's ability to respond to new information or challenges.
The ToC and the project design are sufficiently robust to capture missed opportunities and unforeseen threats	Most assumption analyses focus on downside risks, neglecting potential opportunities. If weak assumptions are not surfaced and challenged, the project may miss chances to innovate or improve outcomes.
A sufficiently robust exit strategy roadmap for ensuring financial and institutional sustainability will be developed by mid-term.	The project's assumption that donor funding will continue without and exit strategy with a clear roadmap for long-term financial mechanisms threatens its sustainability. Earlier LME projects often failed to secure post-donor financing, leading to gaps in governance and capacity retention. For example, stakeholders perceived donor grants as a marker of sustainability rather than developing self-sufficient funding models, risking collapse after external support ended

Table 11 provides examples of more robust and testable assumptions for PACA stakeholders to consider that could help drive adaptive management and learning, and reduce risks to the project.

Table 11: Examples of improved assumptions and testable hypotheses for PACA's stakeholders to consider.

ISSUE	IMPROVED ASSUMPTION	TESTABLE HYPOTHESES
Governance and Collaboration	Structured incentives (e.g., access to sustainable financing, shared data platforms) will motivate governments and stakeholders to adopt transboundary governance frameworks.	• Formalizing joint management agreements reduces overlapping jurisdictional claims by 25% within 3 years. • Countries that adopt the SAP show a 30% increase in cross-border enforcement actions (e.g., illegal fishing patrols) .
Stakeholder Engagement	Inclusive participation (especially women, artisanal fishers, and Indigenous groups) ensures locally relevant solutions and compliance.	• Pilot sites with ≥40% female participation in decision-making report higher compliance with fishing quotas. • Communities co-designing marine spatial plans experience 50% fewer conflicts over resource use.
Capacity Building	Training programs paired with real-time decision-making authority improve institutional capacity.	• Local NGOs and CSOS trained in monitoring develop innovative solutions report 3x more enforcement referrals annually in pilot sites • Artisanal fishers reduce bycatch by 20% in year #1, improve catches and reduce habitat destruction, including stopping/removing discarded lethal ghost nets
Fisheries Management	Reducing bycatch through gear modifications and spatial closures will stabilize billfish and shark populations.	• Use of circle hooks in billfish fisheries reduces bycatch mortality by 40% within 18 months . • Seasonal closures in pelagic zones increase tuna spawning biomass by 10% annually and improve stock in the sportfishing subsector. • Reducing CITES-listed Apex predators by 30% will improve pelagic food web resilience, pelagic fisheries and sport fishing stocks.
Economic Incentives	Market demands and access for sustainably certified seafood commodities incentivizes compliance with ecosystem-based management (e.g, the GEF GMC initiatives).	• Fishers participating in certification programs earn 25% higher prices for shrimp and tuna . • Communities with blue tourism partnerships report 20% income diversification from fisheries .

Refining assumptions can improve the clarity of the causal pathway by making explicit the underlying logic and conditions that link project activities to expected outcomes. By clearly articulating assumptions, the project can better define the intermediate steps and causal mechanisms that lead

from interventions (outputs) to results, thus enhancing the overall theory of change and causal pathway clarity. Consequently, stakeholders can better understand not just what the project aims to achieve but how and why those outcomes are expected. Furthermore, when assumptions are well-defined, the M&E framework can be aligned to test these assumptions and track whether they hold true during implementation, thereby enabling more accurate assessment of causal links and project effectiveness. Pertinent stakeholders could test the hypotheses like those in the examples above. The project could train stakeholders to test the hypotheses like those in the examples , measure their validity and embed their findings in adaptive feedback loops linked to the validation of the assumptions. This hands-on approach could be embedded in the Monitoring Plan to monitor project results and for the Collaborative Information System for the SAP.

4.3 Progress Towards Achieving Results

In general terms, PACA has advanced well in producing the country-specific TDAs, advancing communication and KM strategies, while further refining the approach to EBM by re-examining root causes of the threats to PACA. With the exception of the delayed startup of the Panamá pilot, the other pilot projects are advancing well. The M&E system is currently being designed and the project should be able to complete these outputs by its closing date. However, because outcomes were never developed, the project runs the risk of simply producing outputs whose effects lack metrics for determining output effectiveness. Furthermore, the evidence at mid-term indicates that the two main pillars of PACA's strategic vision and approach are far from being understood, much less applied. Consequently, unless major adjustments are made in the projects ToC and inadequate outcome indicators, it is unlikely that PACA will meet its overall objective focusing on EBM and governance within the planned timeframe. Table 7 summarizes the advances PACA has made at mid-term in producing expected outputs and in those cases where outcomes are SMART and they were not mislabeled.[35]

4.3.1 Analysis of progress in achieving results

The results framework includes 18 indicators: *Seven* are at the objective level and *eleven* are referred to as outputs, although most of these are actually outputs, as discussed earlier. According to the data and verification tools provided by the Project Management Unit (PMU), the project has achieved 14 midterm PACA targets, representing 78% of the total,[36] as of May 2025. Based on the same evidence, the evaluation team considers it likely that the project will achieve 13 of its end-of-project targets, corresponding to 72% of the total[37].

GEF Core Indicators

This midterm review rates the progress in achieving the GEF's seven core indicators (indicators 1 to 7 of the results framework) is *Moderately Satisfactory* (MS). The project has achieved six out of seven midterm targets[38], and it is likely to achieve five out of seven end-of-project targets[39]. The two end-of-project targets that are unlikely to be achieved are those corresponding to Indicators 3 and 4. As for Indicator 3 (marine habitat under improved practices) is not sufficiently specific to be measured. As presented in the ProDoc, the indicator refers to the "area included into the marine spatial planning exercises," but it does not clarify whether the MSPs resulting from the pilot exercises need to be merely developed or

[35] As mentioned in the section that describes the shortcomings in the ToC, outcomes two-thirds of the stipulated outcomes are outputs. While the outputs may be achievable by the end of the project, PACA will produce relatively few transformational outcomes, raising questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the investments by the GEF and Co-financing partners.
[36] Midterm goals achieved by May 2025 correspond to indicators 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18
[37] Indicator 3 is excluded, as it is not SMART and does not have sufficient evidence to evaluate it.
[38] Considering that for indicators 1 and 2, the total number of people was reached, but not the expected numbers per country.
[39] End-of-project targets likely to be achieved correspond to indicators 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

also adopted. Furthermore, to date, only the Costa Rica pilot has reported results, and this does not strictly constitute an MSP by definition, but rather a Management Plan for the Large Pelagics Fishery. Therefore, this indicator could not be evaluated because is neither measurable nor verifiable for this exercise for two reasons:

First, it does not meet the SMART criterion of being specific regarding the definition of the measurement formula. To be evaluable, it is ideal to develop an indicator sheet that allows to answer questions such as: What is the definition of MSP being used? Do the MSPs resulting from the pilot exercises have to be only developed or do they also have to be adopted? How can the Large Pelagic Management Plan be considered a full-fledged MSP? The above is questionable because if the definition referred to in the ProDoc (which corresponds to UNESCO) is used, an MSP is defined as: "*a public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that have usually been specified through a political process. Characteristics of marine spatial planning include ecosystem-based, area-based, integrated, adaptive, strategic, and participatory*." In other words, an MSP should distribute all human activities in marine areas. However, the same Large Pelagic Fishery Plan document indicates that its purpose "is to generate recommendations to improve the status of the fishery for large pelagics of commercial interest (tuna, dorado, and swordfish) caught and landed by fleets operating within and outside the Pacific Ocean EEZ of Costa Rica." Therefore, its purposes are to manage a specific type of fishing, ignoring the fact that an MSP, by definition, regulates all human activity in marine areas. The second reason is that the map provided as mean of verification is specifically for Costa Rica's EEZ (marked in gray on the map) and the regional PACA area (marked in light blue). It does not show the state of the area before the project or the area covered by the Large Pelagic Plan. Therefore, it is not a suitable means of verifying the project's results.

Regarding Indicator 4 (Globally over-exploited fisheries moved to more sustainable levels) the main problem is that it cannot be directly attributed to the project, it is not a SMART indicator, as it is not relevant to PACA, nor does it measure a transformational outcome linked to the project. We understand that this is a complicated issue that has several possible ways to address it. Although the PIR states that the indicator has been met at mid-term, the indicator cannot be attributed. Therefore, the PIR is incorrect to assert that the target was met. In response to this challenge, the MTR team present the following for the consideration of the PMU and the IA:

i) The Mid-term indicator be set at ZERO or

ii) it should remain the same and be stated that it was not achieved at mid-term.

However, if the final target is to be met, the MTR team recommends that PACA should immediately begin to build synergies by working closely with the GEF IW Global Marine Commodities (GMC-2) project, which is operating within multiple PACA LME countries. Subsequently, PACA could consider integrating Core Indicator #4 indicator (attributable to the GMC2) into the SAP, which aims is to carry PACA toward building a more resilient PACA LME that can be complimented by contributions from the GMC-2 Sustainable Marine Commodity Value chains (which also include innovative and inclusive governance mechanisms created via GMC-2's Fishery Improvement Projects). It also follows that PACA's contribution to Core Indicator #3 -Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares) ALSO contributes to GMC's Core Indicator #3.

Project-specific outcomes

Regarding project outcome-level indicators, the project has achieved the midterm targets of 8 out of 11 indicators—equivalent to 73%, as of May 2025. The evaluation team considers that 8 out of 11 end-of-project targets are likely to be achieved[40]. However, as mentioned repeatedly, the ProDoc has confused outputs with outcomes, and therefore, most of those outcomes are actually outputs and therefore not SMART. Progress toward achieving those outcomes is rated as *Moderately Unsatisfactory* for Outcome 1, *Unsatisfactory* for Outcome 2, and *Satisfactory* for Outcomes 3, 4, and 5.

Outcome 1 includes Indicators 8 and 9. Indicator 8 has met and exceeded both its midterm and end-of-project targets. However, Indicator 9 (long-term regional agreement to update the PACA status report) has not achieved its midterm target, and there is no current evidence to suggest that the end-of-project target will be achieved. Key reasons include the fact that most countries have not yet designated representatives from their foreign ministries, and regional entities (e.g., SICA) lack the capacity to lead the process without clear country-level leadership. Moreover, the evaluation identified a lack of a regional vision. Most of the work to date has taken place at the national level (both with the TDAs and pilot exercises), leading to very low ownership of a regional perspective, leading to very low ownership of a regional perspective, which is critical to establishing a long-term regional agreement. As of now, no regional institution has been clearly identified to take on long-term responsibilities for sustaining PACA. From interviews it was very clear that greater involvement by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs could indeed help build synergies at the highest levels of government that go beyond the UNDP country office engagement at the national levels. Therefore, we suggest that the PMU think carefully about what high level stakeholders expressed in the interviews. The Foreign Ministries of each country are not only important for catalyzing approval of regional agreements but for joining forces to request SICA to intervene when one or more countries is carrying out unsustainable practices that could be affecting the other PACA partners. For example, if one or more countries repeatedly take CITES-listed apex predators, the Foreign ministries could take collective action because this affects the entire LME. Therefore, the foreign ministries could play a critical role for enhancing the regional agreement related to this indicator.

Outcome 2 includes Indicators 10, 11, and 12. Two of the three have reached their midterm targets, but only one is considered likely to achieve its end-of-project target. Indicator 10 (Regional Governance Mechanism to support SAP implementation) has not met its midterm target, and there is no evidence to support it being achieved by the end of the project. Adopting a governance framework within a regional body (such as SICA) requires the leadership of at least one country to drive the initiative forward. At mid-term, no such leadership has emerged, and risks associated with Nicaragua and El Salvador's non-participation in the PACA project must be addressed, given the potential impact on regional mechanism adoption and the importance of Nicaragua's Pacific coastal and marine fisheries within the northern PACA corridor. Indicator 11 (people that participate in SAP consultation) has met its midterm target. Given the recent completion of national TDA processes and countries' commitment to participatory consultations, it is considered on track to meet the end-of-project target. Indicator 12 (regional guidelines to strengthen participation of women in PACA governance) has met its midterm target. However, no evidence currently supports the likelihood of meeting the end-of-project target.

Interviews revealed that gender is not perceived as a priority by most of the stakeholders, and in marine and coastal sectors, there is a prevailing perception that men are the most relevant actors. Regarding communication and strengthening collaboration, representatives from regional entities have indicated

[40] One of which, corresponding to indicator 8, has already been reached.

that they do not have sufficient information about the project's progress or opportunities to provide feedback. Collaboration and transparency,[41] especially with beneficiaries at the lowest practical levels for planning and implementation is key to better outcomes for shared marine resource, as is the need to ensure cooperative joint management frameworks that adopt the precautionary principle for ensuring safe and just earth system boundaries.[42], and to adopt flexibility[43] (e.g., through systematic adaptive management and learning) to accommodate the uncertain future driven by climate change.

Outcome 3 includes Indicators 13, 14, and 15. Two have met their midterm targets, and it is likely all it will achieve three end-of-project targets. Indicator 13 (regional plan for the management of sailfish and marlin recreational fisheries) has not yet met its midterm target, but progress has been made, including the development of reference frameworks for key resource governance across PACA countries. Since the end-of-project target is limited to presenting (not endorsing) the plan to national authorities, it is considered on track. Indicators 14 and 15 (regional guidelines for marine spatial planning in PACA and for whale watching in PACA) have met their midterm targets, and the end-of-project targets are considered on track, since the regional guidelines produced need only to be agreed by the Project Board, not endorsed by national authorities. This is a weak Outcome, if it is an outcome at all. The MTR finds that the MSP pilots lack bio-economic and other ecosystem service valuations, which are essential for monitoring the economic values of the lost ecosystem services. First, economic valuations not only provide an improved understanding of the current state of the stock in terms of biomass, catches, landed values, overfishing of apex predators, pollution and other threats to PACA, but these baseline indicators are solid tools for assessing the state of the PACA LME and degradation of the coastal-marine ecosystems. Finally, these tools can guide the MSP towards the desired outcomes.[44] Three PACA stakeholders stated that they believed that with the exception of Costa Rica, economic valuations of ecosystem services is weak to inexistent in the other countries and more can be done, especially in the MSP pilots and the TDAs. Five interviewees recommended ESVs in national accounts linked to GDP.

Outcome 4 comprises Indicator 16 (set of key indicators about the condition of PACA and SAP implementation), which has achieved its midterm target and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved, since a set of key indicators for the PACA region has been selected and the baseline of the 35 indicators selected by the Technical Committee has been established.

Outcome 5 includes Indicators 17 and 18, both of which have met their midterm targets and are likely to achieve their end-of-project targets. Indicator 17 (people participating in dissemination events) has met its midterm target. However, the means of verification do not clearly demonstrate whether these events included specific spaces for sharing lessons learned and best practices. It is recommended that event agendas be provided as evidence, clearly showing time allocated for such spaces. Indicator 18 (visitors on electronic platforms used to disseminate project knowledge) has had its targets modified (from "unique visits" to "users reached on social networks"), a change approved in April 2025. Based on this, midterm target has been achieved and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved.

Table 12 summarizes the above analysis, while the Table in **Annex 8** provides a more detailed assessment aligned with the narrative.

[41] Röckman et al. (2017)
[42] Rockström et al. (2023).
[43] Palacios-Abrantes 2020
[44] Issifu et al. (2024).

Table 12: Progress in achieving the results framework goals through May 2025

Objective / Component / Outcome	Indicator	Midterm Target has been achieved by May 2025	Achievement Rating[45]	Assesment of progress[46]
Objective: To promote ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Large Marine Ecosystem through the strengthening of regional governance.	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people)	Yes (total number)		Moderately Satisfactory (MS)[47]
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 2: Number of indirect project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people)	Yes (total number)		
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 3: Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares).	*Not enough evidence to assess*	*Not enough evidence to asses*	
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 4: Globally over-exploited fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (metric tons).	Yes		
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 5: Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management	Yes		
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 6. Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis formulation. 1. No progress on TDA development. 2. TDA developed. Transboundary issues agreed on based on limited analysis. 3. TDA developed. Transboundary issues agreed on based on solid analysis. 4. TDA adopted by project board	Yes		
	Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 7. Level of Strategic Action Program formulation and implementation. 1. No development of SAP. 2. SAP developed, including clear targets, commitments and time frames addressing key transboundary concerns. 3. SAP signed on at ministerial level. 4. Adoption of SAP into National Action Plans (NAPs) and/or SAP commitments incorporated within national sectoral plans.	Yes		

[45] Green: Achieved, Yellow: on target to be achieved; Red: not on target to be achieved (according to end-of-project target)
[46] To rate the project's progress towards the objective and each project outcome: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU).
[47] The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.

Objective / Component / Outcome	Indicator	Midterm Target has been achieved by May 2025	Achievement Rating[45]	Assesment of progress[46]
Project component 1: Governance instruments improved at regional level for joint management of PACA				
Outcome 1. Common understanding of the regional LME challenges and opportunities supported by the participant countries.	Indicator 8: project specific Percentage of women and people from non-state entities in the TDA Development team	Yes		Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)[48]
	Indicator 9: project specific Level of development of long-term regional agreement to update the PACA status report 1. No agreement/cooperation framework in place 2. Cooperation agreement negotiated but not yet signed 3. Cooperation agreement signed 4. Cooperation agreement under implementation	No		
Outcome 2. Collaborative framework and governance arrangements adopted by the participating countries to implement PACA´s SAP	Indicator 10: project specific Level of Regional Governance Mechanism to support SAP implementation. 1. No governance mechanism in place 2. Regional governance mechanism negotiated but not yet adopted 3. Countries adopt regional governance mechanism 4. Regional governance mechanism entered into force	No		Unsatisfactory (U)[49]
	Indicator 11: project specific Number of people that participate in SAP consultation (percentage of women and non-state entities)	Yes		
	Indicator 12: project specific Level of adoption of regional guidelines to strengthen participation of women in the governance of PACA. 1. No progress on development of guidelines. 2. Guidelines developed. 3. Guidelines presented to COMMCA 4. Guidelines endorsed by COMMCA	Yes		
Project component 2. Initial on the ground pilot active actions to address common key issues and to advance collaborative work and replication				

[48] The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
[49] The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.

Objective / Component / Outcome	Indicator	Midterm Target has been achieved by May 2025	Achievement Rating[45]	Assesment of progress[46]
Outcome 3. Tangible impacts generated in demonstrative pilot interventions implemented to contribute to the development and buy-in of the SAP and to decision making on prioritized topics in the region.	Indicator 13: project specific Level of adoption of a regional plan for the management of sailfish and marlin recreational fisheries (family Istiophoridae) 1. No progress on development of regional plan 2. Regional plan prepared 3. Regional plan presented to national fisheries authorities 4. Regional plan endorsed by national fisheries authorities	No		Satisfactory (S)[50]
	Indicator 14: project specific Level of development of regional guidelines for marine spatial planning in PACA 1. No progress on development of guidelines. 2. Guidelines developed. 3. Guidelines agreed by project board 4. Guidelines endorsed by pertinent national authorities on each country	Yes		
	Indicator 15: project specific Level of development of regional guidelines for whale watching in PACA 1. No progress on development of guidelines. 2. Guidelines developed. 3. Guidelines agreed by project board 4. Guidelines endorsed by pertinent national authorities on each country	Yes		
Project component 3. Knowledge management				

[50] The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.

Objective / Component / Outcome	Indicator	Midterm Target has been achieved by May 2025	Achievement Rating[45]	Assesment of progress[46]
Outcome 4. Collaborative information system developed with key indicators on PACA´s condition and SAP implementation	Indicator 16: project specific Level of adoption of a set of key indicators about the condition of PACA and SAP implementation. 1. No progress on development of set of key indicators. 2. Set of key indicators developed. 3. Set of key indicators agreed by project board. 4. Set of key indicators endorsed by pertinent national authorities on each country.	Yes		Satisfactory (S) [7]
Outcome 5. Lessons on collaborative actions to manage PACA shared in the region and worldwide (south-south cooperation).	Indicator 17: project specific Number of people (men and women, by country) who have participated in events for dissemination of lessons and best practices (e.g., workshops, IWC)	Yes		Satisfactory (S) [7]
	Indicator 18: project specific Number of visitors per month (annual average) recorded in the network of electronic platforms used to disseminate project´s learnings and best practice	Yes (modified on April 2025)		

4.3.2 Unexpected Outcomes

While many outcomes were anticipated, several unexpected or less-predicted results emerged during implementation.

- **Scalability of Pilot Projects** - Regional governance improvements allowed localized initiatives to expand rapidly. In Ecuador the project lit the fuse to get local communities involved, under strong women leadership! A Costa Rican pilot for cetacean migration corridors was adopted regionally within 18 months due to pre-established decision-making protocols, protecting over 1,200 km of critical habitat faster than anticipated.
- **Diplomatic Spillover Effects -** The governance structures established for environmental management inadvertently facilitated cooperation on non-environmental issues and engaged two high level representatives from the Ministries of foreign affairs. Surprising that others haven't done the same... Countries used the project's communication platforms to coordinate responses to illegal fishing and migrant crises, demonstrating the value of sustained dialogue mechanisms.
- **Need for Adaptive Management in PCACA's Project Design –** After having ignored the STAP recommendation for improving the ToC and indicators that could drive AM, the project revealed the necessity to frequently adjust institutional timelines and procedures to minimize delays and respond to changing political or environmental conditions, such as government changes or climate impacts. This level of adaptation and flexibility was not fully anticipated in the original project design, and this is presently on of the projects main bottlenecks (cant proactive adaptive management) because of the inadequate ToC …
- **Institutional Sustainability Concerns -** Despite efforts to build institutional capacity, sustainability ratings for the project outcomes were generally lower than hoped. High staff turnover, violence and limited public sector capacity in participating countries are serious barriers to sustaining PACA and maintaining project gains after external support ended. This highlights the challenge of embedding new practices and knowledge in fragile institutional environments and building strong informal institutions at the lowest practical levels… .
- **Drugs, violence are paralyzing and threaten sustainable fishing, tourism** etc. – these are resulting in fear in coastal communities so that they will not enforce illegal fishing, fishermen are fearful to fish at night due to horrific kidnapping, murder and boat/motor theft by delinquents and this seriously affects their ability to support PCA .
- **Improved enforcement and compliance remains a serious challenge**, and enforcement today now be even more dangerous. Enforcement capacity and compliance with environmental regulations in the region continue to face significant barriers, limiting the effectiveness of governance improvements.
- **Many institutional and enforcement challenges persist, and some socio-economic and environmental benefits are still difficult to quantify or sustain.**
- **Persistent Institutional and Enforcement Weaknesses**: Despite efforts to strengthen governance, enforcement of environmental regulations remains weak. This has limited the project's ability to curb illegal fishing, pollution, and habitat degradation, which continue to threaten marine and coastal ecosystems. This is likely to be the consequence of not having ecosystem service values that could assist governments to internalized the values lost from unsustainable practices and make investments to restore resilience.

- **The strong economic value of sportfishing compared with industrial fishing** and the losses due to poor management
- **Enhanced regional integration and collaboration** through national diagnostics and Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), which helped align countries on shared challenges.

4.3.3 Barriers preventing the Project From achieving its results

The ProDoc identified four main barriers that could limit ecosystem-based management (EBM) of the Pacific Central-American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (Table 13)**.**

Table 13*:* Summary of the degree to which PACA has addressed the 4 Barriers in the ProDoc.

BARRIERS	MTR	Comments
Barrier #1:. Incomplete information to support common management of key regional issues.		PACA has made significant advances through the national reports and the TDAs to fill major information gaps about key problems, their causes and their consequences, as well as organizing them so they are less dispersed and reflect inter-sectoral issues. However, most of the TDAs have identified symptom of the root causes rather than identifying their primary causes. The MTR team only reported this finding based upon the available evidence, which indicates the cause and effect analyses remain at the symptoms levels. As mentioned previously, the team also observed the root cause analyses in working groups at the Antigua workshop and the same mistake was being repeated. In those sub samples. We suggest that this be discussed with the TDA teams in the July workshop, as getting the deepest root causes right is essential….
Barrier #2: Weak understanding and application of the EBM approach		EBM is one of PACA's pillars. because lacks several key elements such as adaptive management and learning, and pathways to provide feedback on the degree to which outcomes are achieved (Figure 6). Other weaknesses include incomplete integration of land-ocean ecosystems and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable EBM. At mid-term, stakeholders are far from reaching this critical understanding incomplete donor several reasons. Either the technical team still does not fully understand EBM, or the communication strategy lacking concrete actions for raising the level of EBM understanding and application. It may be both. EBM also requires a shift from top-down governability to inclusive decision-making and governance that is driven by adaptive management which is driven by monitoring measurable responses and changes resulting from PACA's interventions that aim to lead the national and regional approaches toward its overall objective. EBM must also apply the Precautionary Approach and be Resilience-Focused . Figure 4 shows additional weaknesses of six key EBM targets PACA has not addressed completely. This situation not only undermines PACA's economic, and social objectives, but also its effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Barrier #3: Limited experience on inter-sectoral seascape management.		The TDAs and country profiles are important foundation-laying outputs and in general, they are excellent. However, the real test will be the design of the SAPs, especially the Theories of Change that serve as their foundation for driving adaptive management. Existing experience with inter-sectoral seascape management is mainly site-specific. Although there have been major advances with multi-country inter-sectoral management, they have yet to achieved collaborative EBM.
Barrier #4: Nonexistence of collaborative arrangements to sustain ecosystem-based		Positive, incremental improvement with the integration of key high-level government authorities from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2 countries (Ecuador y Colombia) and the Vice Minister of Environment from Guatemala. Staff to demonstrate that the countries are ready to engage at the highest

management of the large marine ecosystem.		levels of their government. There is no regional cooperation framework in place that can support coordinated action to address key problems within this LME. There are a number of platforms but they are either sectoral or do not include all PACA countries.

Figure 6 provides a snapshot of some of the key elements of EBM and the degree to which PACA has incorporated them into the overall planning and implementation process, while Figure 7 provides a brief summary of the degree to which the project has met some of the well-known EBM targets.

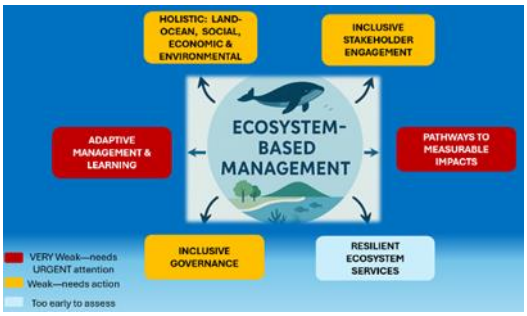


Figure 6: Status of PACA's incorporation of key EBM elements.

Targets	Comments
Improved governance and policy frameworks	*Lacking bottom-up integration mechanisms; confusion of governability and governance*
Assess and monitor (and evaluate) the LME	TDA & SAP good; however, except for Mexico & Ecuador, MSP pilots *largely ignore coastal-marine ecosystems connectivity; MEL is weak*
Reduce key environmental pressures	Promote adaptive management strategies for climate impacts; Support climate-smart livelihoods and ecosystem-based adaptation in coastal communities. *There is no evidence this is happening and there are no indicators to measure outcomes of interventions for reducing pressures*
Enhanced Resilience to climate change	Lacking ; few countries have integrated coastal ecosystems and communities for their climate adaptation measures
Engage stakeholders and build capacities	Disconnect exists between the participation of communities, civil society, and the private sector
Leverage partnerships Financing	Co-financing available now, but urgent for finding funders to sustain PACA in exit strategy.

Figure 7: Status of PACA's EBM targets.

Although the MTR appreciates PACA's efforts to strengthen top-down governability structures at the regional and national levels, the lack of operational governance structures, narrow stakeholder engagement processes, has been identified as one of the major impediments to the effective implementation of EBM.[51] This process is further supported by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)[52] of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which invites Parties and relevant organizations to support community-based monitoring, information systems, and citizen science as key contributions to the implementation and monitoring of the framework. Participatory approaches such as these in knowledge management has some excellent lessons in the three Ecuador pilot projects and they offer important lessons for the regional focus. This not only helps improve data quality, fills knowledge gaps, and builds societal support for social-ecological resilience-building, but it also highlights the need for inclusive processes that can increase awareness and appreciation of diverse knowledge systems, including traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, This is one reason that the MTR Team has focused on the importance of building include governance and participatory learning tools that can help link bottom-up processes with PACA's focus on governability and enhance the effectiveness of EBM. .

During the MTR interviews, stakeholders not only reiterated the barriers presented in the ProDoc, but they also identified additional barriers. Table 14 summarizes those barriers that PACA must consider addressing in the final stages of implementation.

Table 14*:* Summary of the degree to which PACA has addressed the 4 Barriers in the ProDoc.

BARRIER	EXPLANATION
Changes in central government authorities	The main obstacle faced by the project to date has been changes in governments administration, which result in turnover of authorities and civil servants within the ministries involved in the project. For this reason, very few individuals who participated in the PPG phase are currently involved in the implementation. These changes force the project to

[51] Galparsoro et al. (2025).
[52] CBD/COP/15/L.25 (2022).

BARRIER	EXPLANATION
	backtrack and re-engage in awareness-raising efforts before implementation can proceed. This directly affects the level of ownership that national governmental institutions have over the PACA project.
Geopolitical and diplomatic tensions	There are currently geopolitical disputes between El Salvador and Honduras in the Gulf of Fonseca. According to interviewees, El Salvador's withdrawal from the PACA project is directly related to this dispute. In addition, in countries such as Guatemala, foreign policy restrictions limit the use of certain technical terms that are part of the project design ("transboundary", "shared basins"), which has hindered the approval of project-related documents. Another challenge has been the designation of official representatives by foreign ministries to facilitate coordination and provide institutional backing.
Operational implementation challenges	A reported obstacle by pilot implementing entities is the delay in disbursements, especially the initial disbursement. For instance, Panama indicated that their pilot was scheduled to begin implementation in June 2024, but the first disbursement was not received until September, which delayed the start of execution. Additionally, some NGOs acting as field implementation partners had no prior experience working with the United Nations, requiring them to undergo a learning curve related to administrative procedures. Furthermore, countries like Ecuador have noted the complexity of implementation in remote areas, particularly when there is insufficient funding to support a full-time project staff member with enough resources to cover travel costs and effectively engage with coastal communities.
Security concerns	This is a particular issue for the pilot projects due to their field-based nature, as coastal and maritime areas of the Pacific have a high presence of drug trafficking.
Local conflicts	In some countries, such as Costa Rica, disputes have emerged between local stakeholders, implementing entities, and public sector institutions involved in the project, negatively impacting the final outputs of the pilot.
Disconnection between pilots, national diagnostics and regional implementation of the SAP.	Although the pilots were intended to serve as learning laboratories, interviewees consistently noted that the pilots are operating in isolation within each country, rather than collectively. Furthermore, in some cases this information is not being passed on to UNDP COs in at least 2 countries. However, the project design dictates that the pilots, with the exception of the Responsible Sport Fishing pilot, will range from local or national to regional. In the second half of PACA, the PMU will be responsible for developing regional guidelines for pilots 2 and 3 (indicators 14 and 15). The PMU expresses that the Pilots have no role in the TDA and the "positive/replicable" results from the pilots will be included in the SAP process. The t. MTR team is satisfied with this solution as otherwise, the project could miss opportunities for learning and incorporating management and policy recommendations from the pilots in those cases where there are regional overlaps of relevance.
Lack of a full-time project manager for each country	Reviewing the ProDoc design, the lack of a full-time project manager for each country is because the team that designed this project didn't plan for it that way in their management arrangements. While these issues should have been addressed in the PPG phase, they could have also been addressed during the Inception Phase. It's certainly a serious problem, and it reflects gaps in the PPG phase. However, a rigorous review of the ToC and especially the assumptions might have addressed the assumption that the lack of a full time project manager for each country would not be a problem and also that it might be a risk. This is a good example of a process for systematically capturing lessons proactively, rather than reactively. IT is also something that could have been addressed in the Inception Phase.

Table 15 shows additional barriers that the MTR team identified and which PACA must address in its final months.

Table 15*:* Summary of the degree to which PACA has addressed the 4 Barriers in the ProDoc.

