Mid-Term External Assessment: Lessons Learned and Capacity Building to Implement Redd+ Initiatives

The Experience of Costa Rica

CARLOS BORGE, LENÍN CORRALES, SANDRA ESQUIVEL

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TROPICAL AGRICULTURE CENTER OF RESEARCH AND TEACHING (CATIE)

MID-TERM EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

"LESSONS LEARNED AND CAPACITY BUILDING TO IMPLEMENT REDD+ INITIATIVES: THE EXPERIENCE OF COSTA RICA"

(CAM-0025-CRI-13/0001)

ASSESSMENT TEAM:

MSc. Carlos Borge

Mtro. Lenín Corrales

MSc. Sandra Esquivel

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) implements the Project *"Lessons learned and development capacity to implement REDD+ initiatives: the experience of Costa Rica" (CAM-0025-HR-13/0001),* financed by the Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway, started on April 2013.

The project is executed by INBio and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Education Center (CATIE). Other strategic partners are the National Forestry Financing Fund (FONAFIFO), the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC), the National Meteorological Institute (IMN), the Department of Climate Change (DCC-MINAE), the Center for Monitoring World Conservation (UNEP-WCMC) and the Trondheim Biodiversity Group.

The general objective of the project is *"To contribute to maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative impacts of the implementation of REDD+ strategies in maintaining carbon sinks, biodiversity conservation, resilience and ecosystem services, through the use of computer tools, methodologies of analysis, scenarios and modeling".*

The main findings, per objective, of this efficacy and efficiency assessment are:

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT
OBJECTIVE 1: To analyze the available information and knowledge gaps in Costa Rica, to demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be derived from the REDD+ initiatives.
• This work is a cornerstone in the construction of all results objective 1 and very important input for the rest of project results. The analysis and information processing should be ready and available for other researchers and consultants since June 2014. The document is still under construction. • It is still necessary to address how they will perform the measurement of the impact of the main effects of the actions identified. • It´s necessary to depurate REDD+ actions that have been identified, some of the selected ones are actions, but other ones correspond to analysis tools or technical studies. • There is an advance in the identification of the methodology (unanticipated impacts) but the methodological path to be followed for Impacts Evaluation is still not proposed, even though it should have been defined since June 2014.
OBJECTIVE 2: To assess how and where REDD+ activities in Costa Rica may have a greater positive impact on the improvement of the status of the forest ecosystems, their services and their implications on human welfare.
• This result has been focused on the deforestation historical analysis, through a geo-spatially measuring of the differential rates of forests existence, forest regeneration and deforestation, of three historical periods. Their findings have resulted in significant differences about the cover forest change, which the country has officially promulgated. The methodology is solid, however the class definition presents some weaknesses, e.g. coffee appears as forest. • A document that identifies, characterizes and locates the pressures and drivers of change that influence on the state of forest ecosystems, does not yet exist, although it was timelined to June 2014.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT

• There has not been clearly addressed the conceptual definition for the project of:
  • Forest ecosystem analysis unit.
  • Forest ecosystem and its services.
  • Variables to analyze the state of the forest ecosystem.
  • Drivers of change in deforestation and degradation.
  • Technical reasons about why the second D-Degradation won't be addressed.
  • Definition of the co-benefits to be included.
  • Major forest ecosystems that would be included in the analysis.
  • How human welfare will be interpreted in the project.
  • Categories of the analysis ("REDD+ type actions", "early action RED+", "REDD+ initiatives," "measures REDD+ " are interchangeably used).

OBJECTIVE 3: To analyze, with available information, how to guide REDD+ actions to ensure a greater resilience of carbon reservoirs.
• Addressing is coherent, consistent and relevant to the expected result. • The prepared document is solid and provides evidence from available sources, about the relationship among biodiversity, resilience and carbon sinks. It only requires delving into conclusions about the importance of biodiversity conservation to maintain resilience of forest ecosystems as high carbon sinks.
OBJECTIVE 4: To propose REDD+ Costa Rica actions to contribute to climate change adaptation of the main Costa Rican forest ecosystems.
• The work done so far is focused on the source of potable drinking water, irrigation, hydroelectric energy generation and the vulnerability of the use systems of this resource on the face of climate change. • The analysis of the "vulnerability of major forest ecosystems to climate change", as stated in the logical framework, has been neglected
OBJECTIVE 5: To implement a virtual research and communication environment, including environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, to support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration among decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists (users), in relation to REDD+ initiatives.
• The analysis of the required technology is appropriated. • The design process has been performed according to the standards in this area. • There has not been sufficiently addressed sustainability of this effort nor the strategic relationships to its operation after of the project ends.
OBJECTIVE 6: To design a strategy for capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy for the Central American region based on lessons learned by Costa Rica at implementing REDD+ early actions.
• This objective and its results are still unaddressed; there is not it´s runtime according to the timeline.
OBJECTIVE 7: To manage the project in an efficient and effective manner.
• There is a risk that the specific results of all objectives have no integrity and unity among them. Relevance, coherence and consistency of the results advanced so far, could be committed to meet the strategic objective for this project. • The results presented have not, so far, a driver base of unity, coherence, relevance, consistency, feasibility and viability to meet the overall target set for the project´s main goal. • The external audit was carried out at the timelined, attesting a proper management.