BARRIER	EXPLANATION
Inclusive Governance	There is a wide gap in the countries' understanding and application of inclusive governance principles and this is a serious barrier to strengthening social capital at the lowest practical levels which are essential for effective and sustainable implementation of management measures and processes. management. If one or more countries stick with top-down governability, PACA's intended regional integration will fall short of its objective and it will lead to uneven implementation across the PACA LME, and this could further undermine efforts to build social, economic and ecological resilience. Based on the documentation reviewed by the MTR team, there is no uniformly accepted definition of governance, as the country-specific diagnostics understand governance differently. The MTR uses the GEF-IW definition[53] and finds that of the three key interacting governance mechanisms (economic, political, and civil society) that affect the way society uses and interacts with its environment.[54] At mid-term, 2/ 3 of the governance mechanisms are absent. The political mechanism for governance remains as a work in progress. However, Indigenous people have been integrated into the decision-making process in Mexico. This has been a major achievement and PACA has been instrumental in this.. Mexico's experience offers an excellent example of how inclusive governance could be carried out.
Incomplete root cause analyses (RCA) in the ProDoc and the TDAs	Failing to identify primary root causes in the PACA project's RCA can lead to ineffective problem-solving, ongoing project challenges, resource inefficiencies, and lost opportunities for organizational learning and improvement. Addressing only symptoms rather than root causes leads to superficial fixes that do not resolve the underlying problems. This results in recurring issues and persistent project underperformance since the fundamental barriers remain unaddressed. Root cause analysis that stops at symptoms often misses interacting or systemic causes, which require deeper investigation and multifaceted corrective actions. Effective RCA requires thorough, unbiased investigation, iterative questioning ("Why?"), and verification to uncover all underlying causes, enabling targeted corrective actions that address the true barriers to success. If root causes are not properly identified, similar failures are likely to recur in subsequent project phases or other projects, perpetuating a cycle of underachievement and inefficiency.
Traditional approaches to MEL, KM and communication	PACA's KM strategy goes beyond document storage and reporting, and the PMU has developed products that capture lessons learned and promote knowledge sharing among pilots., as well as a training plan that identifies courses and webinars that meet partner needs. However, conventional knowledge management may focus on document storage and reporting rather than dynamic learning and knowledge sharing. This can hinder organizational learning and adaptive management, particularly in complex, multi-stakeholder environments like PACA. In summary, , relying on conventional MEL and knowledge management approaches in the PACA project risks producing basic, slow, and resource-constrained evaluation processes that fail to generate timely, actionable insights or foster adaptive learning. This can limit the project's ability to respond effectively to emerging challenges and improve its development impact over time. Although the MEL and knowledge management processes PACA uses correspond with the project design and adhere to UNDP and GEF requirements, the PMU has expressed its availability to incorporate the evaluation team's recommendations to improve them.

[53] Governance is the decision-making process and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not). The challenge for all societies is to create a governance system that promotes, supports, and sustains human development, especially for the poorest and most marginalized. Governance can be considered the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage the affairs of a country at all levels and it comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups express their interests, exercise their legal rights, fulfill their obligations, and mediate their differences. Governance processes can be expressed through three key mechanisms: economic, political, and civil society.

[54] Sumaila U. R. (2012).

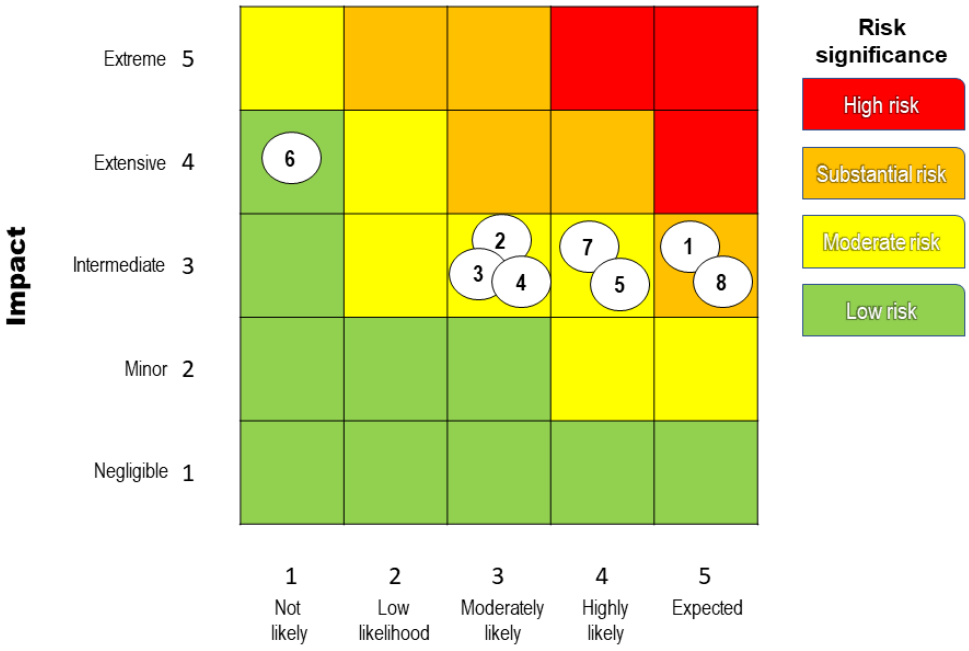
4.3.4 Risk Analyses

The Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) identified eight risks facing the project (see **Section 4.8**; **Annex 10**), two of which are substantial and related to the continuous change of governments, which runs the risk that a new government will change in the country's national priorities, as well as its level of institutional and financial support to the project (Figure 8). The measure proposed to reduce this risk focuses entails the PMU maintaining fluid communication with fisheries and environment authorities, the country-specific foreign affairs ministry and stakeholders, including main SICA entities (e.g., the General Secretariat, OSPESCA, CCAD). At any time that new authorities assume office, there will be a formal presentation of the project document, implementation progress, management arrangements and the roles and contributions of the entity. While these measures are unquestionably important, it is surprising that more emphasis was not placed on strengthening informal institutions at the lowest levels local organizations, which are the key to sustaining a project after a new government takes over. Brochures and workshops are not sufficient to achieve this goal and there is a wide body of published experiences highlighting the importance of active engagement by local actors, including participatory monitoring and adaptive learning and management.

The other substantial risk is related to the challenges related to obtain cofinancing. While this focused mainly on the reverberations from the impacts of COVID-19 on national economies, it still remains as a high risk. The proposed mitigation measure entails maintaining fluid communication with key project partners to identify difficulties in materializing cofinancing, encouraging project partners to maintain as much as possible their contributions to the project and seeking opportunities of collaboration with other ongoing projects and initiatives to obtain contributions that can add to project cofinancing. However, one major weakness of many projects such as PACA is that they do not prioritize developing an exit strategy that could start early-on to identify and secure potential co-funding opportunities.

While another moderate risk included the situation in Costa Rica (risk 5) in which the TDAs and SAPs. fisheries sector could be concerned about the implications of developing a regional collaborative framework and governance arrangements to implement PACA´s SAP because it could generate alarm that fishing activities could be restricted, particularly in relation to oceanic fisheries like tuna and large pelagic fish. These concerns may also serve as a barrier to fishers participating in the pilots, the TDA and SAP. Good communication is proposed as a way to ensure that fishers are fully informed about the project's aim to identify blue development opportunities, while fully engaging them in the pilots and the TDA/SAP process. The evidence from Mexico and Ecuador show the opposite effect and fishers are fully engaged in the pilots. The ProDoc appears to have underestimated the impacts of climate change on transboundary fish stocks, their variability, resilience and, shifting threat points as they relate to the management of transboundary fish stocks. The proposed mitigation measures include taking appropriate adaptation measures that align to the extent possible with the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the participating countries.

Figure 8: ProDoc Risk Analyses



Risk 1. Changes in central governments in the seven participating countries which may imply that project partners change their priorities and modify their support and contributions to the project.

Risk 2. Limitations to indigenous people participation and involvement during the implementation of the marine spatial planning pilot intervention.

Risk 3. Limitations to women participation and involvement.

Risk 4. Concern from ocean-going fishers that a regional agreement could lead to stricter fishing regulations

Risk 5. Costa Rican fishers unwilling to participate in pilot intervention on management of tuna and tuna-like species

Risk 6. Negative impacts on critical habitats and/or legally protected areas.

Risk 7. Impacts of climate variability and climate change.

Risk 8. Difficulty to materialize cofinancing due to the impacts of COVID-19 on national economies

However, this falls significantly short of what is needed to mitigate this risk because it fails to recognize the importance of coastal ecosystems which are crucial for maintaining food security and trophodynamic connections between nursery and reproduction areas along the coast and those in PACA's marine areas. For example, if these is a major populations shift of pelagics in response to an El Nino-La Nina Southern Oscillation of a Pacific Decadal Oscillation Climate Oscillation event, these coastal ecosystems and the services they provide to societies are important nursery and reproduction grounds for many marine species and protecting them is more important than ever maintaining their resilience to feed coastal populations. Collaborative policy frameworks will have to be adaptive, inclusive, flexible, and ecosystem-based if agreements are to resist the uncertainties related to climate change [55]

[55] Sumaila et al. (2020).

4.4 Project Execution and Adaptive Management

4.4.1 Management mechanisms

The ProDoc outlined a complex management arrangement whereby The Regional Implementing Agency (UNDP Costa Rica) and the Executing Agency (WWF Mesoamerica) not only have technical and administrative responsibilities that overlap in some cases. While the roles and responsibilities for each agency are clear, coordination and communication between those two agencies stand to be greatly improved, as this is affecting horizontal and vertical information flow and feedback with national partners.

According to PIR 2024, in order to have a better coordination, it was agreed to have national steering committees for each national pilot. The National Steering Committee (NSC) is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder committee that plays a crucial coordination, governance, oversight, and strategic role in ensuring the PACA project's success by guiding project activities, approving initiatives, and linking the project to broader policy and development goals. It is a multi-stakeholder body decision-making body established to support the implementation of the project at the national level. It provides overall guidance, strategic direction, and governance for the project's implementation and alignment with national priorities and GEF strategies. Its main objective is to guide and approve key planning and budgetary decisions. The NSC is composed of representatives from the UNDP Country Office, the implementing partner, and project beneficiaries. The regional project manager (WWF) is the secretary of each NSC to ensure alignment and coordination with the global project. Occasionally, members from the private sector, donor institutions, and experts may also be included to broaden the committee's expertise and resource base. The NSC also facilitates linkages between the project and national, regional, and global policies and frameworks, enhancing coherence and resource mobilization, promoting partnership development and scaling up of successful interventions through policy mainstreaming and stakeholder engagement.

Based on the available information, the establishment of National Steering Committees appears inconsistent across participating countries, with Panama being the only nation explicitly referenced as having an operational NSC. Panama has actively implemented an NSC, likely due to stronger institutional capacity or alignment with national priorities. This committee facilitates coordination between the PMU, UNDP country office, and domestic stakeholders, ensuring project activities align with local environmental strategies. There is no explicit evidence from the provided materials confirms NSC establishment in other PACA LME countries (e.g., Costa Rica, México, Ecuador). While the reason for these gaps is unclear, some countries may lack resources or institutional frameworks to operationalize NSCs.

4.4.1.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the project stakeholders were clearly established (Figure 8). The organizational structure proposed in the ProDoc included a Project Board responsible for making management decisions by consensus when required by the Director of Operations, including recommendations for approval of project plans and reviews by UNDP/implementing partner, and for addressing any complaints at the project level. This was followed by a Technical Committee, which serves as a multinational inter-institutional coordination body. The implementing partner for this project is WWF Guatemala/Mesoamerica, which is responsible for project execution. According to the ProDoc, the implementing partner will focus on project administration; strategic decisions will be made jointly by UNDP (with the Costa Rica country office as the focal point) and the project board.

For implementation purposes, a Project Management Unit (PMU) was proposed, whose members are hired by the implementing partner. According to the ProDoc design, the implementing partner, WWF Guatemala/Mesoamerica, is responsible for entering into a written agreement/contract with each of the responsible parties that provide the project goods and services, carry out project activities, and produce project results. The responsible parties designated in the ProDoc are those in charge of the pilot projects and correspond to OSPESCA, LANCIS-UNAM, INCOPESCA, MarViva, CI-Ecuador, and MiAMBIENTE Panama, entities that are directly accountable to the implementing partner.

4.4.1.2 Effectiveness and Efficiency of PACA's Management Arrangements

At the time of the evaluation, thanks to the work of the PMU, both the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee have been established. According to the document review and interviews conducted, the NSC is functioning well. Since their initial formation in June 2023, there has been turnover among participants due to changes in central administration in the governments of some countries, as well as the departure (El Salvador) and entry (Colombia) of countries in the region. Reports indicate that they are functioning adequately and that the quality of management's responses has been adequate, meeting periodically and making decisions for the benefit of the project, including modifications to the results framework indicators, the Gender Action Plan, as well as budget modifications, among others.

Additionally, a Regional Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) Development Team has been formed, as established in component 1 of the project. This team is made up of government representatives from the Fisheries and Environment Ministries, as well as one representative from each country's coastal and marine NGOs. This team has exercised its functions and responsibilities related to the development of the national TDAs.
However, management arrangements are operating differently within the framework of component 2. To date, the implementing partner is only managing the regional Responsible Sport Fishing pilot, as WWF Guatemala/Mesoamerica signed a contract directly with OSPESCA for this purpose. For the other pilots, the responsible parties (LANCIS-UNAM in Mexico, OET in Costa Rica, MarViva in Panama, and CI in Ecuador) signed contracts with the UNDP country office. For this reason, the PMU states that the management of these pilots is in the hands of the various UNDP offices and not the PMU.

According to the document review and interviews conducted, management arrangements are functioning differently and present limitations in terms of their effectiveness. At the time of the evaluation, thanks to the work of the PMU, both the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee have been established. Since their initial formation in June 2023, there has been turnover among participants due to changes in central administration in the governments of some countries, as well as the departure (El Salvador) and entry (Colombia) of countries in the region. Reports indicate that they are functioning adequately and that the quality of management's responses has been adequate, meeting periodically and making decisions for the benefit of the project, including modifications to the results framework indicators, the Gender Action Plan, as well as budget modifications, among others.

To date, *there is no coordination body between the implementing partner and the UNDP country offices, so component 2, which includes the pilot projects, is operating relatively isolated from the rest of the project.* This management arrangement, with its limitations in its effectiveness, translates into disadvantages for the project as a whole, as several of the national focal points responsible in each country stated in the interviews that they are unaware of what is happening in other countries, thus failing to capitalize on lessons learned and good practices from what is happening in the field. Furthermore, this has meant that the national TDA construction processes are not communicating with the pilot implementation processes. This is because the

development of the national TDAs has been outsourced. In no country did the PMU hire the same company for both the pilot and the national assessment. The exceptions are the countries where the party responsible for pilot implementation is directly participating in the consortium developing the TDA. Considering that this is a project involving so many countries, some of the interviewees pointed out that a weakness of the management arrangements is having a PMU located in Guatemala managing all the countries. Due to the complexities inherent to each situation, it was mentioned that a good alternative would have been to have small management teams dedicated to the project per country, who could report to the regional PMU.

4.4.1.3 Quality of project execution by the implementing partner (WWF)

The quality of project execution by the implementing partner, WWF Guatemala/Mesoamerica, has been generally positive, with notable strengths and significant areas for improvement. Regarding strengths, the stakeholders interviewed stated that WWF has demonstrated solid capacity in the administrative and financial management of the project, meeting audit requirements and delivery deadlines. Governmental and non-governmental entities involved in project management (Steering Committee, Technical Committee, and ADT Team) have positively valued the PMU's use of clear timelines and its availability and openness to feedback, as well as the use of both formal and informal communication channels to keep people informed. Likewise, in terms of logistical and planning aspects, those who have participated in in-person coordination sessions highlight the excellent work that has been conducted.

Additionally, hiring of multiple consulting firms without adequate integration of the products generated has resulted in fragmentation of the information sharing process and this runs the risk of weakening the important task of generating a regional vision among the stakeholders involved. Furthermore, in addition to what was noted in the section on management arrangements, most of the parties responsible for the pilots pointed out a disconnect between the regional project and what is happening at the local level, alluding to the fact that they have felt like islands, with little participation in decision-making. Along the same lines, some interviewees indicated that, during the implementation process, the project team has failed to clearly communicate all the project components and results, impacting the capacity for ownership and engagement of the various stakeholders. Finally, in one specific case, it was noted that there had been conflicts between actors from different sectors involved in the project's implementation at the local level, and the PMU could have taken a more proactive and managerial approach to resolving them.

4.4.1.4 Quality of coordination by Partner UNDP Agency

The quality of implementation by the partner agency, UNDP, has been generally positive, especially for the Costa Rica country office, which serves as the lead focal point for the project. It is worth noting that the country offices of all the countries involved in the project in the region are participating in project implementation, with the country offices of Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, and Ecuador playing a more active role due to the national pilot projects. Due to the project's operating model—with an implementing partner contracted by PUM—many stakeholders involved in the PACA project have not had contact with UNDP during project implementation. Those who have had contact acknowledge that UNDP has performed well, demonstrating commitment to monitoring project implementation.

However, two areas for improvement were highlighted during the interviews. The first relates to UNDP's diplomatic advocacy capacity. It has been mentioned that UNDP country offices could play a more active and decisive role in facilitating access to key actors, such as foreign ministries, to achieve the political support that the PACA project demands. Secondly, the complexities of UNDP's administrative procedures for disbursements have been particularly highlighted by those responsible for the pilot projects. As

mentioned in the section on barriers to implementation, some national stakeholders have pointed out a lack of clarity in administrative requirements. Therefore, UNDP could create specific training opportunities for national actors who have no prior experience working with United Nations formats.

4.4.1.5 Inter-institutional coordination and Communication

Project coordination and communication between the PMU and UNDP country offices is particularly problematic. UNDP country offices play a key role in oversight and accountability to the GEF. UNDP offices complained that while they have received reports from the PMU and consultant leading the pilot activities, they do not feel that they are being integrated into the pilot projects and other regional technical issues for which WWF is responsible.

PACA's organizational structure (Figure 9) appears to promote compartmentalization of information and the communication links between and among the key actors is problematic. When asked about the viability, responsiveness and communication among key actors in the organigram should be repeated in future projects, the reply was a rotund – never!

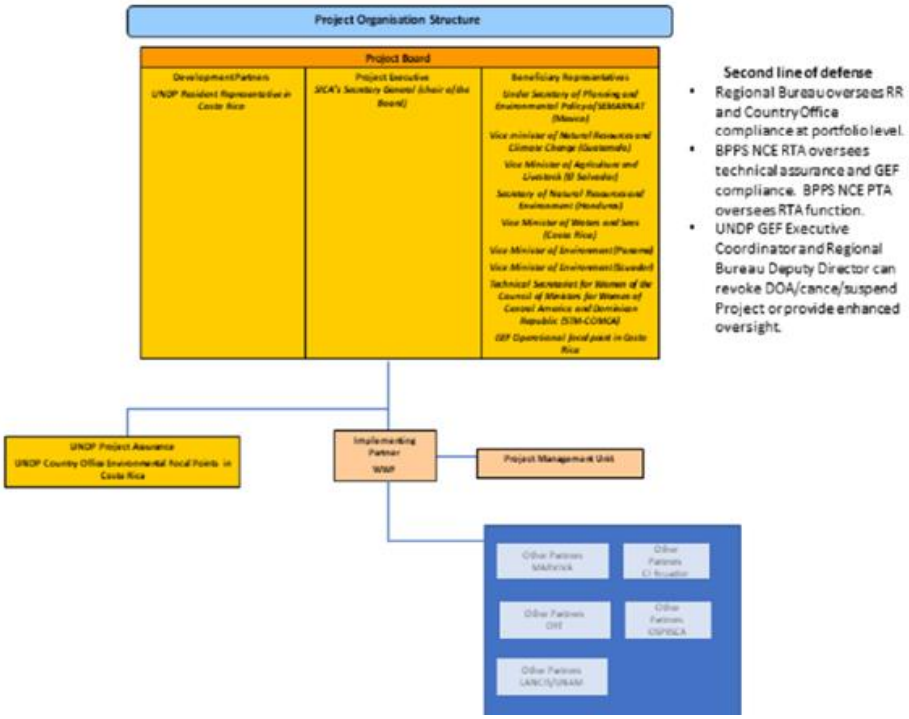


Figure 9: Organigram of PACA as presented in the ProDoc.

There is evidence that this compartmentalized management has not only resulted in poor communication among the partners within the organizational framework, but it has impeded the vertical uptake of several pilot experiences to the UNDP country offices and also national government agencies involved in the project. UNDP country offices mention that they are not receiving adequate information on lessons and good practices from the Pilot activities under the responsibility of the PMU. This includes the pilot led by OSPESCA, which is under the technical supervision of the PMU. This has serious negative implications for the M&E system, as explained in Subsection 3.3.4.

The poor communication has also delayed financial disbursements, which have slowed starting up for several of the key activities. However, several NGO partners showed their commitment to the project by covering the costs for PACA activities with their own resources until they could be reimbursed. While decision-making has been generally transparent, several interviewees complained that suggestions they presented were ignored by the PMU creating frustration. Similarly, in general, communication between the

PMU and its technical counterparts has been good, but there remains considerable compartmentalization of information. However, until the recent regional workshop in Antigua, the response to the weak communication and coordination outside of their compartmentalized responsibilities has been weak.

Similarly, in general, communication between the PMU and its technical counterparts has been good, but there remains considerable compartmentalization of information. However, until the recent regional workshop in Antigua, the response to the weak communication and coordination outside of their compartmentalized responsibilities has been weak.

In general, the interviewees were very positive about the performance of both the PMU and the RIA and the quality of project implementation by the implementing agencies/executing partners and the GEF partner agency (UNDP) has been satisfactory. The quality of the implementing agency's supervision and support has been *satisfactory* with regard to regional coordination and *highly satisfactory* in dealing with contractual and performance issues of the Pilot in Costa Rica.

The PMU team consists of highly qualified professionals in their technical specialties, and the WWF Team Leader's qualifications to lead the project is unsurpassed by few. Similarly, the M&E specialists is performing at a highly satisfactory level. The PMU has a suitable gender balance. However, the capacities of the implementing agencies/executing partners, UNDP, and other partners to deliver benefits to and engage women/indigenous peoples is weak.

4.4.2 Work Planning

The PMU's work planning is well-organized, inclusive, and adaptive. It is effectively balancing regional coordination complexities with environmental and social safeguard requirements. As a result, the MTR team rates this as ***highly satisfactory***. Trimestral Reports are well-prepared and identify advances, delays, changes in Risks and advances in the SESP, among other elements. It is notable that the PMU has used:

- **Comprehensive and Structured Planning** to develop detailed work plans that align with the project's objectives, timelines, and deliverables, ensuring that activities are logically sequenced and resources are appropriately allocated. These work plans incorporate multi-country coordination needs, reflecting the complex regional scope involving seven countries, which requires careful synchronization of activities and stakeholder engagement.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusiveness** for the planning processes that actively involve national authorities, technical partners (such as UNDP, WWF), and local stakeholders, fostering ownership and ensuring that plans are grounded in local realities and capacities.
- **Adaptive and Iterative Planning** using the PIRs allows for regularly revising work plans based on monitoring results, risk assessments, and stakeholder feedback. This flexibility allows the project to respond efficiently to emerging risks, environmental changes, or institutional dynamics, maintaining relevance and effectiveness.
- **Integration of Risk Management** - Work planning integrates comprehensive risk analysis and mitigation measures as recommended by the GEF-UDP guidelines for the PIRs, thereby ensuring that potential obstacles are proactively addressed. The PMU's plans also reflect UNDP and GEF standards for environmental and social safeguards, embedding these considerations into operational activities.

The Table 16 shows a sample of the kinds of advances that are recorded in the PIRs and their responsiveness to recommendations and in addressing unexpected surprises.

Table 16*:* Summary of advances with the SESP monitoring Plan.

Trimester	Advances	Delays
2024		
Trimester 01.	• Significant progress on all three project components in developing inputs that will be part of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), including the development of a set of core indicators for the Pacific Coastal Central American Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA LME) region. • Obtained the appointment of a SICA representative to the Steering Committee and the appointment of national representatives to the Project Technical Committee. The Technical Committee held two meetings as part of the monitoring of Component 1 of the Project. Furthermore, the Indigenous Peoples' Participation Plan held several consultation meetings with Indigenous peoples in Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, and El Salvador (no longer in PACA). • Training course on ADT development and regional workshop for the development of core indicators for the PACA LME region and first in-person meeting of the Technical Committee and the formation of the ADT Development Team took place. Twenty-seven people participated in the training course on TDA development. Included the participation of the Technical Committee and non-state partners, with a total of 31 participants. • The billfish fishing pilot project advanced, with the signing of the contract between WWF and OSPESCA and the transfer of funds to launch activities. OSPESCA has made progress in implementation through the hiring of the pilot coordinator, • Project website (pacificosostenible.org), which was launched during the ADT Development Team formation. In addition, 43 communication products were developed during these months, which were launched through various platforms such as social media, outreach materials, and media publications. • To date, none of the pre-identified risks have affected project development. However, a new risk emerged in March 2024, associated with insecurity in Ecuador. This new risk appears in the table in this section. The challenges associated with this risk are described in Section 4 of this report. • Murder of the mayor of San Vicente, Ecuador. Unknown. Climate of insecurity impacts pilot project activities in one of the PEM municipalities. Protection and security / Social and environmental. Impact: 3; Probability: 3; Risk level: moderate.	1. First Disbursement: the original date was May 30, 2023. The first disbursement was received in June16, 2023. The 16-day delay was probably due to bank processes.
Trimester 02:	• Frequent meetings are carried, and trimestral reports are requested to track the progress of the project and identify bottle necks. • Panama CO, which oversees transferring the funds to the executing partner. • High level support from the RR, is requested in both El Salvador and Costa Rica, to seek for PRODOC endorsement by the El Salvador government. • A close follow-up has been requested to WWF to request approval from the Board of Directors, in relation to the participation of Colombia to the project. • Strict adherence to GEF and UNDP policies regarding gender perspective and Indigenous people participation is observed. • This project closes the reporting period (as of 16 Aug. 2024) with a cumulative delivery since the project start of 14.64% and a delivery for 2024 of 16.65%, representing a total disbursement of (USD): 1,046,215, with a total budget for the project of USD 7,147,209 • Bearing in mind that project last for 48 months (closing in Feb. 2027), starting officially with the ProDoc signature in Feb. 2023, it has lapsed in the system 16 months of implementation (until June 2024); so, it currently has 32 months to implement its balance of around USD 6.1million, meaning an average execution of USD 190,656 per month. • To improve coordination, Project Steering Committees have been put in place for the national pilot projects. These PSC have been organized for Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador for • Marine Spatial Planning pilot projects. These national committees will approve national budget and planning, as well as review risks. • In 2024 the project (regional portion) was audited to review the progress in the fiscal year 2023, with minor observations to attend by WWF. • In the first quarter of 2024, the consultant in charge of the Sustainable Pacific Indigenous Peoples' Engagement Plan was hired. The consultant oversaw facilitating a set of socialization and consultation meetings with Indigenous	the Panama pilot is experiencing significant delays, for which we have requested support .

organizations in the region. From these meetings, the consultant will use the inputs collected for the design of the Indigenous Peoples' Participation Plan for the Project. By the end of March 2024, updated PPI Plan • The project has updated the Gender Action Plan prepared during the design phase. Additionally, in the second meeting of the Steering Committee it was considered the minimum level of participation of persons from non-state entities (>30%) and women (>30%) in the TDA development team. The proposed change was to increase the percentage of women's participation in the TDA development team from 30% to 50% (Annex included in PROJECT GOVERNANCE). • In terms of contributing to closing gender gaps in access to and control over resources: There is unequal participation of women in the blue economy workforce; therefore, there is limited participation of women in leadership roles within fisheries organizations. • For the regional project implemented by WWF there are 3 risks that could affect the project's results completion, all of them registered in QUANTUM, 1 low and 2 substantial. These substantial risks are related to i) changes in central governments in the seven participant countries, and ii) difficulties to materialize the committed cofinancing. MEASURES TO MANAGE THE PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATION PERFORMANCE • Taking the previous into consideration, the PMU is encouraged to: Provide continue follow up to the pilot projects implementation to run in parallel to what is planned for the implementation of the regional component, avoiding delays and miscoordination. - Conduct continuous meetings with the RTA and COs to track the AWP implementation and define measures in case of delays. These meetings can be conducted after the RTA has sent the quarterly monitoring e-mail to the COs and the project coordinator. - Define mechanisms to accelerate the approval and endorsement processes of the project's deliverables by main counterparts in the countries, with special emphasis to complete the TDA/SAP preparation and endorsement. - Start the preparation of the MTR, including preparation of ToRs for hiring the consultant in charge, co-financing tracking (letters), update of core indicators, and others related. Bear in mind that the whole process should be finished in Feb. 2025. - Review with main partners the co-financing commitments and guarantee at least the co-financing amount originally committed, and when possible, find new co-financing with partners. – Start the preparation of the project's sustainability strategy.	

Risks that could affect the project's results completion are periodically registered in QUANTUM. Substantial risks are related to i) changes in central governments in the seven participant countries, and ii) difficulties to materialize the committed cofinancing. *It is noted that to date, there is no evidence that the PMU has begun to formulate an exit strategy (referred to in the PIR as sustainability strategy*).

4.4.2 Adaptive Management[56]

AM is fundamentally about learning from both successes and failures through ongoing monitoring and feedback loops. A project lacking this approach will miss critical opportunities to refine its methods, correct mistakes, and incorporate new scientific knowledge, resulting in stagnation and repeated errors. Marine ecosystems are complex, with many uncertainties and knowledge gaps. Without adaptive management, projects are less able to detect and mitigate unforeseen negative impacts, potentially exacerbating ecological degradation or failing to meet conservation objectives

While the PMU has made some excellent adjustments through mid-term, most have been reactive management in response to crisis or unexpected contingencies that required rapid action. While such an approach is CBD, UNFCC and other scientific experts argue that proactive adaptive management is the best process to address these problems. Continuously applying reactive adaptive management (AM) carries significant risks to PACA compared to a proactive, systematic approach. Table 17 summarizes these risks and how they can be reduced by applying a proactive approach based on a more robust Theory of Change (ToC), which could fundamentally reshape proactive adaptive management by creating a structured, anticipatory framework for addressing complex social and ecological challenges.

[56] GEF Council (2023) approved recommendaitons for future GEF projects to develop more robust ToCs and SMART outcomes, and to apply systematic adaptive management principles.

Table 17: Summary of additional risks and how they could be reduced by applying proactive AM.

FACTOR	REACTIVE MANAGEMENT RISKS	PROACTIVE AM ADVANTAGES
Ecosystem Health	Accelerates trophic cascades from apex predator loss	Maintains food web balance via anticipatory measures
Economic Stability	Frequent fishery closures destabilize coastal livelihoods	Stable, science-based quotas support long-term industry viability
Governance	Erodes trust through crisis-driven decisions	Strengthens regional cooperation via shared SAP frameworks
Climate Adaptation	Fails to address synergistic impacts of fishing + climate change	Uses risk assessments to buffer against warming, acidification, and extreme weather

The MTR team finds that many of the assumptions presented in the ProDoc are superficial, or non-existent in others. Without assumptions and linkages between outputs and outcomes, it is impossible to apply adaptive management principles that can provide feedback loops for correcting mistakes, strengthening good practices and systematically capture lessons and new knowledge throughout implementation. Specific examples of weak assumptions include the unmentioned, but implicit assumption that the pathway toward impacts presented in the ProDoc will translate into behavioral or systemic changes in the region's governance or ecosystem management, without outlining the assumptions along the results chain.

A robust ToC[57] that explicitly links resilience-building actions to outcomes (e.g., marine protected area expansion, well-being, pollution control, reduced overfishing, social well-being, apex predator recovery) through verifiable cause-effect relationships and feedback loops that help PACA countries Identify, for example, leverage points for preventing trophic cascades (e.g., maintaining minimum shark biomass thresholds), deploy targeted interventions before ecosystem thresholds are breached (e.g., preemptive fishery closures when prey fish stocks drop below 40% baseline) and to test assumptions about predator-prey dynamics through embedded monitoring protocols.[58] Climate change, shifting species distributions, and emerging threats require dynamic risk-buffering management strategies require that integrate climate projections and socioeconomic drivers into its causal framework. This, through a robust ToC can help provide early alerts of compounding stressors (e.g., linking warming-induced habitat shifts (projected 1.5°C rise by 2040) to predator migration patterns and fishing pressure.[59] It also helps automatically activate contingency plans when early warning systems detect. Finally, it can help apply adaptive measures to foresee political bottlenecks and other risks presented in the SESP (**Annex 10**).

4.5 Financing and Co-financing

4.5.1 Differences between planned and actual expenses

At midterm, the pace of implementation is satisfactory. By the first quarter of 2025 after 25 months of execution (the official start date being February 2023 with the signing of the ProDoc), 52% of the project implementation period has elapsed (25 of 48 months). According to figures provided by the PMU on

[57] https://www.conservation.org/docs/default-source/publication-pdfs/constructing-theories-of-change-for-ecosystem-based-adaptation.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=1fd83348_3
[58] https://pollution.sustainability-directory.com/term/adaptive-fisheries-management/
[59] Bryce, K, and K. Hunter (2024). https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/marine-science/articles/10.3389/fmars.2024.1339871/full; https://eba.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/WP-November-2021_Adaptive-ToC-webb.pdf

regional implementation, 45% of the total budget has been implemented, with a disbursement of $2,612,071.06 of the $5,795,520.00 programmed in the ProDoc (Table 18).

Table 18: Cumulative financial execution of GEF resources by component

Project Components	Accumulated (until 2025*)					Total Project Amount (USD)	Cumulative execution as a percentage of the total budget (%)
	ProDoc (USD)	Revision (USD)**	Executed (USD)***	% executed over ProDoc	% executed over revision		
Component 1	$2,696,644.72	$1,899,684.37	$1,434,727.87	53%	76%	$2,881,196.56	50%
Component 2	$1,263,375.49	$1,078,952.34	$638,300.41	51%	59%	$1,322,439.26	48%
Component 3	$938,116.88	$722,734.46	$431,657.43	46%	60%	$1,283,338.50	34%
PMC	$221,070.86	$177,396.14	$107,385.35	49%	61%	$ 308,545.68	35%
TOTAL	**$5,119,207.95**	**$3,878,767.31**	**$2,612,071.06**	**51%**	**67%**	**$5,795,520.00**	**45%**

Notes:
*The totals in the 'ProDoc' and 'Revised' columns correspond to the sum of the annual total amounts for 2023, 2024, and 2025. However, the numbers in the 'Executed' column includes the sum of the annual amounts for 2023 and 2024, and only the execution from the first quarter of 2025

**Revised budget refers to the budget approved at the beginning of the year by the Steering Committee

***Budget executed from 2023 to the first quarter of 2025

The levels of financial execution for each Component are uniform. Based on the global amount established in the ProDoc, disbursements for components 1 and 2 (50% and 48%) are satisfactory, while component 3 is low (3%). This is related to the type of activities implemented to date and the fact that experience sharing, particularly between pilots, has been limited. The outlook is that this will change in the short term since, the PMU reported in the interviews that the knowledge management processes among the national pilots are beginning this year.

Comparing projected expenditures (according to the revised budget) and actual expenditures (up to the first quarter of 2025), the project has achieved 67% execution. It should be noted that there are still three quarters remaining in 2025, so it is anticipated that the expected execution level can be reached. At the component level, it is observed that the execution is quite balanced, with 76% for component 1, 59% for component 2 and 60% for component 3 (Table 19).

During implementation, a budget review was conducted, which was necessary to execute the regional pilot project with OSPESCA. As indicated in the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of September 12, 2023, the funds for the pilot were distributed across different budget accounts of component 2. To execute the pilot project, a budget account had to be added to component 2 (72100 "Business Contractual Services") to sign a service contract with OSPESCA for the implementation of the pilot activities. Additionally, evidence provided by the PMU indicates that a request for a budget modification was made at the April 10, 2025, meeting, but as of the evaluation date, there are no Steering Committee minutes available to verify whether it was approved or the results of the changes.

Financial execution has been appropriate for each year (see Tables 19 and 20). The first disbursement was approved in May 2023 but did not occur until June 2023. As expected, while the PMU was being formed

Table 19: Part 1 of the financial implementation of GEF resources by year (2023 and 2024) according to PMU data

	2023 (April-Dec)					2024 (Jan-Dec)				
	Planned		Actual	Percentage		Planned		Actual	Percentage	
	Prodoc	Revision		Over Prodoc	Over Revision	Prodoc	Revision		Over Prodoc	Over Revision
Comp. #1	$ 667,271.44	$ 78,270.36	$ 83,933.65	12.58%	107.24%	$ 1,471,195.44	$ 820,050.18	$ 830,112.24	56%	101%
Comp. #2	$ 237,815.15	$ 90,184.72	$ 68,755.51	28.91%	76.24%	$ 853,374.19	$ 508,865.84	$ 508,825.60	60%	100%
Comp. # 3	$ 327,577.63	$ 145,688.27	$ 139,087.62	42.46%	95.47%	$ 241,469.63	$ 264,831.38	$ 252,131.16	104%	95%
PMC	$ 66,442.82	$ 51,786.42	$ 42,419.77	63.84%	81.91%	$ 87,633.22	$ 59,009.72	$ 53,998.78*	62%	92%
Total	**$ 1,299,107.04**	**$ 365,929.77**	**$ 334,196.55**	**25.73%**	**91.33%**	**$ 2,653,672.48**	**$ 1,652,757.12**	**$ 1,645,067.78**	**62%**	**100%**

Note: * For calendar year 2024, in the PMC component, $9,093.00 was executed in payments made directly from UNDP to BDO, auditors who performed the Micro Assessment of WWF and internal control audit for the 2023 period. This amount is not reflected in the amount executed.

Table 20: Part 2 of the financial implementation of GEF resources by year (2025) according to PMU data

	2025 (Jan-Dec)					2026		TOTAL PROJECT
	Planned		Actual**	Percentage		Planned		Planned
	Prodoc	Revision		Over Prodoc	Over Revision	Prodoc	Revision	ProDoc
Component 1	$ 558,177.84	$ 1,001,363.83	$ 520,681.98	93%	52%	$ 184,551.8	975,848.90	**$2,881,196.56**
Component 2	$ 172,186.15	$ 479,901.78	$ 60,719.30	35%	13%	$ 59,063.8	264,916.13	**$1,322,439.26**
Component 3	$ 369,069.62	$ 312,214.81	$ 40,438.65	11%	13%	$ 345,221.6	567,204.69	**$1,283,338.50**
PMC	$ 66,994.82	$ 66,600.00	$ 10,966.80	16%	16%	$ 87,474.8	140,516.19	**$308,545.68**
Total	**$ 1,166,428.43**	**$ 1,860,080.42**	**$ 632,806.73**	**54%**	**34%**	**$ 676,312.05**	**$ 1,948,485.91**	**$5,795,520.00**

Note: ** The "Actual" column for the year 2025 only records the expenditure for the first quarter.

Source: PMU, 2025

4.5.2 Comparison of PMU Budget vs. UNDP Regional Budget

Since the Project Management Unit (PMU) indicated that it does not manage information on the total project budget—including the investment amounts allocated to pilot initiatives in each country—complementary information was requested from the UNDP Regional Office. The data received had to be compiled from country-level reports, as there is currently no regional financial monitoring system in place that consolidates and periodically updates this information. Tables 14 and 15 contain the details of the information provided.

Discrepancies in the reported amounts are to be expected, particularly in Component 2 (which includes the pilot initiatives) and in the PMC, given that the UNDP country offices also have an assigned budget for project management. In this regard, the total difference in the planned amount according to the ProDoc is **$1,351,689.00** (see Table 21). This amount is distributed as follows: 99% under Component 2 ($1,338,583.00) and 1% under PMC ($13,106.00). Consequently, the cost-effectiveness of pilot implementation appears to be even higher, given the small percentage of the budget allocated for this purpose. However, this very low percentage also explains the inability to hire a dedicated full-time staff member or small team for the PACA project in each country—an issue that has been identified as a weakness and a barrier to advancing implementation.

Table 21: Total amounts by component of the PACA project, according to source, and their difference

	Source: UNDP	Source: PMU	Differences
Component 1	$ 2,881,196.56	$2,881,196.56	$ 0.00
Component 2	$ 2,661,022.26	$1,322,439.26	$ 1,338,583.00
Component 3	$ 1,283,338.50	$1,283,338.50	$ 0.00
PMC	$ 321,651.68	$ 308,545.68	$ 13,106.00
Total	**$ 7,147,209.00**	**$5,795,520.00**	**$ 1,351,689.00**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on information from the PMU and UNDP

Table 22: Part 1 of the financial implementation of GEF resources by year (2023 and 2024) according to Regional Office of PNUD data

Regional

	2023 (April-Dec)					2024 (Jan-Dec)				
	Planned		Actual	Percentage		Planned		Actual	Percentage	
	Prodoc	Revision		Over Prodoc	Over Revision	Prodoc	Revision		Over Prodoc	Over Revision
Component 1	$ 667,271.44	$ 667,271.44	$ 93,948.88	14%	14%	$ 1,471,195.44	$ 78,270.36	$ 841,190.84	57%	1075%
Component 2	$ 413,049.81	$ 309,677.15	$ 129,424.83	31%	42%	$ 1,844,114.81	$ 804,517.17	$ 1,057,586.91	57%	131%
Component 3	$ 327,577.63	$ 327,577.63	$ 128,681.31	39%	39%	$ 241,469.63	$ 145,688.37	$ 234,058.64	97%	161%
PMC	$ 69,719.32	$ 66,442.82	$ 33,094.74	47%	50%	$ 90,909.72	$ 57,995.42	$ 62,199.37	68%	107%
Total	**$ 1,477,618**	**$ 1,370,969**	**$ 385,150**	**26%**	**28%**	**$ 3,647,690**	**$ 1,086,471**	**$ 2,195,036**	**60%**	**202%**

Table 23: Part 2 of the financial implementation of GEF resources by year (2023 and 2024) according to Regional Office of PNUD data

	2025 (Jan-Dec)					2026		Total Project	
	Planned		Actual*	Percentage		Planned		Planned	
	Prodoc	Revision		Over Prodoc	Over Revision	Prodoc	Revision	Prodoc	Revision
Component 1	$558,177.84	$1,001,363.83	$520,681.98	93%	52%	$ 184,552		**$2,881,196.56**	
Component 2	$294,107.82	$ 801,630.82	$200,908.70	68%	25%	$ 109,750		**$2,661,022.26**	
Component 3	$369,069.62	$ 312,214.81	$ 41,930.12	11%	13%	$ 345,222		**$1,283,338.50**	
PMC	$ 70,271.32	$ 68,835.00	$ 17,141.80	24%	25%	$ 90,751		**$ 321,651.68**	
Total	**$ 1,291,627**	**$ 2,184,044**	**$ 780,663**	**60%**	**36%**	**$ 730,275**	**$ -**	**$ 7,147,209**	**$ -**

Note: ** The "Actual" column for the year 2025 only records the expenditure for the first quarter.

Source: Regional UNDP Office, 2025

Additionally, other significant discrepancies were identified between the budgets provided by the PMU and those from the UNDP Regional Office. Minor discrepancies could be expected; however, the most relevant issue is that the figures shown in the "revised" and "current" columns do not match for any component for the years 2023 and 2024. While variation is understandable for Component 2 and the PMC, Components 1 and 3 should present consistent numbers. To facilitate visualization, Table 24 clearly presents the dollar-value differences between the amounts reported by each source for the years 2023–2025, showing that for Components 1 and 3, discrepancies range from as low as USD 1,491.47 to as high as USD -741,779.82. This evidence indicates a communication breakdown in the reporting of financial information between the PMU and the UNDP country offices—an issue of critical importance for effectively monitoring the cost-efficiency of the project.

Table 24: Dollar Amount Differences Between Budgets Reported by the UNDP Regional Office and the PMU for 2023–2025

	2023 (April-Dec)			2024 (Jan-Dec)			2025 (Jan-Dec)		
	Planned		Actual	Planned		Actual	Planned		Actual*
	Prodoc	Revision		Prodoc	Revision		Prodoc	Revision	
C1	$ 0.00	$ 89,001.08	$ 10,015.23	$ 0.00	-$ 741,779.82	$ 11,078.60	$ 0.00	$ 0.00	$ 0.00
C2	$ 175,234.66	$ 219,492.43	$ 60,669.32	$ 990,740.62	$ 295,651.33	$ 548,761.31	$ 121,921.67	$ 321,729.04	$ 140,189.40
C3	$ 0.00	$ 181,889.36	-$ 10,406.31	$ 0.00	-$ 119,143.01	-$ 18,072.52	$ 0.00	$ 0.00	$ 1,491.47
PMC	$ 3,276.50	$ 14,656.40	-$ 9,325.03	$ 3,276.50	-$ 1,014.30	$ 8,200.59	$ 3,276.50	$ 2,235.00	$ 6,175.00
Total	**$ 178,511.16**	**$ 1,005,039.27**	**$ 50,953.21**	**$ 994,017.12**	**-$ 566,285.80**	**$ 549,967.98**	**$ 125,198.17**	**$ 323,964.04**	**$ 147,855.87**

Note: The formula used in each cell is the subtraction of the amount per component, per year, reported by the UNDP Regional Office (Tables 13 and 14) from the amount reported by the PMU (Tables 10 and 11).

4.5.3 Adequacy of PACA's financial controls to make informed management decisions regarding the budget, enabling a timely flow of funds

The project is considered to have adequate financial controls at the regional level to be able to make informed management decisions regarding the budget. Current financial procedures are based on the manuals and controls established by WWF and in accordance with UNDP Program and Operations Policies and Procedures. According to the UNDP Costa Rica office, financial administrative management is sound. According to documentary evidence provided by the PMU, progress in financial execution is reported in the UNDP funding authorization requests and certificate of expenditures (FACE) in a disaggregated manner, in the quarterly technical reports (as total aggregate expenditure), and in the PIR as an annual report.

According to ProDoc, the project must be audited according to UNDP Financial Regulations and Rules and applicable audit cycles. The audit cycle and process were supposed to be discussed during the Inception workshop. However, neither the Project Initiation Report nor the PIR identify the agreed audit cycles. To date, there is an audit report for the PACA project, issued in April 2024, which reviews the financial execution from March 1 to December 31, 2023. In summary, the independent auditor's opinion is favorable, indicating that the project expenditure reports is presented adequately in all material respects and the amount of expenditures incurred for the project are in accordance with the agreed accounting policies, as they are: (i) in accordance with the approved project budgets; (ii) approved for the project; (iii) in accordance with the regulations and standards of UNDP policies and procedures; and (iv) supported by duly approved receipts and other supporting documents. Areas for improvement are highlighted regarding the project's human

resources timekeeping system, including advances declared as expenses, salary costs claimed not based on actual costs, and weaknesses in the documentation of selection processes.

In line with the above, two areas for improvement in financial controls have been identified. The first is related to the time elapsed since the audit was conducted in 2024. Given that financial execution has increased significantly during 2024, it is considered timely to conduct it. Secondly, it is recommended that audit cycles and processes be clearly established for the remainder of the PACA project.

4.5.4 Extent to which PACA has mobilized the planned co-financing

At mid-term, the project has committed in-kind co-financing in the amount of USD 52,970,617.86 (see Table 25), significantly exceeding the co-financing provided in the ProDoc, according to the PMU. Based on the ProDoc, co-financing of the regional pilot by OSPESCA in the amount of USD 600,000.00 had been confirmed. Therefore, the commitments the PMU has obtained to date exceed this expected amount by 8,828%. As evidence of the committed co-financing, the PMU has letters signed by representatives of the institutions listed as sources of in-kind co-financing. The complexity with these figures is that, since they are in-kind co-financing, there is no clear evidence of the actual amount of co-financing received to date.

Furthermore, co-financing is not included in the PACA project's financial or quarterly technical reports, which leads to the risk of obscuring the contribution to implementation and making it impossible to monitor the actual contribution received periodically.

Table 25*:* Co-financing mobilized

Name of cofinancing source	Type of cofinancing		Planned contribution
	Co-financing type	Description	
Federacion Costarricense de Pesca, FECOP	In-kind	Support to build capacity within fisheries authorities with international experts.	$ 200,000.00
UNDP Costa Rica country office	In-kind	Provision of execution services on behalf of INCOPESCA.	$ 12,000.00
Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuacultura, INCOPESCA	In-kind	Programatic work for helping Costa Rica transition to a Green and Blue Economy and socio-economic recovery.	$ 2,400,000.00
Ministerio de Ambiente, Agua y Trancisión Ecológica de Ecuador, MAATE	In-kind	Technical counterpart provided for all components of the project.	$ 5,432,299.73
Subsecretaría de Recursos Pesqueros, Ministerio de Produccion, Comercio Exterior, Inversiones y Pesca de Ecuador	In-kind	Part-time appointment of staff, information collected through the observer program, part time designation of satellite monitoring center operators.	$ 8,760,842.88
Dirección de Normatividad de la Pesca y Acuicultura de Guatemala, DIPESCA	In-kind	Personnel, supplies and equipment	$ 608,647.41
Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales de Guatemala, MARN	In-kind	Oriented to all components of the Project, in particular, for the pilot demonstration intervention	$ 1,187,516.32

Name of cofinancing source	Type of cofinancing		Planned contribution
	Co-financing type	Description	
		for the conservation and management of billfishes.	
Sector Privado Pesca Deportiva de Guatemala	In-kind	Personnel, supplies and equipment	$ 120,000.00
Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas de México, CONANP	In-kind	Tecnical assistance	$ 500,000.00
Laboratorio Nacional de Ciencias de la Sostenibilidad de México, LANCIS	In-kind	Facilities, teleconference services, capacity building, legal and technical support.	$ 175,000.00
Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca de México, CONAPESCA	In-kind	Salaries, participation in workshops and conferences.	$ 4,548,000.00
Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales de México, SEMARNAT	In-kind	Inspections, surveillance operations, monitoring, attention to contingencies.	$ 30,465.53
Dirección General de Fomento y Administracion Portuaria, Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes de México	In-kind	Construction of works, monitoring program, studies, infrastructure maintenance.	$ 11,649,169.20
Secretaria de Medio Ambiente, Energia y Desarrollo Sostenible de Oaxaca, México, SEMAEDESA	In-kind	Conservation of biodiversity, improvement of sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry, financial sustainability and social participation, ecological zoning.	$ 231,032.43
Secretaría de Medio Ambiente e Historia Natural de Chiapas, México	In-kind	Biodiversity conservation, environmental planning, land planning, education and sustainable environmental management.	$ 199,404.37
Dirección General de Investigación, y Desarrollo, Subsecretaría de Marina de México	In-kind	Information produced by the Pacific Ocean Oceanographic Institute.	$ 422,146.68
Oficina de Representación en el Estado de Colima, Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales de México, SEMARNAT	In-kind	Staff, vehicle maintenance, fuel, office supplies, travel expenses	$ 1,403.31
Delegación Federal en el Estado de Oaxaca, Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales de México, SEMARNAT	In-kind	Staff	$ 690.00
Autoridad de los Recursos Acuaticos de Panamá, ARAP	In-kind	Billfish sport fishing project support	$ 3,200,000.00
Ministerio de Ambiente de Panamá, MiAmbiente	In-kind	Annual working plan for Coiba Island National Park, mangrove carbon reserves and sinks study	$ 3,832,000.00

Name of cofinancing source	Type of cofinancing		Planned contribution
	Co-financing type	Description	
Ministerio de Ambiente de Panamá, MiAmbiente	In-kind	Annual working plan for Coiba Island National Park, mangrove carbon reserves and sinks study	$ 7,500,000.00
Fundación Panacetacea Panamá	In-kind	Boats, equipment, personnel, food, lodging, travel costs, and supplies.	$ 360,000.00
OSPESCA	In-kind	Sports fishing piloto project	$ 600,000.00
Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía de Costa Rica, MINAE	In-kind	Transition to Green and Blue Economy, socio economic recovery of coastal communities	$ 1,000,000.00
Total			**$ 52,970,617.86**

Source: Project Management Unit, 2025

4.5.5 Extent to which results are cost-effective

On a purely economic level, the project is being executed cost-effectively. Reviewing the cumulative data through 2025 (see Table 9), project management costs (PMCs) represent 5% of the executed budget, which is in line with GEF policies. By the first quarter of 2025, when 52% of the project implementation period had elapsed (25 of 48 months), the project at the regional level had spent 35% of the PMCs planned for the entire implementation period and 49% of those planned for 2023, 2024, and 2025 (with the important exception that three quarters of 2025 remain to be executed).

With these management expenses, the project team has made significant progress toward its established goals, as shown in the "Progress Towards Results" section. The project has achieved 14 midterm targets, representing 78% of the total, and, as evidence suggests, is likely to achieve 13 end-of-project targets, corresponding to 72% of the total. However, considering the weaknesses of the results framework (which includes the problem that the indicators and their targets reflect output measurements rather than outcome measurements), as well as the weaknesses of the Theory of Change, which hinders the possibility of achieving a regional strategic vision), ***the project's actual effectiveness may be compromised by its focus on meeting the established goals but not on achieving results at the strategic level***.

Furthermore, as noted in previous sections based on the information gathered, the PMU is composed of a solid group of professionals but has chosen to extensively subcontract or outsource the development of key project products. This practice, while within the established cost framework, is impacting on the project's effectiveness in achieving its results, as mentioned in the sections on management arrangements and the quality of WWF's work as a PMU.

Finally, the degree of in-kind co-financing mobilization that the project has achieved to date is highly valuable. It undoubtedly increases the project's profitability by providing human resources and expertise to achieve the expected results, without incurring additional budgetary expenditures. However, to more clearly determine the contribution of the co-financing agencies, it is necessary to periodically collect information to corroborate the actual amounts invested in in-kind co-financing.

4.6 M&E System

PACA's proposed Regional M&E system entails a Collaborative information system developed with key indicators on the LME's condition and the effectiveness of implementing the SAP, as described under Outcome 4. It aims to sustain long-term reporting of PACA´s situation, and to document and share project lessons throughout implementation and it is linked to Output 4.1, which will produce a suite of International Waters process, stress reduction and environmental/socioeconomic status indicators and implementation mechanisms to monitor PACA´s condition and SAP implementation. Presently, the PMU is drafting a proposal for such a collaborative framework capable of conducting long-term monitoring and reporting of PACA´s condition. The proposed framework and collaborative arrangements will include information on the ***State of PACA***. The proposal will be discussed, adjusted and negotiated with key partners (probably IOC/UNESCO, IATTC, OSPESCA, FAO, NOAA, UNCTAD). It has also been submitted to CCAD-SICA, MINAE and CONABIO. Lastly, the final set of core indicators, the mechanism for long-term reporting, and a standard collaboration agreement will be presented to the project board for endorsement.

While the proposed process for moving forward is satisfactory, the MTR raises some serious concerns and risks about the process:

1. **Repetition of the problems identified for PACA's ToC** - not one of more than 60 people interviewed had examined the ToC or if they did, they did not see any problems, despite the significant shortcomings identified herein. Therefore, it is worth highlighting six Essential Propositions of Results-Based Management, which most PACA stakeholders do not seem to be aware of: i) If you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure; ii) If you can't see success, you cannot reward it; iii) If you can't reward success, you are probably a rewarding failure; iv) If you can't see success you can't learn from it; v) If you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it; and vi) If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.[60]
2. **Problems with GEF projects and IW programs using a similar approach in the Lower Mekong Basin and Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS), respectively**. The proposed M&E system's indicator alignment and quality are weak, and not SMART. Furthermore, outcome measurement, institutional capacity, coordination, and the effective use of M&E for learning and adaptive management are unlikely to be achieved under the present proposal. These limitations hinder the project's ability to track progress accurately, demonstrate impact, and respond adaptively to emerging challenges.

The findings in Table 26 highlight the risks that PACA runs if it does not take these lessons into account.

Table 26: Risks PACA's M&E and Information systems face unless action is taken to mitigate them.

Poor Indicator Quality and Measurement Approaches	PACA´s M&E framework tends to focus on outputs (e.g., number of plans developed or workshops held) rather than on measuring transformative environmental or social changes. There is a lack of standardized baseline data collection and early warning mechanisms for implementation challenges. Metrics used are often incompatible across projects, preventing aggregation and comprehensive assessment.
Weak Outcome Measurement Systems	While activity completion is tracked, it appears to be difficult to quantify actual environmental improvements or long-term impacts on biodiversity, water quality, or community resilience
Misaligned and Non-SMART Indicators	The ProDocs' confusion of outputs versus SMART outcomes is a serious impediment for developing a dynamic and robust M&E platform because as mentioned earlier , the focus on

[60] Kusek and Rist (2004). A Handbook for Development Practitioners: Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring And Evaluation System.

	outputs leads to a dead end, rather than the necessary feedback loops to drive adaptive management. The flawed indicators also limit the PACA team's ability to assess overall impact effectively.
Implementation Delays and Institutional Capacity Constraints	The M&E system is affected by systemic delays, often due to overestimation of national institutional capacity, administrative bottlenecks, coordination challenges among stakeholders, and external shocks. These issues reduce the timeliness and effectiveness of monitoring and reporting.
Fragmentation and Coordination Challenges	There are institutional coordination and communication barriers to establishing unified monitoring systems and consistent inter-agency communication, leading to duplicated efforts, resource inefficiencies, and difficulties in synchronizing project timelines.
Inadequate Use of M&E for Adaptive Management and systematic capture of lessons	Due to the inadequate assumptions used for constructing the ToC, the proposed M&E framework does not sufficiently support adaptive management and systematic capture of lessons from implementing activities and testing the effective ness of PACA's outputs. Findings from monitoring and evaluation are not always used effectively to inform decision-making or refine implementation strategies. Presently, PACA's adaptive management is reactive, rather than the kind of proactive AM that a robust M&E platform could capture.
Reporting Gaps and Data Quality Issues	Project implementation reports (quarterly or PIR) have been submitted to UNDP without delay. In other cases, reports from partners have sometimes been delayed according to interviews, incomplete, or overly optimistic, compromising the credibility and usefulness of M&E data. This could be easily overcome by developing a more dynamic, real-time M&E platform.
Impaired Timely and Informed Decision-Making	Adaptive management requires ongoing learning and timely adjustments based on monitoring data. Inconsistent indicators produce unreliable or incomparable data, causing delays or errors in interpreting results and making adaptive changes to project strategies. Again, a real-time M&E platform will significantly compliment the annual PIR monitoring required by the GEF. Furthermore, adaptive management depends on accurate, consistent indicators to track whether interventions are achieving desired outcomes. When indicator quality varies, it becomes difficult to reliably measure progress or detect meaningful changes, undermining the evidence base for decision-making
Limited Knowledge Acquisition and Learning	High-quality, consistent indicators facilitate rapid knowledge acquisition and shared understanding among stakeholders. Poor indicator quality reduces the ability to generate credible insights, weakening the feedback loops essential for adaptive learning and collaboration[61]
Increases Risk of Focusing on Symptoms Rather than Root Causes	Inconsistent and non- SMART indicators may affect stakeholder buy-in due to questions about the validity of monitoring results, and this could reduce the cooperation needed for inclusive governance, EBM and adaptive management processes5. As mentioned earlier, the root cause analyses in the ProDoc and some of the TDAs are presenting symptoms and not primary root causes.

The above observations are fundamental for any M&E system and if they are not addressed, the operational aspects of the system are likely to be inefficient and low in effectiveness in capturing transformative changes that PACA LME urgently needs in the near future. Roles and responsibilities of the proposed M&E system are generalized and they are far from addressing the complexities of fundamental issues like quality assurance of data inputs, ensuring that ALL SAPs adopt SMART, transformative outcome indicators and a robust ToC remains a concern. However, advances in the design of the M&E system have selected 18 key indicators, in conjunction with stakeholders. There is no risk of an overwhelming number of indicators. Funding is established in notes 19 and 21 of the ProDoc. Progress has already been made on a concept note and discussions with CONABIO to host the system, and they have already selected indicators to integrate from their national platform. This progress supports the results of indicator 9 of the project's

[61]https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/california_waterfix/exhibits/docs/LAND/part2rebuttal/land_259.pdf

monitoring plan. In addition, the PMU is supporting the strengthening of the Costa Rica's excellent SINIA platform. While these are positive advances and the PMU is to be congratulated for these excellent advances, especially with CONABIO and SINIA Costa Rica, based on interviews with national monitoring institutions, the MTR team still considers that the following risks should still be addressed: i) rigorous analyses of the indicators to ensure that they measure transformational outcomes with SMART indicators; ii) the integration of an indicator framework and the possibility of a much larger than expected number of indicators and the degree to which critical national indicators will be integrated, which was a concern expressed by several interviews, including the parties that the PMU is working with.

4.7 Involvement of Key Actors

4.7.1 Key Actors

The GEF is the core funding partner and responsible for oversight while governments, private sector, and other development partners contribute additional financial and in-kind resources totaling over USD 54 million. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Lead implementing agency responsible for coordinating project development and for its regional execution. It is led by a Project Manager and the Regional Technical Specialist for Waters, Oceans, Ecosystems and Biodiversity (UNDP). World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Mesoamerica is the executing agency supporting implementation, particularly in conservation, marine spatial planning, and stakeholder engagement in the seven participating Countries. Each country participates through relevant government ministries and agencies responsible for environment, fisheries, and marine resource management.

Regional and Technical Partners are responsible for facilitating cooperation, knowledge exchange, and harmonization of policies across countries, and they are important actors because unlike governments, they are not changed every election year. Consultants and National Coordinators support project design, implementation, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring, while Academic and Research Institutions play important supporting roles by providing scientific input, data collection, and technical assessments such as Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA). Informal institutions represent Civil Society and the Private Sector by engaging to the extent possible under the existing governance framework which in participatory governance, capacity building, and sustainable resource use initiatives. Table 27 summarizes the roles and responsibilities of PACA's key actors. It is important to highlight that Indigenous people have been integrated into the decision-making process in Mexico. This has been a major achievement and PACA has been instrumental in this.. Mexico's experience offers an excellent example of how inclusive governance could be carried out.

Table 27*:* PACA's key actors.

ACTOR	ROLE / CONTRIBUTION	CHARACTERISTICS
UNDP	Lead implementing agency	Project management, coordination
WWF	Executing agency	Conservation, marine spatial planning
Participating Countries	National implementation and policy alignment	Colombia, México, Guatemala, , Honduras, Nicaragua, , Panama, Ecuador
Regional Organizations	Facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing	Various regional marine and environmental networks
Academic & Research Bodies	Provide scientific and technical support	Universities, research centers

Civil Society & Private Sector	Stakeholder engagement and sustainable practices	Local NGOs, fisheries associations
GEF	Primary donor and oversight	Funding and project evaluation
National Coordinators	On-the-ground project execution	Consultants and government focal points

4.7.2 Stakeholder Engagement

PACA's project management team demonstrates strong commitment to meaningful, inclusive, and sustained stakeholder engagement, which is fundamental to addressing environmental and social risks and ensuring the project's long-term success. It has developed and leveraged necessary and appropriate stakeholder partnerships through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy and plans based on a detailed analysis of key players. Table 27 summarizes these key actions and how they contribute to PACA's results. The following points are pertinent:

- **Inclusive Stakeholder Identification and Analyses**: systematic identification and categorization of key stakeholders according to those who are directly affected (primary), indirectly affected or influential (secondary), vulnerable groups, as well as other interested parties (tertiary). This helps to ensures broad representation and consideration of diverse interests throughout implementation. However, several interviewees stated that PACA has yet to map other projects in the LME that could be attracted to help build synergies.

- **Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)**: the SEP emphasizes ongoing engagement from project design through implementation and monitoring, it outlines clear objectives to inform stakeholders about project goals, solicit feedback, manage expectations, and build collaboration.

- **Multi-Channel Communication and Consultation**: PACA applies diverse methods that include public consultations, workshops, surveys, newsletters, community meetings, and grievance mechanisms to ensure transparency, inclusiveness, and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns.

- **Trust and Ownership Building**: PACA prioritizes transparency and in general most of the interviewees expressed their satisfaction with the transparency to date. However, more than one interview complained about non-transparent and non-inclusive decision-making), informed participation, and sensitivity to stakeholders' needs, with the aim of fostering trust and a sense of ownership among communities, government agencies, civil society, and private sector actors.¨ This is probably an outlier but it is real and should be addressed by the PMU.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Feedback**: PACA documents stakeholder inputs, analyzes them and integrates them into project decisions. Regular updates and bi-annual reviews with stakeholders maintain accountability and adaptiveness.
- **Engagement Beyond Direct Beneficiaries**: PACA also involves tangential stakeholders like regional organizations, academic institutions, and international partners, all of whom who play key roles in influencing outcomes and supporting sustainability.

Table 28 summarizes these key actions and how they contribute to PACA's results.

Table 28*:* Key actions contributing to PACA's results.

Engagement Activity	Impact on Project Outcomes
Stakeholder Mapping & Analysis	Inclusive participation, identification of vulnerable groups
Multi-level Consultations	Comprehensive input, culturally appropriate interventions
Community Meetings & Workshops	Transparency, trust-building, co-creation of solutions

Information Disclosure	Informed stakeholders, enhanced accountability
Grievance Mechanisms	Conflict resolution, legitimacy maintenance
Capacity Building & Training	Empowered stakeholders, improved governance

4.7.3 Level of local and national government stakeholder support

In general, interviews confirmed that most local and national government stakeholders support PACA's the objectives and its relevance to their countries and the region. The fact that high level officials are playing an active role in its decision-making processes is a huge plus, as it supports efficient and effective project implementation. Several key points drawn from interviews, stakeholder analyses and engagement plans include the following:

- **High Level of Influence and Engagement**: The presence of to high level representative from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (Colombia and Ecuador) is a strong signal. Also, national government actors have a strong influence and interest in the project. In the Ecuador pilot project, local actors are also actively involved in design and implementation, led by the municipal levels. This places both the top-down and bottom-up stakeholders within the "collaborate" quadrant, which means that they are actively involved in shaping project design, implementation, and monitoring.
- **Multi-country collaboration**: The 7 PACA countries actively participate through their national environmental, fisheries, and marine resource agencies. This regional cooperation implies sustained governmental support and engagement, but there is a major risk that this will be lost if a newly elected government decides to abandon PACA.
- **Government-led governance frameworks**: The project's governance structure includes national governments as key actors in decision-making, policy harmonization, and implementation of pilot projects such as marine spatial planning and fisheries management. However, as stated previously, at least 25% of the non-governmental stakeholders interviewed raised concerns about the lack of transparency and adequate mechanisms for engaging local NGOs, coastal communities and resource users. However, the experience in Mexico is worth repeating. Continuous Monitoring and Feedback: PACA documents stakeholder inputs, analyzes them and integrates them into project decisions. Regular updates and bi-annual reviews with stakeholders maintain accountability and adaptiveness. Regarding inclusion of other economically productive sectors, 20% of the stakeholders interviewed felt that PACA is not adequately focused on engaging other economic sectors whose plans and policies are incongruent with the Sustainable Pacific project.
- **Stakeholder engagement plans**: PACA's stakeholder engagement emphasizes continuous involvement of national authorities at all levels, including capacity building and multi-stakeholder platforms that enhance government ownership and accountability. ~~However, the key is to strengthen local informal (non-governmental) organizations whose lifetimes transcend those of governments~~. This includes the Awareness, Participation, and Coordination (APS) Strategy efforts of the communication strategy, knowledge management, and stakeholder engagement linked to s non-state entities and local organizations. At least one non-governmental organization in each country participates in the ADT Development team. At this stage of the project, our beneficiaries or direct partners are government entities; the project does not currently focus on working with organizations at the local level. However, the key is to strengthen as many possible local informal (non-governmental) organizations whose lifetimes transcend those of governments.
- **Alignment with regional and international commitments**: In general, most countries in meeting international environmental and sustainable development goals, which motivates governments to maintain support. However, there is always a high risk of counter-influence by IUU (several PACA countries have been identified), narcotrafficking activities on the high seas that create societal insecurity and safety issues. Also, there are threats to apex predators that several countries are

ignoring and continue putting pressure on apex predators, including CITES-listed species. This was a concern raised by at least 15 stakeholders. Five stated that they have empirical evidence stated that shark populations are declining in the EEZ of their countries and that it may be on reason that sport-fishing targets (e.g., billfishes) are declining.

- **Binational and Local Scope Involvement**: Implementation of pilot projects mainly involves local stakeholders, including local governments, which are critical for on-the-ground execution and sustainability. The three pilot municipalities visited in Ecuador offer a strong example that this is evolving with strong support thanks to the country consultant's good work with local governments. It also demonstrates that in Ecuador, local government leadership and involvement in initiating and sustaining development initiatives aligns with PACA project principles.

In conclusion, in many cases, interviews indicate that local and national governments are not adequately engaging informal institutions in inclusive governance processes and there in some cases there is concern about the lack of transparency in PACA's planning and decision-related to the engagement of local communities and resource users as active participants in PACA's governance and implementation in Ecuador. These and other informal institutions are especially important because they will hopefully take over the project after each election year where government officials may be voted out of office. The stronger PACA can help make these local organizations become, the greater local ownership and more effective participatory planning, decision-making and implementation can take place at the lowest practical levels. These ingredients are especially important for meeting and sustaining multiple SDGs at the local levels, all of which are fundamental for PACA's sustainability and success. Without their active involvement, in a transparent and inclusive governance framework, PACA faces a risk of having 'weak sustainability', as one interviewee stated, and continued.

4.7.4 Governance instruments developed with government support

PACA's main and important governance instrument is that of creating formal governance frameworks or models that are supported by national authorities to coordinate joint management, implement pilot actions, and promote knowledge sharing. They generally involve steering committees, advisory boards, and designated lead organizations from participating countries to oversee project implementation, resolve disputes, and ensure compliance with agreed standards and policies. While this evidence shows that PACA is developing governance instruments with government support that includes institutional frameworks, stakeholder coordination mechanisms, and management models to enable effective regional cooperation and sustainable management specific governance instruments are being developed with government support for the project objectives, in general, governance is far from being inclusive and largely remains focused on governability. Exceptions include good approaches (e.g., Ecuador) to governance in similar environmental and regional projects:

- **Stakeholder mapping to propose management models for strategic project initiatives** to ensure collaboration between public sector entities and possibly private sector actors.
- **Legal, financial, and institutional mechanisms** aligned with regional cooperation and ecosystem-based management principles.
- **Regional Directive Committee** – provides an important supranational governance body. It remains active since December 2024.

Beyond these, there is limited, direct, project-specific documentation available that the MTR team has reviewed that explicitly identifies formal inclusive governance models being developed with government backing.

4.7.5 Extent to which women are involved

The project has made significant efforts to incorporate women's participation, and several indicators in the results framework, many of which are shared with the Gender Action Plan, highlight this.
A key element in promoting women's involvement has been the Gender Plan, which concretely translates into actions to this end. Among the activities that have enabled this involvement are:

- Establishment of minimum percentages of women participating in the Project Management Unit (GAPI 18), the Project Steering Committee (GAPI 16), the Technical Committee (GAPI 17), and the TDA development team (GAPI 3). All of these indicators have achieved their midterm targets. These actions contribute decisively to the participation and inclusion of women's perspectives. In the case of bodies such as the PMU, a specific profile with knowledge of gender issues was required (GAPI 19).
- However, in other cases, while participation is highly valued, it does not necessarily translate into a professional profile specializing in gender issues.
- Participation of a representative from the Technical Secretariat for Women of the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (STM-COMMCA) on the project board (GAPI 15). This element is key at the strategic level, as COMMCA is a body that brings together all the Ministers of Women in the region. Therefore, it is vitally important to capitalize on this element for the project, to further advance the gender issue.
- Preparation of technical reports on the participation and contributions of women in coastal tourism and fisheries supply chains (GAPI 4) and regional studies on the participation and contributions of women in the whale watching value chain (GAPI 10). To date, according to the PMU, six national technical reports and four regional studies have been prepared. These actions are key because they highlight the role of women in the project's geographic area, giving women a voice as important actors in achieving results.
- Requirement that national teams preparing the TDAs include social and gender specialists (GAPI 5). According to the evidence, this requirement was requested of each team and was met in six of the participating countries (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Ecuador). This action allows the gender perspective to be considered from the TDA preparation process.
- Adoption of a set of key gender-related indicators on the status of the PACA (GAPI 12). The available evidence shows that to date, seven gender and inclusion indicators have been selected for the region, in line with the products being developed by the PACA project. Based on these indicators, a baseline is available as of March 2025, which represents a fundamental starting point for guiding the actions proposed as part of the Regional Strategic Action Plan.

The project has other gender-sensitive indicators both from its results framework as well as from its Gender Action Plan:, which align with GEF's gender policy requirements and the indicators reflect GEF's three core gender equality objectives: closing resource gaps, enhancing participation, and delivering equitable benefits. Core Gender Indicators in ESMP include:

i) Sex-Disaggregated Participation Rates, which are measured by the percentage of women vs. men participating in project activities (training, consultations, decision-making forums) with the target set to be an increase from baseline by project end.

ii) Women's Leadership Representation, measured as the Number/percentage of women in project governance bodies (committees, boards). It aims to achieve equity. Examples include "Women's representation in coastal management committees".

iii) Sex-disaggregated data on access to:

- Livelihood resources (fishing grounds, agricultural inputs).
- Project benefits (income, technology, credit).
- Socioeconomic Benefits (measured as income changes among women beneficiaries, % women engaged in project-funded enterprises, Gender gaps in poverty reduction.

- Gender-Responsive Governance measured as the Inclusion of women/youth in traditional institutions, Gender considerations integrated into management plans, Existence of gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms.

Another important and pertinent indicator is related to Attitudinal Change: Shifts in gender norms (e.g., via Gender Equitable Men scale surveys). Especially important is related to Policy Alignment: Gender targets reflected in national coastal strategies. The above notwithstanding, some of the indicators have either not been achieved to date[62], or their sources of information are external to the stakeholders involved[63]. For the latter, their attribution to project actions cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, their relevance for measuring results is questionable.

Finally, it should be noted that the interviews identified as elements for improvement were promoting greater involvement of SICA's STM-COMMCA (National Technical Secretariat for Sustainable Development), strengthening the requirements for the profiles of gender specialists for the formulation of the TDA and PAE so that they are, in turn, women with knowledge of marine and coastal issues, capitalizing on previous experiences directly related to the project objectives (such as the Network of Women in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector), and strengthening the role of female leaders identified at the local level through the work of formulating the national TDAs and the pilot projects.

4.8 Environmental and Social Safeguards

The ProDoc includes a comprehensive risk analysis section, which identifies environmental, institutional, financial, and socio-political risks that could impact project success. The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) process informs risk updates by identifying emerging environmental and social risks. This risk identification process was thorough and it reflected the complexities and dynamics of multi-country coordination, as well as the need to address diverse ecological and governance challenges. The evidence in the documentation indicates that the project management team has revised risk categories and ratings as new information arises or as project conditions evolve, using an adaptive risk management approach that helps ensure that risk mitigation remains relevant and effective throughout PACA's project lifecycle. The satisfactory quality of PACA's risk analysis is characterized by:

- Comprehensive and multi-dimensional risk identification during project design.
- Adaptive revision of risk categorizations and ratings informed by ongoing assessments like the SESA.
- Well-developed, flexible risk mitigation strategies that are actively implemented and monitored.

The project has applied a robust environmental and social management system (ESMS) that aligns with international safeguards, including GCF and UNDP standards, ensuring comprehensive identification, assessment, and mitigation of social and environmental risks. Key stakeholders have been trained in risk identification and mitigation, as well as communities are engaged through transparent processes and grievance mechanisms, which is consistent with UNDP's emphasis on stakeholder participation and social inclusion. It has integrated environmental and social safeguards into all sub-project assessments, ensuring mitigation measures are tailored to specific risks such as pollution, resource scarcity, and community health impacts. The project is in the early implementation stage but shows clear progress in establishing

[62] Midterm targets have not been reached for GAPI 6, GAPI 9

[63] This include Core Indicator 1 (GAPI 1), Core Indicator 2 (GAPI 2) whose source of information are mostly official data from national statistics office. Therefore, from its design, they are not SMART enough to verify the attribution of these indicators to the project.

preliminary governance structures (e.g., Steering Committees) and pilot actions that address key environmental and social risks. One weakness is with the indicators of the Gender component of the SESP, specifically related to the GEM-PACA status, but rather to the project indicators outlined in the ProDoc and the Gender Plan (see previous comment). Another that was raised during interviews is that unless the socialization of the project improves in a way that focuses on promoting ownership, there is a risk that stakeholders, especially those at the lowest practical levels will not be prepared, or interested to get involved in the implementation of the SAP. One interviewee stated that '*PACA is not reaching the right people in its communication and ownership-building approaches. Instead, it is focusing too much on government actors who are likely to change during every election cycle*.

4.8.1 Risk Identification, Quality, Completeness Analyses and Validity at Mid-term

Major risks were identified in the ProDoc included changes of government and their staff, transboundary coordination challenges, institutional capacity limitations, climate variability impacts, and potential delays in stakeholder engagement are still valid. PACA's regional data-sharing platforms and knowledge management systems are one tool for monitoring such issues, but the use of information systems for early detection and analysis of new risks is still being developed, although the risk analyses should be operational in the coming months and this will help facilitate early identification of new or escalating risks by integrating scientific data, socio-economic trends, and governance developments, especially from the TDAs, national profiles that are for the most part excellent, and also the Pilot Studies.

One risk that has not been formally highlighted is that of the intentional and incidental capture of Apex predators like sharks, particularly CITES species, and as mentioned earlier, this is a concern raised by 15 or 15 stakeholders with scientific backgrounds who were interviewed Two countries have been highlighted as having conducted IUU fishing and 30 tons of shark fins originating from one PACA country appeared in a seafood market in Hong Kong, and the available information indicates that the shipment was authorized by the Fisheries Institute. While that country assures that it has taken all the necessary scientific studies to show this is not a problem, it could be interesting to share those data with PACA fisheries experts for their review, as several stakeholders raise the issue that the responsible institute is the judge and jury to give those assurances. At least three stakeholders highlighted that there are conflicts of interest regarding the industrial fishing sector and efforts to apply precautionary criteria. Consequently, this raises serious concerns about the spp evidence presented by sportfishing organizations that alteration of marine food webs due to the reduction of apex predators is a serious risk to the PACA LME's resilience and sustainability. For example, Panamá has prioritized the enforcement of regulations protecting the capture of juvenile sharks such as *Sphyrna lewini* and *Carcharhinus*, which is having severe impacts on their recruitment not just in Panamá, but in neighboring countries that fail to see this as a problem. Another risk identified in Panamá and during the field visit to Ecuador is that of ghost fishing nets due to the loss of gear and nets, which continues to generate invisible impacts on biodiversity and resources, including destruction of up to 40% of catches. Another concern raised by stakeholders involved with the sportfishing pilots is that billfishes appear to be overexploited as bycatch and that more inclusive governance involving more transparency could be a valuable tool to address this issue.

Risk mitigation strategies were designed to address identified risks through institutional strengthening, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive management. These strategies include establishing formal governance frameworks to improve coordination, pilot projects to test management approaches, and contingency plans for environmental or political uncertainties. While in theory, the project emphasizes flexibility and learning, allowing mitigation measures to be adjusted as risks evolve, the absence

of a robust ToC and SMART indicators is a major barrier because it is difficult to track the effectiveness of mitigation efforts to be able to enable corrective actions in a timely manner.

While specific documented revisions for the PACA project are not detailed, the best practices and standards strongly support that documented revisions reflecting improvements in risk analysis and management are crucial for PACA. These revisions ensure adaptive, transparent, and effective risk management throughout the project lifecycle. This robust risk management approach supports the project's resilience and increases the likelihood of achieving its ecosystem-based management objectives across the PACA LME region.

4.8.2 Validity of Risks Identified in the SESP

The risks identified in the most recent Social and Environmental Safeguards Plan (SESP) remain largely valid, given the ongoing environmental, social, and governance challenges in the region. The SESP Risk Analysis Matrix in **Annex 10** is excellent and provides an important tool for monitoring the effectiveness of risk-mitigation measures. The MTR team has provided comments that aim to compliment the mitigation measures and fill in some gaps identified in the MTR. Although specific updated risk assessments are not detailed in the available documents, the absence of documented major revisions or risk removals implies that the original risk categories—covering environmental, social, and institutional domains—are still considered valid and form the basis for ongoing mitigation and adaptive management. The project's ongoing activities and regional initiatives confirm the pertinence of these risks and the need for continued mitigation and adaptive management, which in comparison to the results based ToC, allow for proactive adaptive management. Several points support the continued relevance of these risks:

- **Diverse socio-environmental contexts**, including indigenous communities and vulnerable coastal populations, which sustain risks related to social inclusion, equitable resource access, and cultural heritage protection. These factors remain critical and are actively addressed through participatory ecological planning and stakeholder engagement, as highlighted in recent workshops involving SEMARNAT, UNDP, and WWF, among others.
- **Environmental risks such as habitat alteration, pollution, and impacts from climate variability** continue to be pertinent. Regional plans like the Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan (MLAP) and Cleaner Pacific 2025 emphasize ongoing challenges from marine litter, pollution, and ecosystem degradation, which align with the environmental risks identified in the project's safeguards. Overfishing of Apex predators is increasingly a serious concern because it affecting coastal and marine food webs (Trophodynamics) which affects the capacity of the LME to recover from these other environmental threats.
- **Governance instruments and joint management frameworks** continue to be important for mitigating institutional and coordination risks identified earlier remain relevant and are being managed through evolving governance commitments and technical planning. current environmental conditions influence the original risk assessments.

Influence of existing environmental conditions at Mid-term on the original risk assessments

Today's environmental conditions significantly influence the original risk assessments of PACA because they alter the assumptions, relevance, and accuracy of identified risks in several ways:

- **Changes in climate and environmental conditions** create new stressors and alter existing ones, leading to "no-analog" ecological communities and novel hydrological and biological processes that were not accounted for in the original risk assessments. *This in turn challenges the validity of past*

data and models used for risk predictions, increasing uncertainty and the potential for type III errors—asking wrong questions or building inappropriate models based on outdated conditions.

- **Multiple Stressors and Nonlinear Responses**: Current conditions often involve the interaction of multiple stressors—chemical, physical, biological—whose combined effects are nonlinear and complex. Traditional risk assessments that focused on single stressors or static conditions may underestimate risks or fail to capture emergent threats under changing environmental regimes.
- **Shifting Baselines and Increased Uncertainty**: Historical environmental variability data used as baselines may no longer be reliable due to directional changes in climate and ecosystem dynamics, thereby undermining the assumptions about "natural" or reference conditions. Consequently, PACA will have to continually carry out risk assessments to incorporate broader temporal and spatial scales and to consider future scenarios rather than relying solely on past data.

Influence of existing social and safety conditions at Mid-term on the original risk assessments

As mentioned in the unexpected outcomes section, the sharp escalation of criminal activity related to poverty and narcotrafficking is a serious problem affecting the implementation of PACA. This was strikingly clear from interviews with fishing communities in the Ecuador pilot sites. Fishermen no longer fish at night due to threats of being murdered, having boats and motors stolen. This is also a problem in several other countries.

4.9 Reporting

Although the project's adaptive management has been reactive instead of proactive. This notwithstanding, the PMU has been especially effective given that it has had to deal with one of the biggest obstacles to a medium-term project in a region with so many countries involved: *the constant changes in government in the region*. As of the date of this evaluation, the project has managed to maintain a Steering Committee with participation from almost all countries in the region. They meet regularly and believe the project is aligned with their national priorities, despite the long period between the PPG phase and the start of implementation. Since the project's inception in 2023, four meetings of the PACA project Steering Committee have been held, both virtually and in person. These meetings included changes to the initial design (financial, administrative, and technical), as well as the products achieved during the implementation period.

The Steering Committee, which included representatives from seven countries (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, and Ecuador) in its first meeting, as well as key regional bodies such as STM-COMMCA of SICA and UNDP, has now included six countries due to El Salvador's withdrawal from the project, as previously mentioned. Although the minutes of the 2025 meeting are not available, other available evidence shows the official appointments of these countries' representatives, as well as the inclusion of representatives from STM-COMMCA, the SICA General Secretariat, the GEF in Costa Rica, WWF Mesoamerica, UNDP Costa Rica, and UNDP Regional on the Steering Committee. Among the adaptive management changes that have taken place are the budget modifications mentioned in the Financing and Co-financing section, approval of Annual Operating Plans and Annual Budgets, modifications to the project's results framework indicators and targets, as well as the necessary changes to implementation due to El Salvador's withdrawal and Colombia's entry into the project.

4.9.1 Communication, Awareness-raising and Knowledge Management

4.9.1.1 Effectiveness of project's internal communication with stakeholders

Communication has been effective when stakeholders have been involved in management processes. However, there are significant areas for improvement with other types of stakeholders who have less influence but are important to the project. The evidence provided by the PMU shows that while the project lacks an explicit Internal Communication Plan, it does have communication guidelines and a knowledge management strategy that address various elements related to internal communication. Furthermore, those interviewed as part of the evaluation process have divided opinions regarding the effectiveness of the PMU's communication regarding project results and activities.

On the one hand, those involved in project management bodies, such as the Steering Committee, the Technical Committee, and the TDA Team have shown a high level of awareness about the project's results and activities, which is related to various communication media such as WhatsApp, email, and social media used by the PMU. On the other hand, as mentioned in previous sections, most of the people representing the parties responsible for the pilots at the national level miss a substantial information, both within the PMU and among the different pilots taking place in the region

In particular, organizations not involved in management bodies but that have participated in local processes for developing the project's major products have mentioned that they would like more space to provide feedback on the products generated, because many feel strongly that they are not being taken into consideration and this fosters some resentment about the lack of transparency in these cases. As local stakeholders, they benefit from the products being developed and they make informal institutions that outlive governments that change every 4-5 years. Consequently, their voices are very important in the validation of the documents being created and local ownership is fundamental for inclusive governance and ecosystems based management. .

Among the areas for improvement identified, the first is the need to strengthen the dissemination of good practices and lessons learned from processes that have already been completed (such as in Costa Rica), as well as to create more spaces for the responsible parties of the pilots to share their experiences with one another. To date, at least three experience-sharing efforts have been carried out, but the responsible parties have expressed a desire to learn more about the pilots in other countries, as well as about the regional pilot.. While local processes were coordinated by responsible parties whose contracts may have expired, it is valuable to open spaces to capture what went well and what went wrong, in order to disseminate this information to other stakeholders. Secondly, there are stakeholders involved with whom communication is very weak within the project, including the UNDP offices. It is essential to develop more fluid channels or mechanisms for communication and coordination, considering the management arrangements that the PACA project has in place regarding the operation of the pilot projects.

4.9.1.2 Adequacy and effectiveness of external communication mechanisms

The effectiveness of external communication is currently limited. This is because not all communication mechanisms are inclusive. Also, the products generated sometimes lack appropriate language for the target audience. To date, the project has a communication guidelines document that establishes that the PACA project uses WhatsApp as its only dedicated social media channel. The social media platforms used as the

main dissemination channels for the project are those of WWF Mesoamerica (Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube). Furthermore, the project has a dedicated website and has established a close working relationship with IW Learn, where informational notes are published. In addition, the project has worked with the parties responsible for the pilots, such as CI Ecuador and SICA/OSPESCA, to jointly develop content about the pilots and disseminate it through their platforms.

However, the evidence indicates that external communication mechanisms are not functioning adequately because there is nether coordination with the people in charge of communication from the government agencies that participate in the Steering Committee or the Technical Committee, nor with key regional organizations such as SICA or with the UNDP country offices themselves. They have the potential to share information through their established communication channels. All of the aforementioned actors could contribute not only to increasing the project's visibility, but a coordinated strategy with them could also improve the level of ownership of the products generated by institutions and organizations.

Furthermore, regarding the communication format, the interviews highlighted the importance of establishing a concrete strategic action aimed at political decision-makers. Convincing these actors about the vital importance of the project for the PACA LME region requires being able to communicate key information to them clearly and succinctly. For example, information on the problems faced by the countries, on the value of the fishing productive sector and its subsectors to GDP, on the key role of traditionally excluded actors such as women and indigenous populations in employment in the area, among other knowledge products that the project has already generated. The various stakeholders emphasized the importance of communication with the political level aimed at raising awareness and generating commitments for work on PACA LME.

4.9.1.4 Assessment of PACA's M&E system

PACA M&E system entails uses a web portal that is designed to track project implementation, assess progress toward outcomes, and facilitate adaptive management and learning. It has different features (Table 29) and monitoring targets that include the *Project Level* (tracks implementation processes, delivery of outputs, and progress toward defined outcomes) the *Portfolio Level* (Monitors trends in implementation and outcomes across the project portfolio, including short- and medium-term effects) and the *National and Global Levels* (assesses broader environmental impacts using data from national and international sources). The system is aligned with GEF's broader M&E policy and incorporates project-specific tools and frameworks tailored to the transboundary and ecosystem-based nature of this important initiative. It developed and adopted a suite of indicators that are used to monitor both the State of the PACA LME and subsequently, to track the progress in the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP). The portal also includes a collaborative information system was established to aggregate, analyze, and disseminate data on these indicators, supporting evidence-based decision-making among participating countries.

Feature	Description
Indicators	Suite covering process, stress reduction, and environmental/socioeconomic status
Information System	Collaborative platform for data collection, analysis, and dissemination
Stakeholder Engagement	Participation, training, and awareness-raising for public and private stakeholders
Knowledge Management	Systematization and sharing of best practices and lessons via web platforms
Evaluation	Independent terminal evaluation, participatory methods, compliance with GEF minimum requirements (PIR).

Table 29: Summary of the features of PACA's M&E system.

Although the M&E system is designed to monitor indicators that are measurable, achievable, attributable, relevant, realistic, and time-bound, as mentioned earlier, few of the indicators presented in the ProDoc and in the ToC are SMART, and most are outputs. This raises serious concerns that the PACA team is unfamiliar with SMART outcomes and if the PMU and the countries continue to apply focus on performance/process-oriented output indicators applied to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of the SAPs because it poses significant risks because of their inability to track progress in generating transformative and systemic changes attributed to the SAPs, as well as being able to assess accountability and their long-term sustainability. For example, while Outputs like "protected areas established" may be cited as achievements, even if illegal fishing or habitat loss continues. Not only are these risks critical for PACA's transboundary an ecosystem-based management goals but the run the risk of reducing the capacities of PACA's stakeholders to carry out systematic, proactive adaptive management.

Another concern is related to the process in which existing indicators used by individual PACA countries, which are too numerous to include, will be integrated into the M&E system. Several interviews stated emphatically that their countries are not going to change the indicators they have in place just to fit into PACA. One option is to compact the diverse and numerous country-specific indicators into a hierarchical information pyramid. The tip of the pyramid could include a composite index value at the tip that integrates all country indicators. This could help manage complexity and enhance communication. In summary, structuring the multitude of PACA country indicators into an information pyramid culminating in a composite index is a practical and strategic approach to capture complex, multi-country data while supporting regional ecosystem-based management and decision-making.

4.9.1.4 Effectiveness of knowledge management

The project has a knowledge management strategy that has contributed to the generation of knowledge activities and products, but there are areas for improvement in its approach. As part of the PMU's actions, the knowledge management specialist developed a strategy aimed at facilitating the identification, generation, updating, and transfer of knowledge through the development and implementation of tools and methodologies that enable the capture, systematization, exchange, and dissemination of the knowledge obtained during the implementation of the Sustainable Pacific Project.

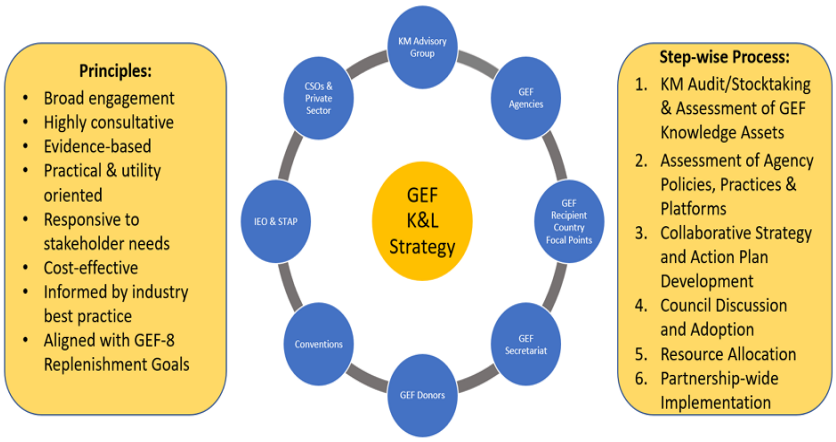
Table 30 summarizes the actions and/or products generated by the project, according to the available evidence, as well as a brief description of their quantities and topics. In this regard, it is noteworthy that most knowledge management is virtual in nature, which can be a limitation when trying to reach populations living in remote areas without stable internet connections (such as the commune of Puerto Cabuyal, in San Vicente, Ecuador).

Although the PMU has argued that the project was not designed to build capacity or knowledge in local communities, the MTR considers that the design has flaws for the pilots that involve local stakeholders. While the Ecuador MSP pilot has done an excellent job of building local capacities, if this is the case in other pilots, this should be a concern and addressed to the extent possible within the remaining time and budget. Strengthened capacities for local communities in the pilots are critical for: a) ensuring inclusive governance; and b) for sustaining the project after it ends, since these are the fixtures that will continue implementation and adaptive learning survive after elected governments are long gone. THE PMU agrees that a behavior change approach can be incorporated into the monitoring plan and a second phase.

Table 30: Knowledge management actions and products

Action or output generated	Description
Bulletins and Information Notes	6 information notes prepared for IW Learn 6 quarterly PACA project newsletters
Brochures, tri-fold and bi-fold	6 products covering topics such as a brief project description, a description of the ADT/PAE process in PACA LME, and an explanation of TDA and SAP as key tools.
Infographics	4 infographics addressing topics such as TDA, PEM, and the value of marine resources in the lives of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.
Videos	4 videos on topics such as SAP, PACA LME shared resources, and the collaborative information system
Manuals	• Guidelines for strengthening gender equality and participation for national assessments. • Guidelines for strengthening gender equality and participation of key stakeholders in pilot projects. • PACA project communication guidelines. • WordPress user manual used as the basis for the PACA project website design.
Technical products	• Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of 6 countries • Management Plan for the Fishery of Large Pelagic Fish of Commercial Interest Captured and Landed by Fleets Operating within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Pacific Ocean of Costa Rica • Management Plan for the Fishery of Large Pelagic Fish of Commercial Interest Captured and Landed by Fleets Operating within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Pacific Ocean of Costa Rica
Courses, workshops, diplomas, among others	At least 18 training and capacity building spaces on priority topics.

The number of Knowledge products generated are impressive and not to be underestimated, as they will be valuable in the long-term. However, the approach to Knowledge Management (KM) is static and linear, producing non-context-specific outputs like bulletins and pamphlets, rather than context-specific, transformative knowledge products, and this reflects common critiques of KM in GEF projects.[64] This approach often limits learning, innovation, and local ownership, as it does not sufficiently engage stakeholders in co-creation, adaptation, or application of knowledge to real-world challenges. Knowledge is one of the key assets of the GEF Partnership and is a critical tool for sustainability and scale up and Figure 10 summarizes the GEF's KM and Learning approach.



[64] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-05/EN_GEF_C.62_Inf.08_Update%20on%20Progress%20to%20Develop%20a%20GEF%20Knowledge%20Management%20and%20Learning%20Strategy.pdf

Figure 10: Towards a GEF KM&L Strategy.[59]

Moving beyond static outputs and measure meaningful KM&L, PACA might sonder the following metrics for measuring effectiveness shown in Table 31.

Table 31*:* Metrics to measure KM&L effectiveness that PACA could consider

Relevance and Contextualization Metrics	• Percentage of KM&L products co-developed with local stakeholders or tailored to specific community needs. • Stakeholder satisfaction and perceived usefulness of KM outputs, assessed through surveys or interviews.
Uptake and Application Metrics	• Number of KM&L products or lessons integrated into local policies, management plans, or practices. • Documented cases of behavioral or policy change attributed to KM activities (e.g., new fisheries practices adopted after KM&L workshops).
Knowledge Sharing and Innovation Metrics	• Number of innovative ideas or solutions generated through KM platforms or exchanges. • Volume and quality of knowledge contributions from grassroots actors (not just top-down dissemination).
Impact and Learning Metrics	• Evidence of improved decision-making, adaptive management, or problem-solving linked to KM&L interventions. • Longitudinal tracking of changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices among target groups.
Systemic and Sustainability Metrics	• Existence and use of feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement of KM&L tools. • Degree to which KM&L processes are institutionalized and sustained beyond the project's life.

Innovative approaches should be transformative. For example, they build capacities to carry out participatory M&E, a highly effective tool for tracking changes and applying adaptive management and hands-on learning to capture lessons systematically is surprisingly absent. This is not only innovative, but it has the effect of building ownership, local capacities and creating social resilience and capital. In this regard, the weak ToC is actually a barrier to such an innovative approach. Table 32 compares PACA's approach to KM and a more innovative one used in other GEF projects and Box 1 summarizes some key lessons learned from knowledge management approaches from around the world..

Table 32*:* PACA's approach to KM compared with more innovative and modern approaches.

PACA's Present approach	Improved Approach
One-way information flows	Two-way engagement of actors
Static- Driven by events, bulletins and guidelines, some of which do not relate to the present Project outputs or outcomes.	Continues and adaptive, with systematic learning
Generic focus	Messages aimed at a specific audience
Focused on Outputs	Focused on delivering outcomes and impacts.

> **Box 1**: *Communities strengthen their own resilience by experimenting, innovating and learning within and between different knowledge systems, cultures and age groups. Adaptation strategies may be novel or old, but generally build on bio-cultural or traditional knowledge. This knowledge is specific to the locations and cultures of given socio-ecological interactions. It is embodied in resource-use customs, agricultural traditions, local languages, cultural values and social institutions. Many communities are losing their knowledge of local resources, biodiversity and the historical events that have shaped their landscapes and seascapes. The maintenance of this knowledge increasingly depends on the ability of elders, parents and the younger generations in a community to document and share it*[65]

5. Sustainability

Sustainability is defined here as the continuation of benefits from the Project after the development assistance has been completed and the probability of continued long-term benefits. Following GEF criteria, there are four risks that PACA must mitigate for it to be sustained into a new phase of funding; (i) Financial Risks; (ii) Economic Risks; iii) Social Risks; (iv) Environmental Risks. Two additional risks are examined – Governance and Political risks.

5.1 Financial Risks for Sustaining PACA

The main financial risks to sustaining PACA project primarily stem from heavy reliance on co-financing, limited institutional and economic capacity, political uncertainties, and the absence of robust long-term funding mechanisms. Additional risks include:

- **Dependence on Co-Financing and In-Kind Contributions**: The overall budget relies heavily on co-financing from governments and private sectors, much of which is in-kind or recurrent expenditures rather than secured direct funding from the 7 governments. Any shortfall or withdrawal of these contributions could jeopardize continuation of PACA's outcomes.
- **Limited Financial and Institutional Capacity**: Participating countries face constraints in institutional capacity and financial resources to sustain project initiatives after GEF funding ends. This includes challenges in maintaining staff, operational costs, and technical expertise necessary for long-term environmental management. This risk also applies to demanding financial requirements to sustain the M&E system.
- **High Transaction Costs and Administrative Burdens**: Complex coordination among multiple countries, agencies, and stakeholders increases administrative costs and can delay fund disbursement and project implementation. These inefficiencies strain what may already be limited financial resources and thereby reduce the effectiveness of investments.

[65] UNU-IAS, Bioversity International, IGES and UNDP (2014). Toolkit for the Indicators of Resilience in Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes (SEPLS).

- **Limited or inexistent Financial Mechanisms for Long-Term Maintenance**: Many projects in similar contexts struggle to create sustainable financing mechanisms (e.g., trust funds, payment for ecosystem services) to cover ongoing costs after project closes, leaving environmental and social gains vulnerable.

Additionally, social insecurity and low stakeholder engagement can undermine PACA's ability to plan accurately, allocate resources efficiently, maintain funding, and avoid costly delays or conflicts. This *amplifies financial vulnerability and jeopardizes the sustainability of project outcomes*. Effective, inclusive stakeholder engagement is therefore critical to managing financial risks and ensuring long-term project success.

5.2 Social Risks

PACA's social sustainability revolves around ensuring inclusive, equitable, and culturally sensitive engagement, protecting vulnerable groups, addressing gender and economic disparities, and maintaining social cohesion across diverse coastal communities, as well as fostering ownership. Consequently, Effective social risk management must be aligned with Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy is critical for securing sustained success. Other risks include poor communication and incomplete or top-down governability, versus inclusive governance. Furthermore, this must include , as well as the absence of social or economic incentives that can demonstrate that PACA is worth their time. Specific Risks include:

- **Limited Stakeholder Engagement and Participation**: Insufficient involvement of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other vulnerable or marginalized groups can lead to lack of ownership, resistance, or conflicts, undermining long-term sustainability of project outcomes. The GEF emphasizes *meaningful* consultations and participation throughout the project cycle to mitigate this risk.
- **Gender Inequality**: Failure to integrate gender-responsive strategies risks excluding women from decision-making and benefits, weakening social cohesion and the equitable distribution of project gains.
- **Cultural and Social Conflicts**: The project spans diverse muti-cultural countries with varying governance systems and social norms. Misalignment or disregard for local customs, land tenure, and traditional knowledge can cause conflicts and reduce effectiveness of interventions. For example, the interviews found that engaging women in some coastal communities in Mexico and Ecuador project activities in some coastal communities could turn a community against the project.
- **Health and Safety Concerns**: Projects must consider community security risk, which are serious in several countries, as fishermen are assaulted, even killed at night and boats are stolen in coastal Ecuador. Other risks relate to pollution, waste management, and natural disasters, which if unaddressed can undermine social acceptance of PACA and its viability.
- **Economic Pressures and Inequities:** Rapid coastal development, tourism, and resource extraction can exacerbate social inequities, displace local communities, and increase competition for resources, potentially leading to social unrest or reduced support for the project.
- **Poor communication, incomplete inclusive governance** these are not convincing to the communities. Another risk is the lack of social and/or economic incentives that demonstrate that PACA is worth their time.

5.3 Economic Risks

Economic risks to PACA's sustainability are multifaceted and interconnected. They arise from external economic shocks (e.g., the US recent impacting tariffs), limited diversification, funding dependencies, undervaluation of a country's natural capital and importantly , the absence of economic valuations of

ecosystem services, climate change impacts, lost values from unsustainable use of ecosystem services and failure to internalize those losses values from illegal resource extraction, and the inability to generate sustainable livelihoods. Addressing these risks requires integrated approaches that promote economic diversification, sustainable resource management, climate resilience, and community empowerment. More specifically, they include:

- **Market Volatility and External Economic Shocks**: Fluctuations in global commodity prices, trade imbalances, and economic downturns can significantly impact the economies of participating countries, reducing their capacity to invest in long-term environmental management and conservation efforts.
- **Limited Economic Diversification**: Many countries in the PACA region have economies heavily reliant on sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. A lack of diversification makes them vulnerable to sector-specific shocks (e.g., disease outbreaks affecting agriculture or environmental disasters impacting tourism), diverting resources away from environmental sustainability.
- **High Dependence on External Funding**: The project's financial sustainability is at risk due to its reliance on external funding sources, including the GEF and co-financing commitments. Shifting donor priorities or shortfalls in co-financing can create significant funding gaps, jeopardizing the continuation of project activities.
- **Absent or Inadequate Ecosystem Services Valuations (ESV)**: Failure to properly value and integrate ecosystem services (e.g., carbon sequestration, coastal protection) into economic planning and decision-making leads to underinvestment in natural resource management and conservation. This undervaluation perpetuates unsustainable practices and increases the risk of environmental degradation and this will continue unless the losses of Ecosystem Service Valus (ESVs) are internalized. Otherwise, the same problems with weak enforcement and illegal resource harvesting will be futile. The MSP Pilots and the TDAs are obvious instruments that could incorporate ESVs.
- **Increased Costs Due to Climate Change impacts**: Climate change impacts, such as sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and ocean acidification, pose substantial economic risks to coastal communities and industries in the PACA region. Adaptation and mitigation measures require significant financial investments, straining already limited resources.
- **Illegal and Unsustainable Resource Extraction**: Overexploitation of fisheries, -IUU fishing and other unsustainable resource extraction activities undermine the long-term economic potential of natural resources in the region. These practices degrade ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and diminish the economic opportunities for local communities that depend on these resources.
- **Ignoring the significant GDP and employment contributions of non-extractive activities like sustainable tourism in favor of private sector political pressures.** Several interviews presented data showing that IUU and pressure from industrial pelagic fishing fleets are having significant negative impacts of the populations of sport fishing species. This was also confirmed by 14/15 scientists interviewed by the MTR team. The case for the significantly greater contributions from sportfishing in Panama and Costa Rica compared with economic and social benefits from pelagic fisheries are surprising. Because the loss of ecosystem service values are not internalized within government natural resource accounting, it is difficult to raise awareness to government and develop strategies to intervene in slowing the reported declines in the sportfishing resources, the continued incidental and intentional capture of apex predators and CITES-listed marine megafauna and the risks to the PACA LME's ecosystem resilience due to alterations in marine food webs and connectivity with coastal ecosystems that are crucial for the life cycles of 40%+ marine species in the LME.

- **Economic Vulnerabilities of Participating Countries**: Many countries in the PACA region have limited economic diversification and are vulnerable to external shocks (e.g., global financial crises, commodity price fluctuations). Such economic instability can reduce government budgets for environmental programs and undermine sustained financing.

5.4 Environmental Risks

The environmental risks to sustaining the PACA project stem from a combination of climate change impacts, unsustainable resource use, pollution, habitat destruction, and invasive species (Table 33). Addressing these risks requires integrated approaches that promote climate resilience, sustainable resource management, pollution control, habitat restoration, and community engagement.

- **Overexploitation of Marine Resources**: Unsustainable fishing practices, including overfishing and destructive fishing methods, threaten fish stocks, reduce biodiversity, and disrupt marine food webs . This can lead to the collapse of fisheries and loss of livelihoods for coastal communities.
- **Overfishing Apex Predators**: Currently, several countries are ignoring the precautionary principle and taking large volumes of Apex predators that include CITES-listed sharks and rays. apex predators in the Pacific Central American LME.[66] This poses multiple effects that generate risks not only to marine ecosystems but also to the communities and economies that depend on them (See Table 24). Effective management and conservation strategies are essential to mitigate these impacts and restore ecological balance.
- **Pollution**: Land-based pollution from agricultural runoff, industrial discharge, and untreated sewage contaminates coastal waters, harming marine life and degrading water quality . Marine pollution, including plastic debris and oil spills, poses a serious threat to marine ecosystems and human health.
- **Habitat Destruction**: Coastal development, deforestation, and destructive land-use practices lead to the destruction of critical habitats such as mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass beds. This habitat loss reduces biodiversity, weakens coastal protection, and diminishes the capacity of ecosystems to provide essential services.
- **Invasive Species**: The introduction and spread of invasive species can disrupt marine ecosystems, outcompete native species, and alter food web dynamics . Invasive species can cause significant ecological and economic damage, undermining conservation efforts.
- **Deforestation:** Deforestation and unsustainable land use practices can lead to soil erosion, sedimentation, and nutrient runoff, negatively impacting water quality and aquatic ecosystems. This can disrupt ecological processes and reduce the resilience of coastal ecosystems and severely undermine the resilience of .

Table 33*:* Potential Effects, Risks and Consequences of overfishing Apex Predators and not applying the Precautionary Principle.

EFFECT	RISK	CONSEQUENCES
Loss of Ecosystem Structure & Biodiversity	Loss of biodiversity, ecosystem restructuring, reduced resilience	Prey populations can increase unchecked, leading to trophic cascading effects throughout the food web, altering species composition and ecosystem functioning.[67]
Trophic Cascades	Unchecked prey populations, altered food	"fishing down the food web," leads to a shift from the main fishery as higher-level stocks are depleted to sequentially target lower

[66] Earth Justice (2022).
[67] Essington et al. (2006). https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.0510964103;
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/workshop/join/2011/474557/IPOL-PECH_AT(2011)474557_EN.pdf

	webs, "fishing down the food web"	trophic level species, with long-term consequences for food web stability.[48]
Fisheries & Economy	Fishery collapses, reduced economic value, shift to lower-value species	This can lead to the collapse of valuable fisheries, reducing economic opportunities for coastal communities and undermining food security, while forcing a shift to lower-value species, which can be less economically viable and further destabilize marine food webs.[68]
Bycatch	Increased mortality of non-target species (turtles, seabirds, marine mammals)	Targeting apex predators often leads to high levels of bycatch, inadvertently capturing and killing non-target species such as sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals. This has contributed to severe declines in populations of these vulnerable species in the Pacific and globally.[50]
Extinction Risk	Heightened risk for apex predators and associated species	Overfishing has placed more than one-third of all sharks, rays, and chimaeras at risk of extinction, with apex predators being particularly vulnerable due to their life history traits and high market value.[69]
Recovery Potential	Slow and uncertain recovery due to biological characteristics of apex predators	Erodes the resilience of marine ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to further disturbances such as climate change, pollution, or invasive species. Recovery of apex predators populations is often slow or uncertain due to their typically slow growth, late maturity, and low reproductive rates.[70]

Climate change acts as a "threat multiplier", intensifying existing economic vulnerabilities in the PACA region and increasing the costs associated with achieving sustainable development goals. Addressing these risks requires integrating climate resilience into all aspects of project planning and implementation, promoting climate-smart agriculture, investing in renewable energy, and strengthening social safety nets to protect vulnerable populations. It can significantly exacerbate economic risks to the GEF-funded PACA project's sustainability through several interconnected pathways and this is why it is critical to connect coastal and marine ecosystems in the MSPs, because if pelagic fisheries decline, local communities will still have coastal resources if they are properly managed. Specific environmental perturbations linked to changing climate include:

- **Increased Frequency and Intensity of Extreme Weather Events**: Rising sea levels, intensified storms, and prolonged droughts can damage coastal infrastructure, disrupt tourism, harm fisheries, and reduce agricultural productivity in the PACA region. These events can lead to significant economic losses and divert resources away from long-term sustainability initiatives, , as well as abandonment of the PACA project..
- **Sea Level Rise and Coastal Erosion**: Rising sea levels threaten coastal communities and ecosystems, leading to displacement, loss of land, and damage to critical infrastructure . The costs associated with coastal protection, relocation, and ecosystem restoration can strain the financial resources of participating countries and undermine project goals.
- **Ocean Acidification and Marine Ecosystem Degradatio**n: Increased ocean acidity harms coral reefs, shellfish, and other marine organisms, impacting fisheries and tourism industries . Declining fish stocks can lead to food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and reduced economic opportunities for coastal communities.
- **Water Scarcity and Droughts**: Changes in precipitation patterns and increased evaporation can lead to water scarcity and prolonged droughts, affecting agriculture, hydropower generation, and human health

[68] https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/article/74/9/2283/3855115
[69] https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/overfishing
[70] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/workshop/join/2011/474557/IPOL-PECH_AT(2011)474557_EN.pdf

. Competition for limited water resources can exacerbate social tensions and undermine economic stability, as well as abandonment of the PACA project.

5.5 Political and Governance Risks

The political and governance risks to sustaining the GEF-funded PACA project primarily arise from challenges common to multi-country environmental initiatives in developing regions. Sustaining the PACA project requires navigating political instability, strengthening institutional capacity and coordination, combating corruption, improving legal frameworks, and fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement across multiple countries. Addressing these governance risks is essential to maintain momentum and ensure long-term environmental and social benefits. Key risks include:

- **Political and Governance Risks**: Changes in government, shifting political priorities, and varying levels of commitment across jurisdictions can disrupt funding flows and institutional support for the project, threatening its sustainability.
- **Political Instability and Government Transitions**: Changes in government or political leadership can disrupt policy continuity, shift priorities away from environmental goals, and delay or reverse reforms critical to the project's sustainability. Lack of long-term political commitment undermines consistent support and funding.
- **Weak Institutional Capacity and Coordination**: Many participating countries face limited capacity in environmental agencies and weak coordination among government sectors and levels (national, regional, local). Fragmented authority and poor communication hinder effective implementation and enforcement of policies developed under the project.
- **Corruption and Lack of Transparency**: Corruption within public institutions can divert resources, reduce accountability, and erode trust among stakeholders. This undermines governance reforms, weakens enforcement of environmental regulations, and jeopardizes project outcomes.
- **Inadequate Legal and Regulatory Frameworks**: Outdated, inconsistent, or poorly enforced laws and regulations limit the ability to manage marine and coastal resources sustainably. Regulatory uncertainty increases risks for investors and stakeholders, reducing incentives for long-term engagement.
- **Low Stakeholder Participation and Civil Society Engagement**: Limited involvement of local communities, Indigenous groups, and civil society reduces social legitimacy and ownership of governance reforms. This can lead to resistance, conflicts, and reduced compliance with conservation measures.
- **Complex Multi-level Governance Challenges**: The project spans multiple countries with diverse political systems, cultures, and governance traditions. Aligning policies, standards, and enforcement mechanisms across jurisdictions is challenging and can slow progress or create gaps in management.
- **Risk of Policy and Regulatory Changes Affecting Investments**: Political risks such as arbitrary regulatory changes, breach of contracts, or restrictions on capital flows can deter private sector investment and public funding necessary for sustaining project activities.
- **Limited Mechanisms for Conflict Resolution and Accountability:** Weak oversight bodies and limited mechanisms to hold leaders and institutions accountable reduce governance quality and increase the risk of mismanagement.
- **Underrepresentation and Social Exclusion**: Political governance systems that exclude women, minorities, or marginalized groups can weaken social cohesion and reduce the effectiveness of governance reforms.

6. Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons at Mid-term

6.1 Conclusions

The evidence-based conclusions shown below are connected to the MTR findings highlight the project's strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes.

1) **The quality of project execution by the implementing partner, WWF Guatemala/Mesoamerica, has been generally positive, with notable strengths and significant areas for improvement**. Stakeholders interviewed stated that WWF has demonstrated solid capacity in the administrative and financial management of the project, meeting audit requirements and delivery deadlines. Coordination has been recognized as efficient and professional, highlighting the transparency of the processes. Governmental and non-governmental entities involved in project management (Steering Committee, Technical Committee, and ADT Team) have positively valued the PMU's use of clear timelines and its availability and openness to feedback, as well as the use of both formal and informal communication channels to keep people informed.
2) **The project has achieved 14 midterm targets, representing 78% of the total, and, as evidence suggests, is likely to achieve 13 end-of-project targets,** corresponding to 72% of the total. However, considering the weaknesses of the results framework (which includes the problem that most of the indicators and their targets reflect output measurements rather than outcome measurements), as well as the weaknesses of the Theory of Change, which hinders the possibility of achieving a regional strategic vision), the project's actual effectiveness may be compromised by its focus on meeting the established goals but not on achieving results at the strategic level.
3) **The creation of the PMU, the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee has been a major achievement for improving coordination and participatory decision-making.** This has been a significant achievement as it has resulted in modifications of the results framework indicators, the Gender Action Plan, and budgetary changes, among others. Additionally, a Regional Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) Development Team was formed and includes government representatives from the Fisheries and Environment Ministries, as well as one representative from each country's coastal and marine NGOs. This team has exercised its functions and responsibilities related to the development of the national TDAs.
4) **Management arrangements for Component 2 has weakened the ability to generate a regional vision** due to high level of outsourcing in execution used to hired multiple consulting firms without adequate integration of the generated products. Most of the parties responsible for the pilots pointed out a disconnect between the regional project and what is happening at the local level, with many alluding to the fact that they have felt like islands and isolated in decision-making. Along the same lines, some interviewees indicated that, during the implementation process, the project team has failed to clearly communicate all the project components and results, impacting the capacity for ownership and engagement of the various stakeholders.
5) **The EBM approach is incomplete**. EBM is one of the key pillars of PACA's Strategic Vision and inaction will not only undermine PACA's environmental, economic, and social objectives, but also the effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy of the PACA initiative.
6) **The Theory of Change is weak and deficient in many aspects** - Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) projects deal with transboundary, ecological and socio-economic systems and are inherently complex and dynamic, requiring clear articulation of causal pathways from interventions to outcomes. It is surprising that at the GEF 7 stage that ToCs are still poorly developed, that the classical output-oriented approach continues to survive despite its many weaknesses.

7) **PACA's proposed Regional M&E system is built on a design that has failed in other GEF projects. The MTR has concerns that the approach has many inherent risks that will compromise its effectiveness and its sustainability.** These concerns are mainly related to the poor understanding of Results-based management by most stakeholders interviewed, as none saw any problems with the indicators or the ToC, nor that the ToC and weak assumptions prevented systematic applications of Adaptive management principles, which would allow PACA to accurately, demonstrate impact and respond adaptively to emerging challenges.
8) **There is a large communication gap between the pilot projects and the TDA consultants, mainly because they were contracted separately, but also because there is poor communication between the consultants and the UNDP country office.** This is a concern because Outcome 3 aims to produce Tangible impacts generated in demonstrative pilot interventions implemented to contribute to the development and buy-in of the SAP. UNDP offices complained that while they have received reports from the PMU and responsible parties leading the pilot activities, they do not feel that they are being integrated into the pilot projects and other regional technical issues for which WWF is responsible.
9) **PACA's communication strategy follows the classical approach to communication in coastal-marine projects**, which has often been top-down, one-way, and heavily focused on information dissemination rather than engagement or behavior change.
10) **On a purely economic level, the project is being executed cost-effectively**. Reviewing the cumulative data through 2025 (see Table 9), project management costs (PMCs) represent 5% of the executed budget, which is in line with GEF policies. By the first quarter of 2025, when 52% of the project implementation period had elapsed (25 of 48 months), the project at the regional level had spent 35% of the PMCs planned for the entire implementation period and 49% of those planned for 2023, 2024, and 2025 (with the important exception that three quarters of 2025 remain to be executed). The project is considered to have adequate financial controls at the regional level to be able to make informed management decisions regarding the budget.
11) **At mid-term, the project has significantly exceeded the amount of in-kind co-financing but there is no way to corroborate the actual amount that has been implemented to date** by co-financing institutions.
12) **The levels of financial execution for each Component are uniform**. Based on the global amount established in the ProDoc, disbursements for components 1 and 2 (50% and 48%) are satisfactory, while component 3 is low (34%). This is related to the type of activities implemented to date and the fact that experience sharing, particularly between pilots, has been limited. The outlook is that this will change in the short term since, the PMU reported in the interviews that the knowledge management processes among the national pilots are beginning this year.
13) Although the PIR states that the indicator has been met at mid-term, the indicator cannot be attributed. Therefore, the PIR is incorrect to assert that the target was met. In response to this challenge,

6.2Recommendations

1) **The PMU and Regional Implementation partner should immediately revise and adjust the ToC to comply with GEF Council recommendations.** While it is recognized that the project is at mid-term and significant changes in the ToC may be difficult to make The PMU should consider revising the existing ToC of the reginal and national projects if possible. However, the highest priority is to ensure that each SAP has a robust ToC with SMART outcomes and indicators, and that assumptions are developed for each link in the results chain. The Evaluation team has volunteered to assist the PMU and partners to analyze the ToC critically in a participatory process and adjust the regional ToC after the final MTR report has been submitted. This training will also help the PMU and partners develop a

robust ToC for the regional TDA and SAP under the leadership of the PMU. With regard to Core GEF indicator #4, the MTR team present the following for the consideration of the PMU and the IA: the MTR recommends that PACA IMMEDIATELY contacts GMC2 (GEF-IW LAC, SFP and partner PACA countries involved with GMC-2) to discuss this option. If it is viable, PACA and GMC2 should coordinate their mutual contributions to those two indicators for the rest of their remaining implementation periods. This IW synergy could become a model for similar GEF IW projects in the same region that share similar Core Indicators.

2) **With urgency, the PMU, Steering and Technical Committees should revise the approach to EBM to ensure that it meets international standards,** as the EBM approach is incomplete. EBM is one of the key pillars of PACA's Strategic Vision and inaction will not only undermine PACA's environmental, economic, and social objectives, but also the effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy of the PACA initiative.
3) **The PMU must ensure that land-sea interactions are included in all TDAs and to ensure a full-scale EBM approach** that not only addresses ecological health, but also social equity, and climate resilience.[71] It should also strengthen key elements of Ecosystem-based management, including insistence that the Precautionary approach be applied under conditions of scientific uncertainty, while incorporating adaptive management principles through a more robust ToC and ensure greater participation and inclusivity at the lowest practical levels that include participatory planning fora, grievance systems, community monitoring
4) **The PMU and Steering Committee must revisit and integrated the STAP report recommendations on knowledge management plans** to ensure that they would benefit from an elaboration of mechanisms to promote exchange of lessons beyond documentation and online distribution of lessons, particularly with regard to the function of the proposed "working groups" at regional scale. If done well, these could potentially provide an additional track for transboundary cooperation beyond the more formal intergovernmental links.
5) **The PMU and UNDP should act immediately to integrate information and knowledge management** so that communication of results and lessons are significantly improved. Communication should evolve into a strategic, inclusive, and adaptive process. The following should be considered: Make Communication Two-Way and Participatory - create dialogue platforms (community forums, consultations, surveys). Involve stakeholders in co-designing messages and tools. This builds trust and ensures messages reflect real concerns and values. Go beyond counting brochures—measure engagement, feedback, and impact on attitudes and behaviors to drive adaptive management and learning and improve PACA's strategy in real-time.
6) **Communication, information and knowledge-sharing must be immediately improved at all levels**, with the PMU and Regional Implementing Agency taking the lead. Otherwise PACA will lose the opportunity to take advantage of the good actions taking place in the siloed-structure of the project and is also likely to overlook mistakes that could be easily corrected and make implementation of mitigation measures and capacity-building more efficient and effective.[72]
7) **The PMU should assess the degree to which PACA governments meet the conditions for inclusive and adaptive governance and develop a strategic plan** to ensure more inclusive national and

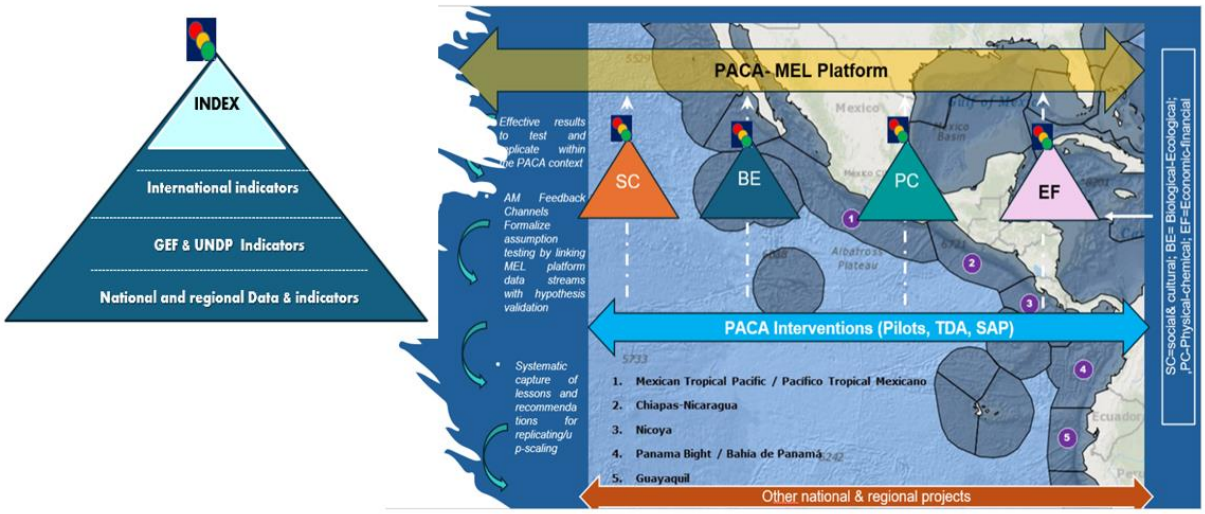
[71] See Quierós et al. 2025, which is extremely pertinent to the TDA, SAP and the MSPs.

[72] Project coordination and communication between the PMU, the UNDP country offices is especially problematic, It needs to improve as it is a huge waste of money and human resources... UNDP doesn't know what's going on... Countries need to be in the lead but UNDP has contracting and decision-making power for the consultants they hire, but ultimately it is the countries' project. Future coordination mechanisms must improve significantly, or these types of arrangements should never be repeated

regional governance, as well as the integrity, equity, and effectiveness of the PACA project, which is currently a major weakness. WWF should develop a strategy to have greater inclusive governance actions in each country, as well as at the regional level.

8) **National diagnostics should be re-examined and in those cases where symptoms vs. root causes are presented**, the TDAs should be revised to ensure that the primary root causes are presented, rather than symptoms--- The question should be asked for each root cause if it addresses the *WHY?* This will take it to the lowest practical root cause level. And also: i) Revise TDA process to include Causal Chain Analysis reaching back to socio-economic, governance, and policy drivers; ii) Integrate political economy analysis into project design phases.
9) **The PMU, Steering and Technical Committees should carefully examine the M&E system that is being developed** because as proposed the Regional M&E system is built on a design that has failed in other GEF projects. It must include a robust ToC, assumptions, address root causes and it should ensure feedback loops that drive adaptive management and learning. Given that existing indicators used by individual PACA countries are too numerous to be integrated into the M&E system and reluctance of countries to change their indicators just to fit into PACA, one option is to compact the diverse and numerous country-specific indicators into a hierarchical information pyramid. The tip of the pyramid could include a composite index value at the tip that integrates all country indicators. This could help manage complexity and enhance communication. Structuring the multitude of PACA country indicators into an information pyramid culminating in a composite index is a practical and strategic approach to capture complex, multi-country data while supporting regional ecosystem-based management and decision-making. The figure below shows a conceptual approach for using information pyramids for the 4 dimensions of sustainable development (biological-ecologic, social and cultural, economic -financial and physical chemical) and a stoplight management system to measure effectiveness (green), caution/action required (yellow) and critical/urgent action (red).

Figure 11: Conceptual and operational illustraton of how ultiple indicators could be integrated into PACA's MEÆ system using informatin pyramoiids and 'stoplicht management' indicators based on exitng regional and national data.



10) **The TDA and SAP should examine the feasibility of including economic valuation of the most critical ecosystem services in the PACA LME studie**s (e.g., Total Economic Value of marine ecosystems and the services they provide), develop tools for natural capital accounting and ecosystem service integration into national decision-making. Costa Rica is a leader of this, but on the land and Promote Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) *for blue economy financing to internalize costs of the loss of PACA's ecosystem services. Otherwise, sustainability will be at a significant risk unless economic valuations of PACA ecosystem services are developed and the loss of those values from unsustainable practices are internalized in national accounts , specifically natural resource accounts and human capital.*
11) **Communications officers of the parties responsible (CI, MarViva, LANCIS-UNA, and OET) should not only contribute toward increasing the project's visibility, but they could create synergies to form a coordinated strategy that could foster an improved the level of ownership of the products generated by institutions and organizations.** The importance of establishing a concrete strategic action aimed at political decision-makers cannot be overemphasized. Convincing these actors about the vital importance of the project for the PACA LME region requires being able to communicate key information to them clearly and succinctly. For example, information on the problems faced by the countries, on the value of the fishing productive sector and its subsectors to GDP, on the key role of traditionally excluded actors such as women and indigenous populations in employment in the area, among other knowledge products that the project has already generated.
12) **Build capacities to carry out participatory M&E, a highly effective tool for tracking changes and applying adaptive management and hands-on learning to capture lessons systematically is surprisingly absent.** This is not only innovative, but it has the effect of building ownership, local capacities and creating social resilience and capital. In this regard, the weak ToC is actually a barrier to such an innovative approach.
13) **It is urgent to work towards building a shared vision among all stakeholders that this is a regional project that goes beyond national boundaries. To achieve this, the project management must embrace a regional strategic vision** and take on a more active role in the coordination and oversight of all project components—including Component 2, which is currently being administered by UNDP country offices. This approach should be extended across all areas of the PMU so that:

a. At the financial level, the PMU is informed of and has oversight over the total PACA project investment across the region.
b. In terms of communications and gender, coordination should be established with the focal points responsible for these areas within the Steering Committee institutions in each country, as well as with the UNDP offices, to implement a more integrated strategy.
c. Greater emphasis should be placed on this issue, leveraging the support made possible by the participation of the STM-COMMCA of SICA in the Project Steering Committee.
d. It is of extreme importance that
e. The professional leadership within the PMU should be strengthened to reduce reliance on subcontracted deliverables, which has led to fragmentation of knowledge.

14) In line with the above, **it is urgent to identify and strengthen the ownership of the PACA project by a regional body that can help ensure its long-term sustainability**. Entities such as SICA or CIAT could potentially assume this role; however, however, doing so requires clear institutional leadership within the region. In this context, it is necessary that PMU identifies which country or countries demonstrate a higher degree of ownership, in order to work jointly on the formal presentation of a sustainability strategy. This strategy should enable the most suitable regional entity to begin assuming responsibilities while there is still time remaining in the implementation period.
15) **Component 2:** In order to address the finding by the evaluation team regarding discrepancies in the reported amounts, particularly in Component 2 (which includes the pilot initiatives) and in the PMC, given that the UNDP country offices also have an assigned budget, it is recommended that:
    c) The PMU works jointly with the UNDP Costa Rica Country Office to define an audit cycle plan for the PACA project.
    d) That WWF coordinate with the UNDP RTA to establish a mechanism that includes a template for consolidating and cross-checking financial information on a quarterly basis. A calendar should be established so that, prior to the submission of the quarterly financial report, the UNDP country offices implementing national pilots send their information to the RTA, where it is consolidated and then shared with WWF for feedback and to maintain an up-to-date record.

6.3 Lessons

The following lessons are applicable From PACA and other projects:

1. **LME projects that narrowly focus on marine ecosystems in MSP exercises yet neglect the critical connectivity with coastal ecosystems face significant risks that could undermine the project effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term impact.** Without a holistic approach that strengthens and applies the key elements of EBM, long-term planning and coordination of *sustainable coastal-marine fisheries, biodiversity conservation, and coastal community resilience*, overfishing and habitat degradation may persist, and marine resources may be depleted beyond recovery, which is a concern expressed in interviews for the sports fishing subsector. This will also undermine social resilience of coastal communities.
2. **Unless the KM is much more grounded in transformational, bottom-up knowledge management, it is unlikely to have impact nor to be sustained -** While top-down, one-way information dissemination, rather than engagement or behavior change has its place usually falls short in its attempts to achieve long-term sustainability and stakeholder buy-in.. Participatory M&E and learning by doing are not just innovative — they create ownership, build local capacity, and embed resilience into KM systems. the efficiency of the project but also is counter to the goal of PACA, namely, to share good practices and replicate them within country-specific contexts.

3. **Without good Interagency coordination and coordination** it is likely that impermeable walls will compartmentalize and silo knowledge and information, This creates major difficulties in tracking progress and outcomes, while jeopardizing adaptive management and accountability. It is also likely to lead to fragmented data collection.
4. **A poorly designed ToC and lack of SMART outcome indicators risks turning PACA into a mechanistic, output-driven initiative that fails to drive or demonstrate real change in marine ecosystem governance and sustainability**. It undermines effectiveness, learning, accountability, and long-term impact. Consequently, the weak ToC represents an example of a lost opportunity for PACA drive an adaptive management process at the regional and national levels, enhance the project's efficiency and its effectiveness, as well as sustain PACA's good practices after funding ends.
5. **Without a robust MEL platform grounded in a revised and solid Theory of Change, projects face the risk of ineffective adaptation, poor accountability, and lost learning opportunities.** This undermines the ability to manage climate and ecosystem risks effectively, ultimately threatening the sustainability and impact of interventions.
6. **The health of Large marine ecosystems depends on regional cooperation, adaptive governance, and community-based management**. If one or more countries stick with top-down governability, the entire LME system can become fragmented, undermining both ecological sustainability and socio-economic equity.
7. **Top-down approaches tend to silo decision-making, while undermining the ecological interconnectedness that PACA aims to strengthen**, and it frequently ignores the knowledge and needs of coastal communities, fishers, Indigenous peoples, and local governments.
8. **Unless all countries develop inclusive governance, the intended regional integration is likely to fall short of its objective and investments are unlikely to be sustained** - this could lead to uneven implementation across the PACA LME and complicate the process for building the necessary social capital for implementing SAP interventions that target changes at the lowest practical levels, PACA's.
9. **Without good inter-institutional communication and information sharing critical data, lessons learned, or innovations from pilots will remain siloed**. The broader project team cannot replicate successes or avoid repeating mistakes and the results will not be integrated into the TDAs and SAPs. Further, the project will lose an opportunity to strengthen the necessary social capital required to implement the SAP at the lowest practical levels
10. **Significant strategic and operational risks are likely unless the TDAs focus on true root causes instead of symptoms** in TDA process for the PACA LME Project, , as they can undermine the project's success in achieving long-term ecosystem-based management and inclusive governance.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: PACA MTR Terms of Reference *(excluding the annexes)*

Terms of Reference for the mid-term review of the project 'Towards joint integrated, ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA)' (PIMS ID: 6273)

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for -the Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed project titled Towards joint integrated, ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA) (PIMS ID: 6273) implemented through the UNDP Costa Rica/World Wildlife Fund -WWF Mesoamerica-, which is to be undertaken in 2025. The project started on February 27, 2023, and is in its second year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects (UNDP Evaluation guidelines).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Towards joint integrated, ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA) is a project that focus on transboundary marine governance, to address existing inadequate management of shared resources. The core element of the project´s theory of change is that improved marine governance will contribute to construct sound seascape-level ecosystem-based management. The project allocates GEF resources strategically to (1) develop a participatory process to generate an integrated diagnosis on the current situation of the large marine ecosystem (i.e., Transboundary Diagnosis Analysis -TDA-) and a formal instrument adopted by the participating countries (i.e., Strategic Action Programme -SAP-), (2) build human and social capital through training, communication and knowledge transfer, and (3) implement some practical exercises to generate learning on key issues (billfish recreational fisheries, marine spatial planning, and whale watching).

The Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA LME) is a valuable source of natural resources and ecosystem services for Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Ecuador. It extends from southern Mexico to the Gulf of Guayaquil encompassing a surface of ca., 1,996,659 km2 of coastal and marine habitats. The PACA LME integrates five marine ecoregions and high conservation value species like blue whales (Balaenoptera musculus) and humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and marine turtles. PACA LME´s ecosystems are also key to sustain trans-equatorial migration of several birds, like the Sabine's gull (Xema sabini) and the pink-footed shearwater (*Ardenna creatopus*).

About 245.4 million people live in the nine bordering PACA LME countries, 59.8 million in the coastal provinces, and approximately 17.1 million people live in the 228 coastal municipalities that border PACA. This LME is fundamental for the blue economy of the region. Key blue sectors are fisheries, aquaculture, shipping and marine tourism. For example, there are important fisheries in the area, like small pelagic fish, shrimps, and the regional tuna fishery of Eastern Pacific Ocean. The estimated total catch in 2016 was 1.3 million tons with a value of USD 1.9 billion.

The Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP) found that PACA´s overall risk factor is high. Biodiversity is threatened mainly by: (1) pollution, (2) degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems and habitats, (3) overuse of fishery resources, (4) direct impacts on fauna and flora, and (5) climate variability and climate change. The area is also impacted by the consequences of poverty, illegal drug trafficking, and illegal migration.

The objective of the project is to promote ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Large Marine Ecosystem, through the strengthening of regional governance. The three project´s components are:

- Component 1: develop regional governance instruments for joint management of PACA. This includes generating a common understanding of the current situation of the LME (i.e, the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis), and the necessary collaborative arrangements and planning tools (i.e., the Strategic Action Program).

- Component 2: generate on the ground learning, to address three common key issues: (i) conservation and management of billfishes, (ii) marine spatial planning, and (iii) cetacean conservation.

- Component 3: generate and share lessons and practical experience.

The three project´s components will result in five outcomes and 10 outputs:

Outcomes	Outputs
Component 1	
Outcome 1. Common understanding of the regional LME challenges and opportunities supported by the participant countries.	1.1. Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem prioritizes threats to LME, their immediate and root causes and opportunities sustainable development
Outcome 2. Collaborative framework and governance arrangements adopted by the participating countries to implement PACA´s Strategic Action Programme.	2.1 Strategic Action Programme (SAP) of legal, policy and institutional reforms, and needed investments, for sustainable utilization of the Pacific Central American Coastal large marine ecosystem endorsed by participating countries at ministerial level.
	2.2 Collaborative framework and governance arrangements to implement PACA´s SAP endorsed by participating countries.
	2.3. Strategy for awareness raising, participation and articulation among key decision-makers and stakeholders.
	2.4. Training of key stakeholders (public and private) on ecosystem-based management of large marine ecosystems.
Component 2	
Outcome 3. Tangible impacts generated in demonstrative pilot interventions implemented to contribute to the development and buy-in of the SAP and to decision making on prioritized topics in the region.	3.1. Three pilot interventions on common key issues of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem implemented. 3.1.1. Conservation and management of billfishes 3.1.2. Marine spatial planning. 3.1.3. Cetacean conservation
	3.2. Best practice and lessons from the pilots systematized, accessible and available to all stakeholders in the region
Component 3	
Outcome 4. Collaborative information system developed with key indicators on PACA´s condition and SAP implementation	4.1. Development and adoption of a suite of International Waters process, stress reduction and environmental /socioeconomic status indicators and implementation mechanisms to monitor PACA´s condition and SAP implementation.
Outcome 5. Lessons on collaborative actions to manage PACA shared in the region and worldwide (south-south cooperation).	5.1. Website for dissemination of lessons and best practice, linked to partners´ portals and IW: LEARN. 5.2. Project lessons documented and disseminated.

5.2. Project lessons documented and disseminated.

The project spans four years with a total investment of $. 6,395,520.00 USD, according to the following table (this figure does not include the pilot project´s budget, managed by UNDP and implemented by different Implementing Partners):

Financing Plan

Financing Plan	
GEF Trust Fund – regional activities	USD 5,795,520
(1) Total Budget administered by UNDP Costa Rica (lead office)	USD 5,795,520
(2) Costa Rica Pilot Project (Management plan including spatial planning for surface long-line and greenstick fishery for large pelagic fish (tuna, mahi mahi and swordfish) by the	USD 227,250

medium-scale and advanced commercial fleets.)		
(3) GEF Trust Fund – Panama Pilot Project (Marine Spatial planning and cetacean conservation)		USD 522,254
(4) GEF Trust Fund – Ecuador National activities		USD 253,735
(5) GEF Trust Fund – Mexico National activities (Pilot Project: Marine Ecological Management Programme for Mexico´s South Central Pacific Region)		USD 348,450
confirmed co-financing		
Regional	OSPESCA	USD 600,000
(6) Total confirmed co-financing		**USD 600,000**
(7) Grand-Total Project Financing (1)+(2)		**USD 6,395,520**

The project partnership involves the participation of seven countries: México, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Ecuador ; through the environmental, fisheries, and foreign affairs authorities. The project partners are listed in following table:

Country (from north to south)	Environment authority	Fisheries authority	Foreign affairs authority
Mexico	Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)	National Commission of Aquaculture and Fisheries (CONAPESCA)	Secretary of Foreign Affairs (SRE)
Guatemala	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN)	Directorate for Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulations (DIPESCA)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Honduras	Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment (MiAmbiente+)	General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DIGEPESCA)	Secretary of Foreign Relations
Costa Rica	Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE)	Costa Rican Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (INCOPESCA)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship
Panama	Ministry of Environment (MiAmbiente)	Panama´s Water Resources Authority (ARAP)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ecuador	Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition - MAATE	Vice Ministry of aquaculture and fisheries	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility

3. MTR PURPOSE

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

The main purpose of this MTR is to enhance project implementation, during the first half of the project's period. This is a strategic exercise to identify challenges, measure results and outline corrective actions, to ensure that the project is on track to achieve maximum results by its completion. The MTR findings would be used by UNDP Costa Rica CO and the other UNDP COs involved in the project, the Project Management Unit at WWF Mesoamerica and key stakeholders, to improve

the project implementation, and modify any aspect to ensure the results framework is achieved. This MTR is part of the project monitoring and evaluation plan.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

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

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, governments counterparts (environmental, fisheries and foreign affairs authorities), the GEF Operational Focal Point, the UNDP Country Offices, the Nature Hub Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to environmental and fisheries authorities of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador and Ecuador, The technical secretary of the Consejo de Ministras de la Mujer -COMMCA-, pilot execution partners like Conservation Internacional (CI) (Ecuador), MarViva (Panama), Organization of Tropical Studies (OTS)(Costa Rica), LANCIS-UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico); senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Steering Committee, Project Technical Committee project stakeholders, and CSOs, etc. Furthermore, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to the participant countries, which may include visits to pilot project sites such as Mexico (central-south Pacific coast), Costa Rica, Panama (Coiba National Park), and. Ecuador (San Vicente, Pedernales, and Jama municipalities)

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

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

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

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for extended descriptions.

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of participating countries?

- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?

- Review the progress according to the Stakeholder and Engagement Plan.

- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for further guidelines.

o Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?

o Review the progress according to the project's Gender Plan

- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.

- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?

- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyze beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.

- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

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

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

Project Strategy	Indicator[73]	Baseline Level[74]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[75]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment [76]	Achievement Rating[77]	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							

[73] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards
[74] Populate with data from the Project Document
[75] If available
[76] Colour code this column only
[77] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved

Green= Achieved Yellow= On target to be achieved Red= Not on target to be achieved

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

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

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

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

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.

- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?

- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

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

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

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?

- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for further guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?

- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?

- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

• How does the project engage women? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
  - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization.
  - The identified types of risks (in the SESP).
  - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP) .
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

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

Reporting:

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

Communications & Knowledge Management:

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

iv. Sustainability

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

- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

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

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

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

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

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

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

Conclusions & Recommendations

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

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

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

Ratings

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

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	

	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 34 working days over a time period of 12 of weeks, and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETION DATE
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report (MTR Inception Report due no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission)	*5 days*	*24th January, 2025*
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits	*15 days (7 days field mission)*	*21st February, 2025*
Presentation of initial findings- last day of the MTR mission	*1 day*	*25th February 2025*
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	*10 days*	*12th March, 2025*
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	*3 days*	*24th March, 2025*

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

7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**MTR Inception Report**	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	**Presentation**	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	**Draft MTR Report**	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	within 3 weeks of the MTR mission	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP

4	**Final Report***	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

*The final MTR report must be in English, but the drafts MTR reports are expected to be presented in Spanish for the national stakeholders review.

8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Country Office in Costa Rica.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the region for the MTR team and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

9. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of two independent consultants (regional/national) will conduct the MTR with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally. The consultants, will be responsible for the results of this MTR, this includes overall design, definite and conduct methodological process and writing of the MTR report, etc. Also, the team is responsible to include the gender perspective in all the MTR process.

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

For evaluation lead (international)

Education

- A Master's degree preferably in the areas of environment and/or sustainable development, or other closely related field. A Bachelor's degree is acceptable with an additional 2 years' experience.

Experience

- Minimum ten (10) years' experience in environmental management, fisheries, sustainable development, water management, climate change or a related field;
- Experience in evaluating projects GEF/PNUD is required;
- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies is desirable;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios is desirable;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to BD (biodiversity), CCM (climate change mitigation), International Waters and LD (land degradation) is desirable;

- Experience working in Latin America will be considered an asset;
- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years is desirable;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and Biodiversity Conservation, Climate Change, International Waters and Land Degradation; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis is desirable.
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English and Spanish.

For the National evaluator:

Education

- A Master's degree preferably in the areas of environment and/or evaluation or other closely related field. A Bachelor's degree is acceptable with an additional 2 years' experience.

Experience

- At least 5 years of relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and public policies;
- Experience in evaluating projects or monitoring tools.
- Experience working in Latin-American with environmental projects;
- Experience for at least 5 years in relevant technical areas related to the themes to analyze in this MTR;
- Understanding of issues related to gender and women participation; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Excellent communication skills;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English and Spanish.

10. ETHICS

The MTR team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This MTR will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The MTR team must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The MTR team must also ensure security of collected information before and after the MTR and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information, knowledge and data gathered in the MTR process must also be solely used for the MTR and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

11. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

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

Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40% :

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

12. APPLICATION PROCESS

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

a) Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability using the template provided by UNDP;

b) CV and a Personal History Form (P11 form); including copies of university degrees and the supporting documents necessary to demonstrate the requested qualifications.

c) Financial Proposal that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc.), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

d) Copies of university degrees and the supporting documents necessary to demonstrate the requested qualifications.

e) Health certificate in accordance with the format provided by UNDP.

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

Annex 2: Evaluation Questions and their Judgment Criteria

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
1. Estrategia del proyecto	
1.1 Diseño del proyecto	
1.1.1 ¿En qué medida el problema que aborda el proyecto y los supuestos identificados son pertinentes para su contexto?	• Pertinencia del problema en los lugares del proyecto: coherencia con las necesidades y los beneficiarios previstos • Nivel de concordancia entre los supuestos identificados en el ProDoc y la situación en los lugares del proyecto • Efecto de supuestos incorrectos o cambios en el contexto para alcanzar los resultados del proyecto como fueron establecidos en el documento de proyecto
1.1.2. ¿Qué relevancia tiene la estrategia seleccionada para lograr los resultados previstos?	• Grado en que la estrategia del proyecto muestra ser la ruta más efectiva para lograr los resultados esperados en el contexto de desarrollo • Pruebas de que los documentos de planificación utilizan las lecciones aprendidas/recomendaciones de proyectos anteriores como aportación al proceso de planificación/estrategia
1.1.3.¿En qué medida responde el proyecto a las prioridades y planes de desarrollo nacionales de los países involucrados?	• Nivel de alineación de los resultados y productos del proyecto con las prioridades y planes nacionales (a) al inicio del proyecto; (b) a medio plazo • Contribución del proyecto a la implementación de políticas nacionales
1.1.4 ¿En qué medida contribuye el proyecto a las prioridades de PNUD Costa Rica y PNUD LAC?	• Alineamiento del proyecto con las prioridades del PNUD Costa Rica y PNUD LAC
1.1.5. ¿Se tuvieron en cuenta las perspectivas de todas las partes interesadas (aquellos que podían ser afectados por las decisiones del proyecto, que podían afectar los resultados y/o podían proveer información u otros recursos al proceso) durante el diseño del proyecto?	• Número y tipo de partes interesadas consultadas durante el diseño del proyecto • Nivel de análisis para determinar el impacto del proyecto en las poblaciones • Pruebas de que las preocupaciones expresadas se utilizan para ajustar la estrategia del proyecto
1.1.6 ¿En qué medida se consideraron aspectos sociales y ambientales relevantes en el diseño del proyecto?	• Nivel de implementación del SES

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
1.1.7 ¿En qué medida se tuvieron en cuenta las cuestiones de género durante el diseño del proyecto? ¿Se ha actualizado el proyecto cuestiones de género relevantes?	• Número y tipos de actividades realizadas durante el diseño del proyecto para evaluar las necesidades relacionadas con cuestiones de género e igualdad de las mujeres para el proyecto • Pruebas de la incorporación de estas necesidades en el documento del proyecto • Existencia de un análisis de género y un plan de acción de género
1.2 Marco lógico /Teoría del Cambio	
1.2.1. ¿En qué medida los objetivos y resultados o componentes del proyecto son claros, prácticos y viables en su marco temporal? ¿Son realistas dentro de los plazos previstos?	• Coherencia entre el objetivo, los resultados, los productos y las actividades del proyecto • Viabilidad de los objetivos, resultados y productos dentro del marco presupuestal y temporal del proyecto • El MSP incluye el ordenamiento Marino y costero?
1.2.2 ¿En qué medida son SMART los indicadores de las consecuencias/efectos esperados y las metas de mitad de periodo y finales del marco lógico para medir los efectos del proyecto?	• Calidad del marco de resultados en el documento de proyecto y coherencia de los indicadores propuestos • Uso de indicadores de consecuencias/efectos SMART con líneas de base, metas y métodos y fuentes de verificación • Uso de indicadores y objetivos desglosados por género • Examinar si existen efectos del proyecto sobre el desarrollo o el medio ambiente que no se miden con los indicadores actuales y que deberían ser incluidos.
2. Progreso hacia los resultados	
2.1 ¿En qué medida se han alcanzado hasta ahora los productos, resultados y objetivos previstos del proyecto? ¿En qué medida se espera que el proyecto cumpla sus metas antes de su fecha de cierre?	• Grado de consecución de los objetivos, resultados y productos indicados en el marco de resultados (usando la tabla en la página 7 de los TdR) • Expectativa de cumplir las metas del proyecto antes de su fecha de cierre • Comparación entre la herramienta de seguimiento del FMAM con la línea de base y su versión más reciente, completada antes del MTR
2.2 ¿Cuáles son los principales obstáculos a los que hay que hacer frente y las principales oportunidades que hay que aprovechar en	• Naturaleza y alcance de los factores que están dificultando el avance hacia los objetivos y resultados previstos • Naturaleza y alcance de las oportunidades generadas por los logros más importantes hasta

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
función de los avances actuales hacia los resultados?	la fecha (oportunidades de expansión de beneficios)
3. Ejecución del proyecto y gestión adaptativa	
3.1 Arreglos de gestión	
3.1.1 ¿En qué medida son efectivos los arreglos de gestión que se propusieron en el ProDoc?	• Evidenciar si se han hecho cambios • Evidenciar si los roles y responsabilidades están claras • Evidenciar si existe una toma de decisiones oportuna y transparente • Nivel de respuesta del equipo del proyecto y de los respectivos organismos de ejecución a las necesidades cambiantes del proyecto
3.1.2 ¿Cuál es la calidad de la ejecución del proyecto por parte de los organismos implementadores / socios ejecutores y de la agencia socia del FMAM (PNUD)?	• Calidad de la supervisión y apoyo de la entidad implementadora • Calidad de la ejecución de la agencia socia en la implementación • Capacidad de los organismos implementadores / socios ejecutores, PNUD y otros socios para brindar beneficios a las mujeres /pueblos indígenas e involucrarles. • Equilibrio de género en el personal del proyecto y en la Junta Directiva del proyecto.
3.2 Planificación del trabajo	
3.2.1 ¿Ha habido retrasos en la implementación? En caso afirmativo, ¿por qué?	• Diferencia entre el calendario real y el previsto para la ejecución del proyecto • Causa y total de retrasos
3.2.2 ¿Los procesos de planificación del trabajo usan el enfoque basado en resultados? ¿Se ha utilizado el marco lógico durante la ejecución como herramienta de gestión y seguimiento?	• Medida en que se ha usado el marco de resultados / marco lógico como herramienta de gestión. • Cambios que se han hecho en el marco de resultados / marco lógico desde el inicio del proyecto
3.3 Financiación y cofinanciación	
3.3.1 ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre los gastos previstos y los reales? ¿Por qué?	• Nivel de discrepancia entre el presupuesto planificado y el ejecutado (total, por año y componente) • Número, tipo y nivel de relevancia de las revisiones presupuestales
3.3.2 ¿Dispone el proyecto de los controles financieros adecuados para tomar decisiones de	• Disponibilidad, oportunidad y calidad de los informes financieros • Disponibilidad de auditorías

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
gestión informadas sobre el presupuesto permitiendo un flujo de fondos oportuno?	
3.3.3 ¿En qué medida se está utilizando la cofinanciación estratégicamente para lograr los objetivos del proyecto?[78]	• Cantidad de recursos que el proyecto ha apalancado desde su inicio (y fuente(s)) • Nivel de discrepancia entre los cofinanciamientos planificados y los apalancados • Regularidad de las reuniones del equipo del proyecto con los socios co-financiadores para alinear las prioridades financieras y los planes de trabajo anuales.
3.3.4 ¿En qué medida se consiguen los resultados de forma rentable? (costo-efectividad)	• Nivel de los gastos de gestión y discrepancia con los previstos • Costos relacionados con los resultados alcanzados en comparación con los costos de proyectos similares
3.4 Sistema de Monitoreo y Evaluación (M&E) a nivel del proyecto	
3.4.1 ¿Es el sistema de seguimiento y evaluación operativo, eficiente y eficaz?	• Solidez del sistema de M&E (roles y responsabilidades, plan de trabajo, participativos e inclusivos). • Captura lecciones aprendidas sistemáticamente y contribuye al mejor conocimiento sobre EBM, MSP y los resultados de los proyectos piloto • Inclusión de aspectos de género u otros ejes transversales. • Financiación del sistema de M&E y costo-efectividad. • Pertinencia y calidad de los informes de monitoreo y progreso. • Alineación con los sistemas nacionales y los requisitos de información del PNUD/FMAM (Ej., IW LEARN) •
3.5 Involucramiento de actores	
3.5.1 ¿En qué medida se han establecido acuerdos de asociación eficaces para la ejecución del proyecto con las partes interesadas pertinentes?	• Número y tipos de alianzas establecidas entre el proyecto y los órganos/organizaciones nacionales y locales. • Alcance y calidad de la interacción/intercambio entre los ejecutores de proyectos y los actores interesados.

[78] Se hará uso de la Tabla de seguimiento de cofinanciamiento que deberá ser completada por la Unidad de Puesta en Marcha y el equipo del proyecto, que aparece en la página 9 de los TDR

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
3.5.2 ¿En qué medida el proyecto está impulsado por los actores de los gobiernos locales y nacionales de los países participantes?	• Apreciación de las partes interesadas nacionales con respecto a la pertinencia del diseño y la ejecución del proyecto a las realidades nacionales y a las capacidades existentes. • Número, tipo y calidad de mecanismos implementados para promover la participación de los interesados en la toma de decisiones, la ejecución y el seguimiento del proyecto. • Medida en que la participación de las partes interesadas y la concienciación pública contribuyeron al progreso hacia el logro de los objetivos del proyecto.
3.5.3 ¿En qué el proyecto involucra a las mujeres?	• Evidencia de las barreras a la participación de las mujeres y las niñas en el proyecto y grado de esfuerzo para abordar las barreras. • Probabilidad de que el proyecto tenga el mismo nivel de efectos positivos y/o negativos en mujeres y hombres, niñas y niños. • Pruebas de actividades que incorporan la cuestión del género en la planificación o las actividades como resultado del proyecto.
3.6 Salvaguardas sociales y ambientales	
3.6.1 ¿En qué medida continúan vigentes los riesgos identificados en el SESP más reciente del proyecto?	• Calidad del análisis de riesgo en el documento de proyecto / Completitud de la identificación de riesgos durante la planificación y el diseño del proyecto. • Revisiones realizadas a la categorización general de riesgo del proyecto, a los tipos de riesgos identificados en el SESP y sus calificaciones de riesgo individuales. • Calidad de los sistemas de información existentes para identificar y analizar nuevos riesgos. • Calidad de las estrategias de mitigación de riesgos desarrolladas y seguidas.
3.6.2 ¿En qué medida es eficaz y eficiente la aplicación del plan de gestión social y medioambiental del proyecto?	• Consistencia del análisis de riesgos y la implementación de medidas de mitigación con estándares de PNUD. • Grado de avance en la aplicación del plan de gestión ambiental y social.
3.7 Informes	
3.7.1. ¿Cómo la dirección del proyecto ha informado sobre los cambios de gestión adaptativa (cambios en el diseño del proyecto y	• Ejemplos de cambios en la estrategia/enfoque del proyecto como resultado directo de recomendaciones formuladas en los PIR y/o las

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
en los resultados del proyecto durante su ejecución) y los ha compartido con el Comité Directivo del Proyecto?	reuniones del CDN para adaptarse a un nuevo contexto. • Calidad en el cumplimiento de los requisitos de presentación de informes del FMAM. • Proporción de procesos de gestión adaptativa documentados y compartidos con los socios.
3.8. Comunicación, sensibilización y gestión del conocimiento	
3.8.1 ¿En qué medida es eficaz la comunicación interna del proyecto con los actores interesados?	• Existencia de un plan de comunicación interna, protocolos de comunicación y mecanismos de retroalimentación • Nivel de conciencia percibido por los interesados acerca de los resultados y las actividades del proyecto / Visibilidad del proyecto
3.8.2 ¿Qué tan adecuados y eficaces son los mecanismos de comunicación externa?	• Número y tipo de mecanismos de comunicación externa o actividades implementadas • Inclusividad de los mecanismos de comunicación • Percepción de los actores sobre la utilidad de las actividades de comunicación
3.8.3 ¿Ha sido eficaz la gestión del conocimiento?	• Existencia de una estrategia de gestión del conocimiento • Alcance y relevancia de las actividades incluidas en el plan • Número y tipo de actividades y productos desarrollados
4. Sostenibilidad	
4.1. ¿Son los riesgos identificados en el documento del proyecto los más importantes? ¿Siguen estando actualizados?	• Existencia y solidez de una estrategia de sostenibilidad y de salida • Nivel de implementación de la estrategia de salida • Alcance de los obstáculos y/o riesgos para la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto
4.2 ¿Cuál es la probabilidad de que no se disponga de recursos financieros y económicos una vez finalizada la ayuda del FMAM?	• Tipo y coste de las actividades que requerirían un apoyo financiero continuado tras la finalización del proyecto para mantener los resultados • Existencia de fuentes de financiación para estas actividades
4.3 ¿Existen riesgos políticos o sociales que puedan poner en peligro la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto?	• Existencia y tipo de condiciones políticas y sociales que puedan afectar a la sostenibilidad de los resultados directos (*Ej., la pesca IUU[79] de especies CITES*)

[79] Illegal unregulated and unreported fishing.

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores
	• Existencia de mecanismos para documentar e intercambiar las lecciones aprendidas (incluidos los conocimientos técnicos) • Existencia de actores que puedan promover la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto
4.4 ¿Plantean el marco legal, político y regulatorio, y las estructuras y procesos de gobernanza riesgos que puedan poner en peligro el mantenimiento de los beneficios del proyecto?	• Existencia y tipo de marcos, políticas, estructuras de gobernanza y procesos que pueden poner en peligro los beneficios del proyecto • Tipo de marcos, políticas, estructuras de gobernanza y procesos que faltan actualmente para garantizar la sostenibilidad de los beneficios del proyecto
4.5 ¿Existen riesgos medioambientales que puedan poner en peligro el mantenimiento de los resultados del proyecto?	• Existencia e intensidad de las condiciones medioambientales que afectan a la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto

ANNEX 3: Evaluation Matrix

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
1. Estrategia del proyecto			
1.1 Diseño del proyecto			
1.1.1 ¿En qué medida el problema que aborda el proyecto y los supuestos identificados son pertinentes para su contexto?	• El proyecto aborda el problema fundamental en los lugares del proyecto • Coherencia con las necesidades y los beneficiarios previstos • Está coherente tanto para abordar las barreras y causas rais del problema • Nivel de concordancia entre los supuestos identificados en el ProDoc y la situación en los lugares del proyecto • Se han tomado medidas adaptativas en respuesta a los supuestos incorrectos. • Efecto de supuestos incorrectos o cambios en el contexto para alcanzar los resultados del proyecto como fueron establecidos en el documento de proyecto	- Entrevistas, revisión de la documentación disponible	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Asesora Técnica Regional - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
1.1.2. ¿Qué relevancia tiene la estrategia seleccionada para lograr los resultados previstos?	• Grado en que la estrategia del proyecto muestra ser la ruta más efectiva para lograr los resultados esperados en el contexto de desarrollo • Se han tomado en cuenta las lecciones y recomendaciones de proyectos previos que son pertinentes al tema	- Pruebas de que los documentos de planificación q utilizan las lecciones aprendidas/ recomendaciones de proyectos anteriores como aportación al proceso de planificación/ estrategia	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Asesora Técnica Regional - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
1.1.3.¿En qué medida responde el proyecto a las prioridades y planes	• Nivel de alineación de los resultados y productos del proyecto con las prioridades y	- Entrevistas, revisión de la documentación disponible	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes.

[80] Un valor de 5 es el Máximo puntaje posible y 1 es el más bajo.

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
de desarrollo nacionales de los países involucrados?	planes nacionales (a) al inicio del proyecto; (b) a medio plazo • Contribución del proyecto a la implementación de políticas nacionales relacionadas a la protección de la biodiversidad marina y la pesca sustentable dentro de aguas nacionales y PACA		- Políticas y estrategias nacionales - Oficinas país PNUD - UGP - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
1.1.4 ¿En qué medida contribuye el proyecto a las prioridades de PNUD Costa Rica y PNUD LAC?	• El proyecto está en alineación con las prioridades del PNUD Costa Rica, PNUD LAC y aguas internacionales del GEF.	Entrevistas, Documentación del proyecto	- MANUD/UNSDC - ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Oficinas país PNUD
1.1.5. ¿Se tuvieron en cuenta las perspectivas de todas las partes interesadas (aquellos que podían ser afectados por las decisiones del proyecto, que podían afectar los resultados y/o podían proveer información u otros recursos al proceso) durante el diseño del proyecto?	• Número y tipo de partes interesadas consultadas durante el diseño del proyecto • Nivel de análisis para determinar el impacto del proyecto en las poblaciones	- Pruebas de que las preocupaciones expresadas se utilizan para ajustar la estrategia del proyecto - Encuestas - Visitas al campo - Entrevistas virtuales y presenciales	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Asesora Técnica Regional - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
1.1.6 ¿En qué medida se consideraron aspectos sociales y ambientales relevantes en el diseño del proyecto?	• Nivel de implementación del SES • Alineación con los indicadores del SES, particularmente el eje transversal de género	- Plan de monitoreo y evaluación del plan SES - Entrevistas con los expertos responsables para el seguimiento del SES - Visitas a los proyectos piloto	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Asesora Técnica Regional - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
1.1.7 ¿En qué medida se tuvieron en cuenta las cuestiones de género durante el diseño del proyecto? ¿Se ha actualizado el proyecto cuestiones de género relevantes?	• Número y tipos de actividades realizadas durante el diseño del proyecto para evaluar las necesidades relacionadas con cuestiones de género e igualdad de las mujeres para el proyecto	- Pruebas de la incorporación de estas necesidades en el documento del proyecto - Existencia de un análisis de género y un plan de acción de género	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Plan de género - Asesora Técnica Regional - UGP

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
			- Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
1.2 Marco lógico /Teoría del Cambio			
1.2.1. ¿En qué medida los objetivos y resultados o componentes del proyecto son claros, prácticos y viables en su marco temporal? ¿Son realistas dentro de los plazos previstos?	• Coherencia entre el objetivo, los resultados, los productos y las actividades del proyecto • Viabilidad de los objetivos, resultados y productos dentro del marco presupuestal y temporal del proyecto	- PIR, la Teoría del cambio u otras herramientas del monitoreo y seguimiento - Entrevistas y encuestas - Visitas a los proyectos piloto	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
1.2.2 ¿En qué medida son SMART los indicadores y las metas de mitad de periodo y finales del marco lógico para medir los efectos del proyecto?	• Calidad del marco de resultados en el documento de proyecto • Uso de indicadores SMART con líneas de base, metas y métodos y fuentes de verificación • Uso de indicadores y objetivos desglosados por género	- PIR, la Teoría del cambio u otras herramientas del monitoreo y seguimiento - Examinar si existen efectos del proyecto sobre el desarrollo o el medio ambiente que no se miden con los indicadores actuales y que deberían ser incluidos.	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Plan de género - UGP
2. Progreso hacia los resultados			
2.1 ¿En qué medida se han alcanzado hasta ahora los productos, resultados y objetivos previstos del proyecto? ¿En qué medida se espera que el proyecto cumpla sus metas antes de su fecha de cierre?	• Grado de consecución de los objetivos, resultados y productos indicados en el marco de resultados (usando la tabla en la página 7 de los TdR) • Expectativa de cumplir las metas del proyecto antes de su fecha de cierre	- PIR, la Teoría del cambio u otras herramientas del monitoreo y seguimiento - Entrevistas - Encuestas - Comparación entre la herramienta de seguimiento del FMAM con la línea de base y su versión más reciente, completada antes del MTR	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
2.2 ¿Cuáles son los principales obstáculos a los que hay que hacer frente y las principales	• Medida en que los factores que están dificultando el avance hacia los objetivos y resultados previstos	- Entrevistas - Encuesta	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes.

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
oportunidades que hay que aprovechar en función de los avances actuales hacia los resultados? ¿Ha habido efectos/consecuencias no esperadas?	• Medida en que las oportunidades generadas por los logros más importantes hasta la fecha (oportunidades de expansión de beneficios)	- Naturaleza y alcance de los factores que están dificultando el avance hacia los objetivos y resultados previstos - Naturaleza y alcance de las oportunidades generadas por los logros más importantes hasta la fecha (oportunidades de expansión de beneficios)	- UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores
3. Ejecución del proyecto y gestión adaptativa			
3.1 Arreglos de gestión			
3.1.1 ¿En qué medida son efectivos los arreglos de gestión que se propusieron en el ProDoc?	• Medida en que se han hecho cambios en base a una gestión adaptativa sistemática • Los roles y responsabilidades están claras • Existe una toma de decisiones oportuna y transparente • Nivel de respuesta del equipo del proyecto y de los respectivos organismos de ejecución a las necesidades cambiantes del proyecto	- Evidenciar si se han hecho cambios (documentación, entrevistas) - Evidenciar si los roles y responsabilidades están claras (documentación, entrevistas) - Evidenciar si existe una toma de decisiones oportuna y transparente(documentación, entrevistas)	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
3.1.2 ¿Cuál es la calidad de la ejecución del proyecto por parte de los organismos implementadores / socios ejecutores y de la agencia socia del FMAM (PNUD)?	• Calidad de la supervisión y apoyo de la entidad implementadora • Calidad de la ejecución de la agencia socia en la implementación • Capacidad de los organismos implementadores / socios ejecutores, PNUD y otros socios para brindar beneficios a las mujeres /pueblos indígenas e involucrarles. • Equilibrio de género en el personal del proyecto y en la Junta Directiva del proyecto.	- Entrevistas - Encuestas	- UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
3.2 Planificación del trabajo			
3.2.1 ¿Ha habido retrasos en la implementación? En caso afirmativo, ¿por qué?	• Diferencia entre el calendario real y el previsto para la ejecución del proyecto y la	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
	medida en que estos hubieran sido evitados; Causa y total de retrasos		- Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
3.2.2 ¿Los procesos de planificación del trabajo usan el enfoque basado en resultados? ¿Se ha utilizado el marco lógico durante la ejecución como herramienta de gestión y seguimiento?	• Medida en que se ha usado el marco de resultados / marco lógico como herramienta de gestión. • Cambios que se han hecho en el marco de resultados / marco lógico desde el inicio del proyecto	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
3.3 Financiación y cofinanciación			
3.3.1 ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre los gastos previstos y los reales? ¿Por qué?	• Nivel de discrepancia entre el presupuesto planificado y el ejecutado (total, por año y componente) • Número, tipo y nivel de relevancia de las revisiones presupuestales	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Informes financieros - Informes de análisis de ejecución presupuestaria y ajustes realizados por el equipo de proyecto - UGP -
3.3.2 ¿Dispone el proyecto de los controles financieros adecuados para tomar decisiones de gestión informadas sobre el presupuesto permitiendo un flujo de fondos oportuno?	• Disponibilidad, oportunidad y calidad de los informes financieros • Disponibilidad de auditorías	- Revisión documental	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Informes financieros - Informes de auditoría - Informes de análisis de ejecución presupuestaria y ajustes realizados por el equipo de proyecto
3.3.3 ¿En qué medida se está utilizando la cofinanciación	• Cantidad de recursos que el proyecto ha apalancado desde su inicio (y fuente(s)) • Nivel de discrepancia entre los cofinanciamientos planificados y los apalancados	- Revisión documental	- Tabla de seguimiento de cofinanciamiento que deberá ser completada por la UGP - ProDoc

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
estratégicamente para lograr los objetivos del proyecto?[81]	• Regularidad de las reuniones del equipo del proyecto con los socios co-financiadores para alinear las prioridades financieras y los planes de trabajo anuales.		- Informes financieros - Informes de análisis de ejecución presupuestaria y ajustes realizados por el equipo de proyecto
3.3.4 ¿En qué medida se consiguen los resultados de forma rentable? (costo-efectividad)	• Nivel de los gastos de gestión y discrepancia con los previstos • Costos relacionados con los resultados alcanzados en comparación con los costos de proyectos similares	Revisión documental	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Informes financieros - Informes de auditoría - Informes de análisis de ejecución presupuestaria y ajustes realizados por el equipo de proyecto
3.4 Sistema de Monitoreo y Evaluación (M&E) a nivel del proyecto			
3.4.1 ¿Es el sistema de seguimiento y evaluación operativo, eficiente y eficaz?	• Solidez del sistema de M&E (roles y responsabilidades, plan de trabajo, participativos e inclusivos). • Inclusión de aspectos de género. • Financiación del sistema de M&E y costo-efectividad. • Pertinencia y calidad de los informes de monitoreo y progreso. • Alineación con los sistemas nacionales y los requisitos de información del PNUD/FMAM.	- Revisión documental Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Sistema de seguimiento del proyecto - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores
3.5 Involucramiento de actores			
3.5.1 ¿En qué medida se han establecido acuerdos de asociación eficaces para la ejecución del proyecto con las partes interesadas pertinentes?	• Número y tipos de alianzas establecidas entre el proyecto y los órganos/organizaciones nacionales y locales. • Alcance y calidad de la interacción/intercambio entre los ejecutores de proyectos y los actores interesados.	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales

[81] Se hará uso de la Tabla de seguimiento de cofinanciamiento que deberá ser completada por la Unidad de Puesta en Marcha y el equipo del proyecto, que aparece en la página 9 de los TDR

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
3.5.2 ¿En qué medida el proyecto está impulsado por los actores de los gobiernos locales y nacionales de los países participantes?	• Apreciación de las partes interesadas nacionales con respecto a la pertinencia del diseño y la ejecución del proyecto a las realidades nacionales y a las capacidades existentes. • Número, tipo y calidad de mecanismos implementados para promover la participación de los interesados en la toma de decisiones, la ejecución y el seguimiento del proyecto. • Medida en que la participación de las partes interesadas y la concienciación pública contribuyeron al progreso hacia el logro de los objetivos del proyecto.	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas - Encuestas -Vistas a los proyectos piloto	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
3.5.3 ¿En qué el proyecto involucra a las mujeres?	• Evidencia de las barreras a la participación de las mujeres y las niñas en el proyecto y grado de esfuerzo para abordar las barreras. • Probabilidad de que el proyecto tenga el mismo nivel de efectos positivos y/o negativos en mujeres y hombres, niñas y niños. • Pruebas de actividades que incorporan la cuestión del género en la planificación o las actividades como resultado del proyecto.	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas - Encuestas -Vistas a los proyectos piloto	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Plan de género - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
3.6 Salvaguardas sociales y ambientales			
3.6.1 ¿En qué medida continúan vigentes los riesgos identificados en el SESP más reciente del proyecto?	• Calidad del análisis de riesgo en el documento de proyecto / Completitud de la identificación de riesgos durante la planificación y el diseño del proyecto. • Revisiones realizadas a la categorización general de riesgo del proyecto, a los tipos de riesgos identificados en el SESP y sus calificaciones de riesgo individuales. • Calidad de los sistemas de información existentes para identificar y analizar nuevos riesgos. • Calidad de las estrategias de mitigación de riesgos desarrolladas y seguidas.	- Revisión documenta l, - Entrevistas -Plan de monitoreo del SESP, especialmente respecto al eje transversal de género	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - SESP - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
3.6.2 ¿En qué medida es eficaz y eficiente la aplicación del plan de gestión social y medioambiental del proyecto?	• Consistencia del análisis de riesgos y la implementación de medidas de mitigación con estándares de PNUD. • Grado de avance en la aplicación del plan de gestión ambiental y social.	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas -Plan de monitoreo del SESP, especialmente respecto al eje transversal de género	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - SESP - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores
3.7 Informes			
3.7.1. ¿Cómo la dirección del proyecto ha informado sobre los cambios de gestión adaptativa (cambios en el diseño del proyecto y en los resultados del proyecto durante su ejecución) y los ha compartido con el Comité Directivo del Proyecto?	• Medida en que se ha habido cambios en la estrategia/enfoque del proyecto como resultado directo de recomendaciones formuladas en los PIR y/o las reuniones del CDN para adaptarse a un nuevo contexto. • Calidad en el cumplimiento de los requisitos de presentación de informes del FMAM. • Proporción de procesos de gestión adaptativa documentados y compartidos con los socios.	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas - Ejemplos de cambios en la estrategia/enfoque del proyecto como resultado directo de recomendaciones formuladas en los PIR y/o las reuniones del CDN para adaptarse a un nuevo contexto.	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores
3.8. Comunicación, sensibilización y gestión del conocimiento			
3.8.1 ¿En qué medida es eficaz la comunicación interna del proyecto con los actores interesados?	• Existencia de un plan de comunicación interna, protocolos de comunicación y mecanismos de retroalimentación • Nivel de conciencia percibido por los interesados acerca de los resultados y las actividades del proyecto / Visibilidad del proyecto	- Entrevistas, - Revisión documental , especialmente la revisión del plan de comunicación y sus indicadores - Encuesta	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Plan de comunicación - UGP -
3.8.2 ¿Qué tan adecuados y eficaces son los mecanismos de comunicación externa?	• Número y tipo de mecanismos de comunicación externa o actividades implementadas • Inclusividad de los mecanismos de comunicación • Percepción de los actores sobre la utilidad de las actividades de comunicación	- Entrevistas, - Revisión documental , especialmente la revisión del plan de comunicación y sus indicadores - Encuesta	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Plan de comunicación - UGP - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
3.8.3 ¿Ha sido eficaz la gestión del conocimiento?	• Existencia de una estrategia de gestión del conocimiento • Alcance y relevancia de las actividades incluidas en el plan • Número y tipo de actividades y productos desarrollados	- Entrevistas, - Revisión documental especialmente la revisión del plan de comunicación y sus indicadores	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - Plan de comunicación - UGP - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
4. Sostenibilidad			
4.1. ¿Son los riesgos identificados en el documento del proyecto los más importantes? ¿Siguen estando actualizados?	• Existencia y solidez de una estrategia de sostenibilidad y de salida • Nivel de implementación de la estrategia de salida • Alcance de los obstáculos y/o riesgos para la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto	- Revisión documental Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales
4.2 ¿Cuál es la probabilidad de que no se disponga de recursos financieros y económicos una vez finalizada la ayuda del FMAM?	• Tipo y coste de las actividades que requerirían un apoyo financiero continuado tras la finalización del proyecto para mantener los resultados • Existencia de fuentes de financiación para estas actividades	- Revisión documental Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
4.3 ¿Existen riesgos políticos o sociales que puedan poner en peligro la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto?	• Existencia y tipo de condiciones políticas y sociales que puedan afectar a la sostenibilidad de los resultados directos • Existencia de mecanismos para documentar e intercambiar las lecciones aprendidas (incluidos los conocimientos técnicos)	- Revisión documental Entrevistas - Encuestas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores

Criterios y preguntas de evaluación	Indicadores/Criterios de Juicio (1-5)[80]	Instrumentos /Métodos / Técnicas	Fuentes primarias y secundarias
	• Existencia de actores que puedan promover la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto		- Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
4.4 ¿Plantean el marco legal, político y regulatorio, y las estructuras y procesos de gobernanza riesgos que puedan poner en peligro el mantenimiento de los beneficios del proyecto?	• Existencia y tipo de marcos, políticas, estructuras de gobernanza y procesos que pueden poner en peligro los beneficios del proyecto • Tipo de marcos, políticas, estructuras de gobernanza y procesos que faltan actualmente para garantizar la sostenibilidad de los beneficios del proyecto	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias
4.5 ¿Existen riesgos medioambientales que puedan poner en peligro el mantenimiento de los resultados del proyecto?	• Existencia e intensidad de las condiciones medioambientales que afectan a la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto	- Revisión documental - Entrevistas	- ProDoc, PIR, Informes trimestrales y otros informes. - UGP - Oficinas país PNUD - Socios implementadores - Contrapartes nacionales y locales - Organizaciones beneficiarias

ANNEX 4: Interview Protocol

Consentimiento Informado: Se explicita los motivos de evaluación, la confidencialidad de la información brindada y el uso de la misma.
Introducción
Fecha de la entrevista
Nombre y cargo de la persona entrevistada
Relación con el proyecto y desde cuándo ha estado involucrado en el mismo
1. Estrategia del proyecto
1.1 Diseño del proyecto
1.1.1 ¿En qué medida el problema que aborda el proyecto y los supuestos identificados son pertinentes para su contexto?
1.1.3.¿En qué medida responde el proyecto a las prioridades y planes de desarrollo nacionales de los países involucrados?
1.1.4 ¿En qué medida contribuye el proyecto a las prioridades de PNUD Costa Rica y PNUD LAC?
1.1.5. ¿Se tuvieron en cuenta las perspectivas de todas las partes interesadas (aquellos que podían ser afectados por las decisiones del proyecto, que podían afectar los resultados y/o podían proveer información u otros recursos al proceso) durante el diseño del proyecto?
1.1.6 ¿En qué medida se consideraron aspectos sociales y ambientales relevantes en el diseño del proyecto?
1.2 Marco lógico /Teoría del Cambio
1.2.1. ¿En qué medida los objetivos y resultados o componentes del proyecto son claros, prácticos y viables en su marco temporal? ¿Son realistas dentro de los plazos previstos?
2. Progreso hacia los resultados
2.1 ¿En qué medida se han alcanzado hasta ahora los productos, resultados y objetivos previstos del proyecto? ¿En qué medida se espera que el proyecto cumpla sus metas antes de su fecha de cierre?
2.2 ¿Cuáles son los principales obstáculos a los que hay que hacer frente y las principales oportunidades que hay que aprovechar en función de los avances actuales hacia los resultados?
3. Ejecución del proyecto y gestión adaptativa
3.1 Arreglos de gestión
3.1.1 ¿En qué medida son efectivos los arreglos de gestión que se propusieron en el ProDoc?
3.1.2 ¿Cuál es la calidad de la ejecución del proyecto por parte de los organismos implementadores / socios ejecutores y de la agencia socia del FMAM (PNUD)?
3.2 Planificación del trabajo
3.2.1 ¿Ha habido retrasos en la implementación? En caso afirmativo, ¿por qué?
3.2.2 ¿Los procesos de planificación del trabajo usan el enfoque basado en resultados? ¿Se ha utilizado el marco lógico durante la ejecución como herramienta de gestión y seguimiento?
3.3 Financiación y cofinanciación
3.3.1 ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre los gastos previstos y los reales? ¿Por qué?
3.4 Sistema de Monitoreo y Evaluación (M&E) a nivel del proyecto

3.4.1 ¿Es el sistema de seguimiento y evaluación operativo, eficiente y eficaz?
3.5 Involucramiento de actores
3.5.1 ¿En qué medida se han establecido acuerdos de asociación eficaces para la ejecución del proyecto con las partes interesadas pertinentes?
3.5.2 ¿En qué medida el proyecto está impulsado por los actores de los gobiernos locales y nacionales de los países participantes?
3.5.3 ¿En qué el proyecto involucra a las mujeres?
3.6 Salvaguardas sociales y ambientales
3.6.1 ¿En qué medida continúan vigentes los riesgos identificados en el SESP más reciente del proyecto?
3.6.2 ¿En qué medida es eficaz y eficiente la aplicación del plan de gestión social y medioambiental del proyecto?
3.7 Informes
3.7.1. ¿Cómo la dirección del proyecto ha informado sobre los cambios de gestión adaptativa (cambios en el diseño del proyecto y en los resultados del proyecto durante su ejecución) y los ha compartido con el Comité Directivo del Proyecto?
3.8. Comunicación, sensibilización y gestión del conocimiento
3.8.1 ¿En qué medida es eficaz la comunicación interna del proyecto con los actores interesados?
3.8.2 ¿Qué tan adecuados y eficaces son los mecanismos de comunicación externa?
3.8.3 ¿Ha sido eficaz la gestión del conocimiento?
4. Sostenibilidad
4.1. ¿Son los riesgos identificados en el documento del proyecto los más importantes? ¿Siguen estando actualizados?
4.2 ¿Cuál es la probabilidad de que no se disponga de recursos financieros y económicos una vez finalizada la ayuda del FMAM?
4.3 ¿Existen riesgos políticos o sociales que puedan poner en peligro la sostenibilidad de los resultados del proyecto?
4.4 ¿Plantean el marco legal, político y regulatorio, y las estructuras y procesos de gobernanza riesgos que puedan poner en peligro el mantenimiento de los beneficios del proyecto?
4.5 ¿Existen riesgos medioambientales que puedan poner en peligro el mantenimiento de los resultados del proyecto?
5. Lecciones y recomendaciones
5.1 ¿Qué lecciones se pueden aprender del diseño e implementación de este proyecto?
5.2 ¿Qué recomendaciones tienes para este proyecto?
Fin.

ANNEX 6: Itinerary of the MTR Mission

Country: Guatemala
Date: April's 08th – 11th, 2025

PRESENCIAL: Taller del Proyecto en Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala					
#	**Fecha**	**Horario**	**Ciudad**	**Persona/Cargo/País**	**Técnica**
1	8/4/2025	08:30	Antigua Guatemala	Participación en la apertura del taller	N/A
2	8/4/2025	10:00-10:40	Antigua Guatemala	Samira Kiwan- representante MiAmibente -Panamá- Ynés Sánchez - representante ARAP - Panamá-	Entrevista
3	8/4/2025	11:45 - 12:30	Antigua Guatemala	Violeta Reina - representante OSPESCA	Entrevista
4	8/4/2025	14:00 - 15:00	Antigua Guatemala	Francisco Aceituno-representante SERNA - Honduras- Lorenzo Turcios -representante Secretaría Pesca -Honduras	Entrevista
5	8/4/2025	15:00-15:40	Antigua Guatemala	Ericka Alarcón -representante SEMARNAT-México-	Entrevista
6	9/4/2025	11:00 - 11:45	Antigua Guatemala	Digna Barsallo - Representante Comité Directivo -Panamá-	Entrevista
7	9/4/2025	12:00-12:40	Antigua Guatemala	Regina Sánchez -representante MARN - Guatemala-	Entrevista
8	9/4/2025	15:00-15:40	Antigua Guatemala	Adrian Salgado - represetante CONAPESCA-	Entrevista
9	9/4/2025	15:40-16:20	Antigua Guatemala	Juan Andrés Salvador- representante Cancillería- Ecuador	Entrevista
10	9/4/2025	16:20-17:00	Antigua Guatemala	Camila Gómez -representante Ambiente- Colombia	Entrevista
11	9/4/2025	17:00 - 17:40	Antigua Guatemala	Natalia Vega-representante MINAE -Costa Rica- Nixon Lara -representante INCOPESCA - Costa Rica-	Entrevista
12	10/4/2025	10:45-11:25	Antigua Guatemala	Margarita Caso -representante Comité Directivo -México-	Entrevista
13	10/4/2025	14:30-16:30	Antigua Guatemala	<u>Entidades No Estatales</u> Tannia Frausto -Costa Salvaje- México Bianca Bosarreyes -FUNDAECO- Guatemala Sach Oseguera -CODDEFFAGOLF- Honduras Álvaro Morales -UCR- Costa Rica Juan Maté -Smithsonian Institute- Panamá Maritza Cardenas -BIOELIT- Ecuador John Joergensen -FAO- Regional Arnuldo Franco -CIAT -Regional	Grupo Focal
14	10/4/2025	17:00-17:40	Antigua Guatemala	Jaime Carrera - representante Comité Directivo -Guatemala-	Entrevista

Country: Ecuador
Dates: April's 21st – 25th, 2025

Fechas y horas	Actividad	Lugar	Contacto	Participantes
Lunes 21 de abril				
11H00	Salida de Guayaquil			
13H30	Almuerzo	Portoviejo		
18H00	Arribo a Pedernales y alojamiento en Hotel	Hotel Texas Home en Pedernales		
Martes 22 de abril				
08H00	Desayuno	Pedernales		
09H00	Recorrido por las playas de Pedernales y La Chorrera Entrevista con la Sra. Nancy Lucas, dirigente de pescadores artesanales de La Chorrera	Pedernales y La Chorrera		Deivy Ormaza Nancy Lucas
11H00	Entrevista con el Decano de la Extensión de la ULEAM de Pedernales	Pedernales		
13H00	Almuerzo	Pedernales		
14H00	Taller con puntos focales y actores locales de las playas de Pedernales y La Chorrera	GADM de Pedernales	Ing. Deivy Ormaza Ing. Katherine Molina	Equipo CI-Ecuador Funcionarios GADM Pedernales Actores locales de Pedernales y La Chorrera
17H00	Salida a Jama			
17H30	Alojamiento en Jama	Hotel en Jama		
18H30	Cena	Jama		
Miércoles 23 de abril				
08H00	Desayuno	Jama		
10H00	Reunión con puntos focales y actores locales de la playa El Matal	Infocentro de Jama	Ing. Mariela Vera Ing. Daniel Cuadrado	Equipo CI-Ecuador Funcionarios GADM Jama Actores locales de El Matal
13H00	Almuerzo	El Matal		
14H30	Recorrido por la playa El Matal y entrevistas con funcionarios municipales de Jama	El Matal		
16H30	Salida de El Matal a Jama			
17H30	Alojamiento en Jama	Hotel en Jama		
18H30	Cena	Jama		
Jueves 24 de abril				
08H00	Desayuno	Jama		
10H30	Reunión con puntos focales y actores locales de la playa Puerto Cabuyal	Puerto Cabuyal	Ing. Karen Quintero	Equipo CI-Ecuador Funcionarios GADM San Vicente

Fechas y horas	Actividad	Lugar	Contacto	Participantes
				Actores locales de Puerto Cabuyal, funcionarios del MAATE
13H00	Almuerzo	Puerto Cabuyal		
14H00	Salida de evaluadores hacia Guayaquil			Roxana García Joe Ryan
16H00	Hospedaje en Guayaquil			Roxana García Joe Ryan
Viernes 25 de abril				
07H00	Desayuno	Bahía de Caráquez		
10H00	Entrevista Luis Arriaga Ochoa, Director Marino Costero y Oceánico -MAATE y Caroline Icaza	Guayaquil		Roxana García Joe Ryan
Sábado 26 de abril				
Todo el día	Viaje de regreso a respectivos países			

ANNEX 7: List of People interviewed

	Día	Hora	Modalidad	Nombre	Institución	País
1	**7 de abril**	01:00 - 01:50 p.m.	Virtual	Damián Martínez	FECOP	Costa Rica
2	**7 de abril**	02:00 - 02:50 p.m.	Virtual	Gabriela Jarrín	PNUD	Ecuador
3	**7 de abril**	03:00 - 03:50 p.m.	Virtual	Reinaldo Morales	OSPESCA	Regional
4	**7 de abril**	04:00 - 04:50 p.m.	Virtual	Natalia Gamboa	PNUD	Costa Rica
5	**8 de abril**	10:00 - 10:40 a.m.	Presencial	Samira Kiwan	MiAmbiente	Panamá
6				Ynés Sánchez	ARAP	Panamá
7	**8 de abril**	11:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Presencial	Violeta Reina	OSPESCA	Regional
8	**8 de abril**	02:00 - 02:45 p.m.	Presencial	Francisco Aceituno	SERNA	Honduras
9				Lorenzo Turcios	Secretaría Pesca	Honduras
10	**8 de abril**	03:00 - 03:45 p.m.	Presencial	Ericka Alarcón	SEMARNAT	México
11	**8 de abril**	04:00 - 04:50 p.m.	Virtual	Andreas Lehnhoff	WWF	Regional
12	**8 de abril**	05:00 - 05:50 p.m.	Virtual	Luis Bojórquez	UNAM	México
13				Daniela Pedroza	UNAM	México
14	**9 de abril**	08:00 - 08:50 a.m.	Virtual	Juan Posada	Fundación MarViva	Panamá
15				Andrea Fallas	Fundación MarViva	Panamá
16	**9 de abril**	11:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Presencial	Digna Barsallo		Panamá
17	**9 de abril**	12:00 - 12:45 p.m.	Presencial	Regina Sánchez	MARN	Guatemala
18	**9 de abril**	03:00 - 03:40 p.m.	Presencial	Adrián Salgado	CONAPESCA	México
19	**9 de abril**	03:40 - 4:20 p.m.	Presencial	Juan Andrés Salvador	Cancillería	Ecuador
20	**9 de abril**	04:20 - 05:00 p.m.	Presencial	Camila Gómez	Ambiente	Colombia
21	**9 de abril**	05:00 - 05:40 p.m.	Presencial	Natalia Vega	MINAE	Costa Rica
22				Nixon Lara	INCOPESCA	Costa Rica
23	**10 de abril**	09:00 - 09:45 a.m.	Virtual	Ana María Nuñez	PNUD	Regional
24	**10 de abril**	10:00 - 10:45 a.m.	Presencial	Evelyn Solís	SICA	Regional
25	**10 de abril**	10:45 - 11:30 a.m.	Presencial	Margarita Caso		México
26	**10 de abril**	01:30 - 02:30 p.m.	Virtual	Laura Michelle Godoy	COMMCA	Regional
27	**10 de abril**	02:30 - 04:30 p.m.	Presencial (Grupo Focal)	Tannia Frausto	Costa Salvaje	México
28				Bianca Bosarreyes	FUNDAECO	Guatemala
29				Sach Oseguera	CODDEFFAGOLF	Honduras
30				Álvaro Morales	UCR	Costa Rica
31				Juan Maté	Smithsonian Institute	Panamá
32				Maritza Cardenas	BIOELIT	Ecuador
33				John Joergensen	FAO	Regional
34				Arnuldo Franco	CIAT	Regional

	Día	Hora	Modalidad	Nombre	Institución	País
35	**10 de abril**	05:00 - 05:45 p.m	Presencial	Jaime Carrera		Guatemala
36	**11 de abril**	10:00 - 10:50 a.m.	Virtual	Fernando Mora Rodríguez	PNUD	Costa Rica
37	**11 de abril**	02:00 - 02:50 p.m.	Virtual	Víctor Manuel Velázquez	ECOSUR	Regional
38	**14 de abril**	08:00 - 08:50 a.m.	Virtual	Sandra Andraka	PNUD/OET	Costa Rica
39	**15 de abril**	10:00 - 10:50 a.m.	Virtual	Mario Rodas	PNUD	Ecuador
40	**16 de abril**	10:00 - 10:50 a.m.	Virtual	Rafaella Sánchez-Mora	PNUD	Costa Rica
41	**22 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Nancy Gabriela Lucas	Pescadora artesanal	Ecuador
42	**23 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Alexandra Banguera	Emprendedora	Ecuador
43	**23 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Alex Cevallos Medina	Alcalde	Ecuador
44	**25 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Luis Arriaga Ochoa	MAATE	Ecuador
45	**25 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Caroline Icaza	MAATE	Ecuador
46	**25 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Nelson Zambrano	Conservación Internacional	Ecuador
47	**25 de abril**	*No se registró*	Presencial	Xavier Chalén	Conservación Internacional	Ecuador
48	**28 de abril**	09:00-10:00 a.m.	Virtual	Alejandro Arrivillaga	WWF (UGP)	Guatemala
49	**28 de abril**	10:00-11:00 a.m.	Virtual	Juan Carlos Villagrán	WWF (UGP)	Guatemala
50	**28 de abril**	12:00-12:45 p.m.	Virtual	Paula Rabanales	WWF (UGP)	Guatemala
51	**28 de abril**	15:30-16:15	Virtual	Arabella Samayoa	WWF (UGP)	Guatemala
52	**28 de abril**	16:30-17:00	Virtual	Claudio Gonzalez	WWF (UGP)	Guatemala
53	**29 de abril**	08:00 - 08:45 a.m.	Virtual	Arnaldo Velásquez	WWF (UGP)	Guatemala
54	**29 de abril**	10:00 - 10:50 a.m.	Virtual	Milena Obando	PNUD	Costa Rica
55	**30 de abril**	02:30 - 3:20 p.m.	Virtual	Anna Nunez Pereligina	PNUD	Panamá
56	**02 de mayo**	08:00 - 09:00 a.m.	Virtual	Karla Pérez	WWF	Guatemala
57	**02 de mayo**	09:00-10:00 a.m.	Virtual	José Girón	WWF	Guatemala
58	**02 de mayo**	10:00 - 10:50 a.m.	Virtual	Julieta Calvo	MINAE / CENIGA	Costa Rica
59	**02 de mayo**	12:30 - 01:30 p.m.	Virtual	Astrid Mejía	PNUD	Honduras
60	**05 de mayo**	09:30 - 10:30 a.m.	Virtual	José Daniel Estrada	PNUD	Costa Rica

ANNEX 8: Results Progress Tracking Matrix

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
Objective: ***To promote ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Large Marine Ecosystem through the strengthening of regional governance*****.**							
Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1: Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people)	0	Number of direct beneficiaries from pilot interventions and project activities at mid-term -**Billfishes** 8,000 (men) -MSP Mexico 2,000,000 (1,000,000 women, 1,000,000 men) -**MSP Costa Rica** 2,000 (men) -**MSP Panama** 500 (100 women, 400 men) -MSP **Ecuador** 50,000 (25,000 women, 25,000 men) -**Cetaceans** 48 (8 women, 40 men) Total 2,060,548	Number of direct beneficiaries from pilot interventions and project activities at project end **-Billfishes** 13,000 (men) -**MSP Mexico** 3,993,101 (2,026,482 women, 1,966,619 men) -**MSP Costa Rica** 4,000 (men) -**MSP Panama** 1053 (163 women, 890 men) -**MSP Ecuador** 114,356 (56,464 women, 57,892 men) -**Cetaceans** 103 (17 women, 86 men) Total 4,125,613	Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people): 978 (women 429, men: 549) -People participating in diverse project activities: TDA development team (Annex 1), National diagnotics inception workshop (Annex 2), APA Strategy meetings (Annex 3 and 4), National Monitoring meetings for Collaborative Information System (Annex 9): 166 people (women: 84, men: 82) -Direct Beneficiaries in Pilot 1, billfish sport fishing (Annex 5 and 6) (as reported by OSPESCA): 26 people (women: 7, men: 19) Direct Beneficiaries in Pilot 2, Marine Spatial Planning in Costa Rica (Annex 7 and 8) (as reported by TSO): 786 people (women: 338, men: 448) -Direct beneficiaries in Pilot 2, Marine Spatial Planning in Mexico and Ecuador have begun; however, the reporting of beneficiaries will begin when the	Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people): - **OSPESCA** (Billfishes): 26 people (women: 7, men: 19) - **MSP México**: 3,707,627 (1,8136,282 men, 1,894,345 women) - **MSP Costa Rica**: 786 people (women: 338, men: 448) - **MSP Panamá**: No data available - **MSP Ecuador**: 111,993 (56,002 men, 55,991 women) - **Cetaceans**: No data available - Others (People participating in diverse project activities): 174 people (87 men, 87 women)		The total number of beneficiaries expected by the midterm target has been reached. However, the expected numbers for each pilot have not been reached for Billfishes, MSP Costa Rica, MSP Panama, and Cetaceans. End-of-project target appears to be on track to be achieved as a whole, considering that MSP Pilot from México and Ecuador (which are the highest numbers) use the data from Official population for each coastal municipality from national statistics office.

[82] Green: Achieved, Yellow: on target to be achieved; Red: not on target to be achieved (according to end-of-project target)

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
				goals of these projects are achieved and will be reported through national censuses. -Pilot project interventions for Marine Spatial Planning in Panama have not started yet.	Total: 3,820,606		

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 2: Number of indirect project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people)	0	Number of indirect beneficiaries from pilot interventions and project activities: - Billfishes 50,000 (ca., 40% women) - MSP Mexico 27,428,548 (14,041,686 women, 13,386,862 men) - MSP Costa Rica 243,898 (119,085 women, 124,813 men) - MSP Panama 10,000 (8,450 women, 1,550 men) - MSP Ecuador 1,141,904 (503,246 women, 638,658 men) - Cetaceans 2000 (330 women, 1,670 men) Total 28,876,350	Population of coastal provinces / departments / states of the participating countries, once SAP has been endorsed. - Mexico: 14,026,592 men, 14,681,627 women, 28,708,219 total -**Guatemala**: 1,968,727 men, 2,062,021 women, 4,030,748 total - ~~**El Salvador**: 1,572,379 men, 1,770,202 women, 3,342,581 total~~ - **Honduras**: 327,418 men, 337,556 women, 664,974 total - **Costa Rica**: 454,742 men, 437,930 women, 892,672 total - **Panama**: 1,761,370 men, 1,753,616 women, 3,514,986 total - **Ecuador**: 3,839,701 men, 3,866,374 women, 7,706,075 total	Number of indirect project beneficiaries disaggregated by sex (individual people) for this period: 0 (women: 0, men 0). The presentation of information on indirect beneficiaries will begin when the objectives of the pilot projects are achieved and the rest of the countries at the time of regionalizing (regional plan or regional guidelines) the results. These beneficiaries will be reported through the national census data in each of the countries. According to the monitoring plan of ProDoc, this reporting period corresponds to the first year of the project. As indicated in the monitoring plan, the complete data for this indicator will be reported for the mid-term evaluation.	Number of indirect beneficiaries from pilot interventions and project activities: - Billfishes: No data available - **MSP Mexico** 27,045,049 (13,898,229 women, 13,146,820 men) - **MSP Costa Rica** 245,028 (118,882 women, 126,146 men) - **MSP Panama**: No data available - **MSP Ecuador** 1,592,840 (805,794 women, 787,046 men) - **Cetaceans** 12 (10 women, 2 men) Total: 28,882,929		The end-of-project target must be adjusted, since El Salvador is no longer part of the project and Colombia joined en 2025. With that change, the end-of-project target appears to be on track to be achieved, considering that the source of the information is the Official population data from national statistics office.

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
			Total 48,860,255				
Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 3: Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares).	0	>50,000,000 ha	>180,965,900 ha	Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares): 0. The calculation of the areas under improved practices will be calculated through marine spatial planning exercises in Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador.	Not enough evidence to determine total number of Ha under improved protection		The Management Plan for the Large Pelagics Fishery of Costa Rica is the only pilot completed to date. It does not clearly indicate the number of hectares impacted by the actins presented in the Plan. Moreover, the indicator is not SMART, as it lacks specificity regarding whether the measurement of hectares is based on

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
							MSP that has been developed or one that has been formally adopted by the competent local authorities. If the end-of-project indicator requires adoption by local authorities, it is less likely that the target will be achieved.
Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 4: Globally over-exploited fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (metric tons).	0	>40,000 t	>82,000 t	Globally over-exploited fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (metric tons): 0. At the time of this report, the project has not undertaken actions that could have implications for the sustainability of fishing through certification. This indicator has been reported from information sources indicated in the PRODOC.	~~44.391~~		The main issue with the indicator is that it is not attributable to the project, and therefore it is not a SMART indicator (it is not relevant, as it does not measure any project outcome). According to the information source indicated in the ProDoc, and used by the team project, the midterm target has been achieved. However, the project is not able to implement actions to achieve the end-of-project target.

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
Comment for the FINAL MTR REPORT:	The MTR Team understands that this is a complicated issue that has several possible ways to address it. Although the PIR states that the indicator has been met at mid-term, the indicator cannot be attributed. Therefore, the PIR is incorrect to assert that the target was met. In response to this challenge, the MTR team present the following for the consideration of the PMU and the IA: i) The Mid-term indicator be set at ZERO or ii) it should remain the same and be stated that it was not achieved at mid-term. However, if the final target is to be met, the MTR team recommends that PACA should immediately begin to build synergies by working closely with the GEF IW Global Marine Commodities (GMC-2) project, which is operating within multiple PACA LME countries. Subsequently, PACA could integrate that Core Indicator #4 indicator (attributable to the GMC2) into the SAP, which aims is to carry PACA toward building a more resilient PACA LME that can be complimented by contributions from the GMC-2 Sustainable Marine Commodity Value chains (which also include innovative and inclusive governance mechanisms created via GMC-2's Fishery Improvement Projects). It also follows that PACA's contribution to Core Indicator #3 -Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares) ALSO contributes to GMC's Core Indicator #3. Therefore the MTR recommends that PACA IMMEDIATELY contacts GMC2 (GEF-IW LAC, SFP and partner PACA countries involved with GMC-2) to discuss this option. If it is viable, PACA and GMC2 should coordinate their mutual contributions to those two indicators for the rest of their remaining implementation periods . This IW synergy could become a model for similar GEF IW projects in the same region that share similar Core Indicators.						
Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 5: Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management	0	0	1, once SAP has been endorsed	Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management: 0. This indicator will be reported after SAP is endorsed.	0		Midterm target is as expected. Considering the recent completion of the national TDA construction processes and the countries' commitment to participation, it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved.
Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 6. Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis formulation. 1. No progress on TDA development. 2. TDA developed. Transboundary issues	1	2	4	Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis formulation: 1. No progress on TDA development.	2		Midterm target has been achieved, and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved.

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
agreed on based on limited analysis. 3. TDA developed. Transboundary issues agreed on based on solid analysis. 4. TDA adopted by project board							
Mandatory GEF Core Indicators 7. Level of Strategic Action Program formulation and implementation. 1. No development of SAP. 2. SAP developed, including clear targets, commitments and time frames addressing key transboundary concerns. 3. SAP signed on at ministerial level. 4. Adoption of SAP into National Action Plans (NAPs) and/or SAP commitments incorporated within national sectoral plans.	1	1	3	Level of Strategic Action Program formulation and implementation: 1. No development of SAP. SAP will be developed in 2025 upon completion of the TDA.	1		Midterm target is behind. However, there is no reason to believe that the end-of-term target will not be achieved.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:							
Project component 1: Governance instruments improved at regional level for joint management of PACA							
Project Outcome 1. Common understanding of the regional LME challenges and opportunities supported by the participant countries.							

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
Indicator 8: project specific Percentage of women and people from non-state entities in the TDA Development team	0	Women >30% Non-state entities >30%	Women >30% Non-state entities >30%	Midterm target level achieved. Percentage of women and people from non-state entities in the TDA Development team: 58% women and 42% from non-state entities.	Women 62% Non-state entities 38%		The end-of-project target has been achieved considering the sex and affiliation of every person designated to be part of TDA team. However, during the process of developing the regional TDA, it is important to record participants on each TDA meeting / activity / training event, to ensure that percentages are maintained over time.
Indicator 9: project specific Level of development of long-term regional agreement to update the PACA status report 1. No agreement/cooperation framework in place 2. Cooperation agreement negotiated but not yet signed 3. Cooperation agreement signed 4. Cooperation agreement under implementation	1	2	3	Level of development of long-term regional agreement to update the PACA status report: 1. No agreement/cooperation framework in place. This indicator reflects progress in development of the TDA.	1		Midterm target has not been achieved. To date, there is no evidence to support the end-of-project target will be achieved. Most countries in the region have not yet designated representatives from their foreign ministries, and the capacity of regional bodies (such as SICA) is limited without clear leadership from the countries.

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	*Includes Indicators 8 & 9. Indicator 8 has met/exceeded both its midterm and end-of-project targets. However, Indicator 9 (long-term regional agreement to update the PACA status report) has not achieved its midterm target, and there is no current evidence to suggest that the end-of-project target will be achieved. Moreover, the evaluation identified a lack of a regional vision, Most of the work to date has taken place at the national level (both with the TDAs and pilot exercises), leading to very low ownership of a regional perspective, which is critical to establishing a long-term regional agreement. As of now, no regional institution has been clearly identified to take on long-term responsibilities for sustaining PACA.*						
Outcome 2. Collaborative framework and governance arrangements adopted by the participating countries to implement PACA´s SAP							
Indicator 10: project specific Level of Regional Governance Mechanism to support SAP implementation. 1. No governance mechanism in place 2. Regional governance mechanism negotiated but not yet adopted 3. Countries adopt regional governance mechanism 4. Regional governance mechanism entered into force	1	2	3 Governance mechanism for SAP implementation within the framework of SICA.	Level of Regional Governance Mechanism to support SAP implementation: 1. No governance mechanism in place.	1		Midterm target has not been achieved. To date, there is no evidence to support the end-of-project target will be achieved. The adoption of a governance framework at the level of a regional body such as SICA requires the leadership of at least one country in the region to champion the proposal. As of the time of this evaluation, no clear regional leadership has been identified to advance this initiative within a regional forum. Additionally, risks related to the non-participation of Nicaragua and El Salvador in the PACA project—and their potential impact on

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
							the adoption of a regional mechanism—must be addressed.
Indicator 11: project specific Number of people that participate in SAP consultation (percentage of women and non-state entities)	0	0	>400 people (women >50%, non-state entities >50%)	Number of people that participate in SAP consultation (percentage of women and non-state entities): 0	0		The mid-term target is of Zero is as expected. Given the good progress with the country and regional TDAS, the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved.
Indicator 12: project specific Level of adoption of regional guidelines to strengthen participation of women in the governance of PACA. 1. No progress on development of guidelines. 2. Guidelines developed. 3. Guidelines presented	1	1	3	Level of adoption of regional guidelines to strengthen participation of women in the governance of PACA: 1. No progress on development of guidelines.	1		Midterm target is as expected. However, to date, there is no evidence to support the end-of-project target will be achieved. During the interview process, it was noted that gender does not appear to be a priority issue. There is a prevailing perception that, in the

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
to COMMCA 4. Guidelines endorsed by COMMCA							marine and coastal context—particularly in productive sectors—the most relevant actors are men. Furthermore, representatives from regional entities such as COMMCA have indicated that they do not have sufficient information about the project's progress or opportunities to provide feedback.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	*Includes Indicators 10, 11 & 12. Two of the three have reached their midterm targets, but only one is considered likely to achieve its end-of-project target. Indicator 10 (Regional Governance Mechanism to support SAP implementation) has not met its midterm target, and there is no evidence to support it being achieved by the end of the project. Adopting a governance framework within a regional body (such as SICA) requires the leadership of at least one country to drive the initiative forward. At mid-term, no such leadership has emerged, and risks associated with Nicaragua and El Salvador's non-participation in the PACA project must be addressed, given the potential impact on regional mechanism adoption and the importance of Nicaragua's Pacific coastal and marine fisheries within the northern PACA corridor. Indicator 11 (people that participate in SAP consultation) has met its midterm target. Given the recent completion of national TDA processes and countries' commitment to participatory consultations, it is considered on track to meet the end-of-project target. Indicator 12 (regional guidelines to strengthen participation of women in PACA governance) has met its midterm target. However, no evidence currently supports the likelihood of meeting the end-of-project target. Interviews revealed that gender is not perceived as a priority by most of the stakeholders, and in marine and coastal sectors, there is a prevailing perception that men are the most relevant actors. Furthermore, representatives from regional entities have indicated that they do not have sufficient information about the project's progress or opportunities to provide feedback.*						
Outcome 3. Tangible impacts generated in demonstrative pilot interventions implemented to contribute to the development and buy-in of the SAP and to decision making on prioritized topics in the region.							

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
Indicator 13: project specific Level of adoption of a regional plan for the management of sailfish and marlin recreational fisheries (family Istiophoridae) 1. No progress on development of regional plan 2. Regional plan prepared 3. Regional plan presented to national fisheries authorities 4. Regional plan endorsed by national fisheries authorities	1	2	3	Level of adoption of a regional plan for the management of sailfish and marlin recreational fisheries (family Istiophoridae): 1: No progress on development of regional plan.	1		Midterm target has not been achieved. However, the evidence indicates that steps have been taken toward the preparation of the regional plan, beginning with the development of reference frameworks for the governance of peak resources in the coastal ecosystems of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Ecuador. Considering that the end-of-project target aims at a regional plan being presented to national fisheries authorities, it is considered that the target is on track to be achieved.
Indicator 14: project specific Level of development of regional guidelines for marine spatial planning in PACA 1. No progress on development of guidelines. 2. Guidelines	1	1	3	Level of development of regional guidelines for marine spatial planning in PACA: 1: ***No progress on development of guidelines***	1		Midterm target is as expected. Considering that the end-of-project target aims to produce guidelines that will be agreed upon by the project board, it is considered that the target is on track to be achieved.

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
developed. 3. Guidelines agreed by project board 4. Guidelines endorsed by pertinent national authorities on each country							
Indicator 15: project specific Level of development of regional guidelines for whale watching in PACA 1. No progress on development of guidelines. 2. Guidelines developed. 3. Guidelines agreed by project board 4. Guidelines endorsed by pertinent national authorities on each country	1	1	3	Level of development of regional guidelines for whale watching in PACA: 1. No progress on development of guidelines.	1		Midterm target is as expected. Part of the input for these guidelines will come from the Cetacean Pilot in Panama. While the pilot is behind schedule, no reasons have been identified to suggest that the end-of-project target will not be met. Considering that the end-of-project target aims at guidelines agreed by the project board, it is considered that the target is on track to be achieved.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	*Includes Indicators 13, 14 & 15. Two have met their midterm targets, and it is likely all it will achieve three end-of-project targets. Indicator 13 (regional plan for the management of sailfish and marlin recreational fisheries) has not yet met its midterm target, but progress has been made, including the development of reference frameworks for key resource governance across PACA countries. Since the end-of-project target is limited to presenting (not endorsing) the plan to national authorities, it is considered on track. Indicators 14 and 15 (regional guidelines for marine spatial planning in PACA and for whale watching in PACA) have met their midterm targets, and the end-of-project targets are considered on track, since the regional guidelines produced need only to be agreed by the Project Board, not endorsed by national authorities. This is a weak Outcome, if it is an outcome at all.*						
Outcome 4. Collaborative information system developed with key indicators on PACA´s condition and SAP implementation							

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
Indicator 16: project specific Level of adoption of a set of key indicators about the condition of PACA and SAP implementation. 1. No progress on development of set of key indicators. 2. Set of key indicators developed. 3. Set of key indicators agreed by project board. 4. Set of key indicators endorsed by pertinent national authorities on each country.	1	2	3	Midterm target level achieved. Level of adoption of a set of key indicators about the condition of PACA and SAP implementation: 2. Set of key indicators developed.	2		Midterm target has been achieved, and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved, since a set of key indicators for the PACA region has been selected and the baseline of the 35 indicators selected by the Technical Committee has been established.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	*Comprises Indicator 16 (set of key indicators about the condition of PACA and SAP implementation), which has achieved its midterm target and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved, since a set of key indicators for the PACA region has been selected and the baseline of the 35 indicators selected by the Technical Committee has been established.*						
Outcome 5. Lessons on collaborative actions to manage PACA shared in the region and worldwide (south-south cooperation).							
Indicator 17: project specific Number of people (men and women, by country) who have participated in events for dissemination of lessons and best practices (e.g., workshops, IWC)	0	> 800 (>30% women)	> 1,600 (>30% women)	Number of people (men and women, by country) who have participated in events for dissemination of lessons and best practices (e.g., workshops, IWC): 27 participants (women: 55%).	977 people (54.60% women)		Midterm target has been achieved, and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved. However, means of verification do not provide clear evidence that the reported events included spaces for the dissemination of lessons learned and

Indicator	Base Level	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported) as of Jun 30, 2024	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating[82]	Justification for Rating
							best practices from the project. It is recommended that the event agendas be included as part of the supporting evidence, clearly indicating the time allocated for sharing lessons and best practices.
Indicator 18: project specific Number of visitors per month (annual average) recorded in the network of electronic platforms used to disseminate project´s learnings and best practice	Visits 0 Unique visits 0	Visits >2,000 Unique visits >1,500 Approved modification on April 2025 to: - Visits >2,000 - Users reached on social networks 150,000	Visits >4,000 Unique visits >3,000 Approved modification on April 2025 to: - Visits >4,000 - Users reached on social networks 150,000	Number of visitors per month (annual average) recorded in the network of electronic platforms used to disseminate project´s learnings and best practice: 647 total visits; and 434 unique visits. Reported visits for this reported period (April, May and June).	Visits: 18,837 (average considering period may-dec 2024) Users reached on social networks (annual average): 210,591 (average considering period Jan-march 2025)		Both midterm and end-of-project targets were modified to chance "unique visits" for "users reached on social networks", changes were approved on April 2025. Considering this, midterm target has been achieved, and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved.
The progress of the objective/outcome can be described as:	*Includes Indicators 17 & 18, both of which have met their midterm targets and are likely to achieve their end-of-project targets. Indicator 17 (people participating in dissemination events) has met its midterm target. However, the means of verification do not clearly demonstrate whether these events included specific spaces for sharing lessons learned and best practices. It is recommended that event agendas be provided as evidence, clearly showing time allocated for such spaces. Indicator 18 (visitors on electronic platforms used to disseminate project knowledge) has had its targets modified (from "unique visits" to "users reached on social networks"), a change approved in April 2025. Based on this, midterm target has been achieved and it is considered that the end-of-period target is on track to be achieved.*						

ANNEX 9: MTR Evaluation Scale

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

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)

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

Source: Guidance for conducting midterm reviews of UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects

ANNEX 10: SESP Risk Analysis OFFLINE PROJECT RISK REGISTER TEMPLATE

Project Title: Towards joint integrated, ecosystem-based management of the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem (PACA).	Project Number: 00111558	Date: 13-Feb-25

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
1	Changes in central governments in the seven participating countries which may imply that project partners change their priorities and modify their support and contributions to the project.	During the life cycle of the project in several countries there will be changes of government due to popular elections.	Potential effect. project partners change their priorities and modify their support and contributions to the project.	**7. STRATEGIC (7.6. Change/turnover in government) - UNDP Risk Appetite: OPEN TO SEEKING**	Likelihood: **5 - Expected** Impact: **3 - Intermediate** Risk level: **SUBSTANTIAL (equates to a risk appetite of OPEN)**	From: 27-Feb-23 To: 27-Feb-27	OPM and PTA with support of UNDP country offices (as needed)	Risk Treatment 1.1: The project unit will maintain ongoing fluid communication with key project partners (fisheries and environment authorities and ministry of foreign affairs on each country) and stakeholders, including main SICA entities (e.g., the General Secretariat, OSPESCA, CCAD). Risk Treatment Owner: At any time that new authorities assume office, there will be a formal presentation of the project in the first 6 months, implementation progress, management arrangements and the roles and contributions of the entity. **MTR:** ***Also recommends that efforts must be stepped up to build ownership to drive engagement at the lowest practical levels for planning and implementation, namely the coastal communities, who***

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								will outlive the periodic changes of elected government officials.
2	Limited indigenous peoples' participation and involvement during the implementation of the marine spatial planning pilot intervention and other project activities.	There is the possibility of low participation of representatives of indigenous peoples in the consultation processes.	Potential effect. Limited participation and involvement of indigenous peoples in the MSP pilot intervention	**1. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL (1.9. Indigenous peoples) - UNDP Risk Appetite: CAUTIOUS**	Likelihood: **2 - Low likelihood** Impact: **2 - Minor** Risk level: **LOW (equates to a risk appetite of CAUTIOUS)**	From: 01-Dec-23 To: 30-Oct-26	Gender and participation specialist	Risk Treatment 2.1: The stakeholder analysis (Annex 8 in the Prodoc) identified indigenous people along PACA´s coastal zone and their relationship with specific project actions. Risk Treatment Owner: The EGP and PPI consultant will seek letters from representatives of indigenous peoples indicating that they are aware of the project **MTR:** ***This is not sufficient. The PMU must insure that PACA follows Free and Informed Public Consent, as stipulated under The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that all PACA countries should have signed.***
								Risk Treatment 2.2: The project will likely not intervene in areas where indigenous peoples are located, except for the pilot interventions on marine spatial planning in which there are indigenous people in the areas of influence.

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								However, an indigenous peoples plan (IPP) will be prepared at the start of project implementation, which will fully assess and confirm the presence of and potential impacts on indigenous peoples. The requirements for free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) will be defined in the IPP according to standard 6 of UNDP Social and Environmental Standards.
3	Limitations to women participation and Involvement (commitment and interest).	As a result of the consultation and participation processes, there is the possibility that there are limitations in the participation of women in these processes.	Potential effect. Women have limited participation. on decision-making bodies related to the key sectors	**1. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL (1.2. Gender equality and women's empowerment) - UNDP Risk Appetite: CAUTIOUS**	Likelihood: **2 - Low likelihood** Impact: **3 - Intermediate** Risk level: **MODERATE (equates to a risk appetite of EXPLORATORY)**	From: 27-Feb-23 To: 27-Feb-27	*Gender and participation specialist*	Risk Treatment 3.1: Implement the gender action plan and monitor and analyse the project´s gender-related indicators Risk Treatment Owner: The EGP will follow up on the gender action plan **MTR:** *This is an adequate strategy. However, PACA must be fully aware that forcing gender equity on some communities might have an adverse effect and turn certain communities against the project.*
4	Concern from ocean-going fishers that a regional agreement could lead to stricter fishing	As a result of the ADT/PAE construction processes, there is the possibility that oceangoing fishermen will	Potential effect. Opposition to TDA/SAP process	**1. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL (1.3. Grievances (Accountability to stakeholders)) -**	Likelihood: **3 - Moderately likely** Impact:	From: 27-Feb-23 To: 27-Feb-27	Principal technical Advisor, Gender, and participation	Risk Treatment 4.1: There are well established regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), based on binding protocols, which deal

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
	regulations and possible economic displacement	show their concern about possible regulations and economic displacements		**UNDP Risk Appetite: CAUTIOUS**	**3 - Intermediate** Risk level: **MODERATE (equates to a risk appetite of EXPLORATORY)**		Specialist and Communication specialist	with these matters: the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the Central America Fisheries & Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA). The SAP will not supersede the existing fisheries agreements but the risk is that ocean-going fishers perceive that advancing towards large marine ecosystem management is a threat. Risk Treatment Owner: The project will liaise with key fisheries organisations like the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, FAO and OSPESCA. It is expected that these entities will participate and contribute to the TDA/SAP process (see section "Strategic allies" in the PRODOC). **MTR: *This response and strategy are adequate.*** Risk Treatment 4.2: The regional pilot on billfish recreational fisheries will not restrict fishers' interests, on the contrary it will facilitate to explore an alternative activity that will generate important direct and indirect benefits and will contribute to conserve billfish stocks. This pilot will

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								work with fisheries authorities and the billfishes recreational fishing supply chain to develop a regional plan. Risk Treatment Owner: At project start there will be initiation workshops with national stakeholders on each participating country. In addition, the pilot interventions will hold start-up meetings with local stakeholders on each country. These meetings will allow to engage with representatives of the main fisheries organisations (see section "stakeholder engagement" in the PRODOC. **MTR: *This response and strategy are adequate.*** Risk Treatment 4.3: Fishers organisations participated in the two national consultation workshops held on each participating country during project preparation. Risk Treatment Owner: - Fisheries organisations, like other key stakeholders, will be duly informed of project progress and lessons through the various communication channels to be used (see

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								outputs 2.3 and 5.1 in the PRODOC). -The TDA/SAP process and the pilots on billfish recreational fisheries and marine spatial planning will apply a Strategic Environmental and. Social Assessment (SESA) approach to identify and manage possible risks of economic displacement. -Apply the recommendations from the indigenous peoples plan (which will be prepared at the project start). - The EGP with the ATP will promote the participation of the Ocean-going fisheries to participate in the SPA strategy. **MTR: *This response and strategy are adequate.***
5	Negative impacts on critical habitats and/or legally protected areas.	As a result of the construction of MPAs, there is a possible impact of not considering adequate recognition of the impact on critical habitats in the TDA/SPA process and in the MSP pilot interventions.	Potential effect. The value of critical habitats and MPAs is not adequately recognized in TDA/SAP process and MSP pilot interventions.	**1. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL (1.4. Biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management) - UNDP Risk Appetite: CAUTIOUS**	Likelihood: **1 - Not likely** Impact: **4 - Extensive** Risk level: **LOW (equates to a risk appetite of CAUTIOUS)**	From: 27-Feb-23 To: 27-Feb-27	Specialist in marine resources management	Risk Treatment 5.1: The project was designed to ensure that the value of critical habitats is recognised and that MPAs are the foundation for zoning to safeguard what is most ecologically important, biologically diverse, or vulnerable. Risk Treatment Owner: Ensure that the TDA/SAP process is

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								built upon a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) approach. **MTR:** ***It is further recommended that the TDAs and the pilot MSPs conduct Ecosystem Services Valuation of key ecosystem services in their countries.*** This will help lay a foundation for internalizing the economic costs of lost ecosystem services and provide an evidence based approach for improving decion making based on thos economic losses to the country.
								Risk Treatment 5.2: Ensure that the conservation value and contribution to blue growth of critical habitats and MPAs is discussed in the TDA/SAP process and included into the TDA and SAP (see paragraphs 99 and 105 of the PRODOC). Risk Treatment Owner: SMR will ensure that topics such as the value of conservation and the contribution of blue growth in the development of the ATP and SAP. **MTR:** ***Those values should be quantified to the extent possible. Costa Rica is a leader in ESVs and could***

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								provide an important role in educating the other APCA countries on ESV. IT is cautioned that ACA focus on sustainable use and circularity, not growth, which reduces throughput and does noting to working within PACA's safe boundaries to avoid further loss of social and ecosystem resilience .
								Risk Treatment 5.3: Ensure that the MSP pilot intervention safeguard that the value of critical habitats is recognised and that MPAs are used as the foundation for zoning to safeguard what is most ecologically important, biologically diverse, or vulnerable (see paragraphs 125, 147, 158, 170 and 180 of the PRODOC). Risk Treatment Owner: special attention in the Panama pilot project for the potential construction of the port of Barú
6	Impacts of climate variability and climate change.	As a result of environmental threats caused by extreme phenomena, it may affect the implementation of some measures and/or planning of activities of	Potential effect. Disruption or delay in project activities.	**1. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL (1.5. Climate change and disaster risks) - UNDP Risk Appetite: CAUTIOUS**	Likelihood: **3 - Moderately likely** Impact: **3 - Intermediate**	From: 27-Feb-23 To: 27-Feb-27	Principal technical advisor	Risk Treatment 6.1: The project unit will ensure that the effects of climate variability and climate change will be analysed in the TDA and that the SAP incorporate appropriate adaptation measures and

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
		pilot projects or the development of the ATP/SAP			Risk level: **MODERATE (equates to a risk appetite of EXPLORATORY)**			aligns, as much as possible, with the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the participating countries (see paragraphs 99 and 105 and Table 11 of the PRODOC) Risk Treatment Owner: The ATP with the project team, will guarantee that it is included within the development of the ATP and SAP the appropriate adaptation measures **MTR: *These measures fall short and the SESP section outlines additional measures that could be taken.*** Risk Treatment 6.2: Annual workplans will be adjusted, as needed, to cope with the impacts of ENSO events during project implementation (see Table 11 of the PRODOC). Risk Treatment Owner: The ATP will adjust the annual workplans, to cope with the impact of ENSO events and other climate risks.
7	Low capacity of government agencies to fulfill their obligations in the project	Government agencies' low capacity to meet their obligations in the project is caused by a lack of proper infrastructure and inadequate staffing	Government agencies' low capacities to fulfill their obligations in the project can significantly delay the timeline and compromise the overall success of the project.	**7. STRATEGIC (7.5. Government commitment) - UNDP Risk Appetite: OPEN TO SEEKING**	Likelihood: **5 - Expected** Impact: **3 - Intermediate** Risk level:	From: 14-Mar-24 To: 26-Feb-27	Project Manager and Principal Technical Advisor	To manage this low capacity of stakeholders to fulfill their obligations in the project, the Project Management Unit is following the guidelines provided by the project's Awareness, Participation, and

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
					SUBSTANTIAL (equates to a risk appetite of OPEN)			Articulation strategy (SPA). Paying greater attention and consideration to Honduras, or other countries when deemed appropriate, greater interest and attention can be achieved. In the case of Honduras stakeholders have had low involvement in workshops and in the review process of national diagnostics documents. **MTR: *Agreed*** Risk Treatment 7.1: A consultancy call has been launched to conduct a diagnosis and identify key messages for government authorities on issues of importance. Through this consultancy, measures tailored to the interests of each government agency will be implemented. Risk Treatment Owner: The PMU will follow the results of the consultancy and will establish the appropriate measures for the involvement of government agencies. **MTR: *Agreed*** Risk Treatment 7.2: At the moment, the involvement of the countries' foreign ministries in the activities of the project has

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
								not been achieved. Therefore, each of these offices should be approached with the accompaniment of representatives of the ministries of the environment. Risk Treatment: The project manager and the Principal Technical Advisor will promote meetings alongside the representatives of the Ministries of Environment, to present the progress of the project and emphasize the importance of involvement in the SAP process. It is expected that, for these meetings, they will be able to identify the representatives from foreign affairs, who will contribute to the Technical Committee of the project. These meetings should take place in all countries, except for Mexico, which already has a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. **MTR: *Agreed***
8	Difficulty to materialize cofinancing due to the impacts of the pandemics on national economies.	As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, there were delays in the start of the project.	Potential effect. Reduced cofinancing contributions to the project. However, by the end of 2023 the risk due to COVID-19 would not be in	**2. FINANCIAL (2.6. Budget availability and cash flow) - UNDP Risk Appetite: MINIMAL TO CAUTIOUS**	Likelihood: **1 - Not likely** Impact: **1 - Negligible**	From: 27-Feb-23 To: 26-Feb-27	Operations manager and UNDP country offices	Risk Treatment 8.1: Encourage project partners to maintain as much as possible their contributions to the project. Risk Treatment Owner: Maintain fluid communication

#	Event	Cause	Impact(s)	Risk Category and Sub-category *(including Risk Appetite)*	Impact, Likelihood & Risk Level *(see Annex 3 Risk Matrix)*	Risk Valid From/To	Risk Owner *(individual accountable for managing the risk)*	Risk Treatment and Treatment Owner
			force as a difficulty in materializing co-financing. By 2025, COVID-19 is considered not to pose a risk to economies. However, it is not ruled out that other pandemic diseases may have an impact in the future		Risk level: **LOW (equates to a risk appetite of MINIMAL)**			with key project partners to identify difficulties in materializing cofinancing. The constant updating of the risk matrix is a priority, and the PMU encourages pilot projects to update their own risk matrices Risk Treatment 8.2: Seek opportunities of collaboration with other ongoing projects and initiatives to obtain contributions that can add to project cofinancing. Risk Treatment Owner: Maintain fluid communication with key project partners to identify difficulties in materializing cofinancing. **MTR: *Urgently begin formulating an Exit Strategy that includes these important points.***

ANNEX 11: List of the Documents Reviewed

The documents that the MTR Team reviewed included:

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. UNDP Inception Plan
3. UNDP Project Document (PRODOC)
4. CEO Endorsement Request
5. Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) and Risk Management and Safeguards Tools
6. Project Inception Report
7. Project Implementation Reports (PIR) (June 2024)
8. Quarterly progress reports and work plans
9. Audit reports
10. Annual Operational Plans
11. GEF Tracking Tools and Revised Project Indicator List
12. Project Monitoring Systems and Matrices
13. Project Financial Information
14. Cofinancing Data
15. Financial and Administrative Guidelines Used by the Project Team
16. Project Deliverables
17. Communication Materials
18. Data on Website and Social Media Activities
19. Summary List of Formal Meetings
20. List of Contracts and Procurements
21. List of Related Projects and Initiatives Contributing to the Project Objectives
22. Country Programme Documents for UNDP in All Participating Countries (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador)
23. Project Site Maps
24. Minutes of Board Meetings and Other Meetings
25. GEF-7 Programming Directions and Monitoring Instruments for GEF Focal Areas

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ANNEX 12: Co-financing Table List of the Documents Reviewed

Previously included in the body of the report

ANNEX 13: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:
Name of Evaluator: Joseph Ryan

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

Signed in Granada, Nicaragua, on 13 June, 2025

Signature: _



Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:
Name of Evaluator: Roxana Garcia

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

Signed in San José, Costa Rica on 13 June, 2025



ANNEX 14: Format for the Final Approval of the MTR Report

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

- *Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report*