In the **general evaluation** of the Project the following general points are noted:

- The Project´s Logical Framework has a good logical sequence for its implementation, is relevant to the objective and purpose of the project, coherent and consistent among its parts and theoretically consistent with REDD+. There was a great job on the conception and design of the original project.
- The project has had trouble finding wholeness between objectives and results. It lacks of concepts homologation. Some approaches could not respond to the set out in the logical framework. There is a need to identify the common thread between them and urgently address this aspect. According to the criteria of the evaluation team, the document "Methodological Approach" there´s still no remedy to this deficiency.
- The co-executors divided the six objectives of the project, three for each executor, based on their expertise and institutional developments. A greater integration has been necessary, in the conceptual terms, for the co-execution of results, taking advantage of the strengths of both parties in different areas.
- The INBio-CATIE project´s team decided not to address the second D of REDD+, indicating there is not enough information on the degradation theme of forests (structure, composition and functionality) to perform this analysis. However, the evaluation team considers it is one of the most important contributions that both institutions could do to REDD+ theme. Generally, this issue is a weakness of the REDD+ strategies, in those countries designing and implementing them. Both institutions are scientifically robust to contribute to this topic.
- The subject of biodiversity was handled like the above case. It would have been expected that in the analysis of the state (integrity) of forest ecosystems, the ecosystem services, the co-benefits of REDD+, degradation, resilience of carbon sinks, vulnerability of forest ecosystems and maximization of the positive impacts of REDD+, the theme *biodiversity* and its relationship with the *functions of ecosystems* were outstanding, as were laid down in the conceptual framework (page number 3 of that document). This is even more expected when the project is managed by an institution as INBio, internationally recognized in the field.
- One of the key issues in the Project Proposal was: *How to design the national "safeguard information system" in a way that generates information about the impacts of biodiversity from REDD+ policies and actions?* The evaluation team did not find evidence of the executed results answering this question.
- Products delivered so far, are generally of good technical quality. What is required is that the analysis responds consistently to the established one on the logical framework. For example: If it was decided to analyze the vulnerability of hydric resource (objective 4), the analysis should be linked to forest ecosystems.
- The issue of co-benefits has not been clearly addressed by the project. In the partial results, different co-benefits are identified. There is no homologation.

- There´s still work to do on the operation sustainability of the virtual environment once this investment time is completed, and also on the political feasibility for decision-makers and stakeholders to use this input in REDD+ discussions.
- With FONAFIFO, there is a relationship of mutual trust, both CATIE and INBIO. This represents a great social capital accumulated for years. With this project everyone adds to increase such capital. In REDD+, governance is not only an important co-benefit, it is what gives political feasibility. CATIE and INBIO are part of consultation and technical instances of Costa Rica REDD+.
- The administration of the project is adequate. In administrative and financial terms, the auditor testifies the adequate management.

The evaluation team makes specific recommendations to the objectives and expected results, and it also gives general recommendations to increase and enhance the efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the project:

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
OBJECTIVE 1: To analyze the available information and knowledge gaps in Costa Rica, to demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be derived from the REDD+ initiatives.
• To clearly define the recognized actions within the REDD+ framework. • Definitive election of the methodology to Impact Evaluation. • Conclusion, in two months, of this result. It is vital for the results 2.2, 4.1, 5.3, 6.1.
OBJECTIVE 2: To assess how and where REDD+ activities in Costa Rica may have a greater positive impact on the improvement of the status of the forest ecosystems, their services and their implications on human welfare.
• It is essential that the team´s project makes a stop along on the journey, to define conceptually: a) Unit of analysis of forest ecosystems, b) what is understood as forest ecosystem and what variables define it, c) what is called main forest ecosystems and state of forest ecosystems, d) what is understood as pressures and drivers, e) which co-benefits are going to be worked out, and g) how the project understands human welfare. • The analysis result of the differential rates of forests existence, forest regeneration and deforestation in three historical periods, shows a high political and social sensitivity to the internal and external of the country; that´s why the evaluation group recommends an external experts forum to validate the results of the process outcomes. • The treatment of the coffee coverage as forest class in the analysis may be put to question. The evaluation group recommends to shield the methodology to any questioning, to be sufficiently robust, to spread results in opposition to the official country´s data. • Must be progress on the issue of *"pressures and drivers of change that affect forest ecosystem services and their implications for human well-being",* as stated in the logical framework. It´s also necessary to work on consistency and coherence of the variables to be analyzed. • The project must address as it is stated in the logical frame, *"the influence of early REDD+ actions on the state of forest ecosystems, their services and co-benefits".* It is necessary to define a single list of early actions and a single list of co-benefits to be worked in all objectives. Also conceptually define human welfare and the indicators to its measure.
OBJECTIVE 3: To analyze, with available information, how to guide REDD+ actions to ensure a greater resilience of carbon reservoirs.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
• To address in a much more forcefully way the conclusions. • The spirit or motivation of the project is based on the interrelation between the functions of ecosystems, biodiversity, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and its link to human welfare. This goes beyond the REDD+ Costa Rica official proposal. What is generated in this analysis (objective 3) should also provide feedback to the Objective 2 and Objective 4.
OBJECTIVE 4: To propose REDD+ Costa Rica actions to contribute to climate change adaptation of the main Costa Rican forest ecosystems.
• Discussion on the expected outcome should be assumed: *"vulnerability analysis of the major forest ecosystems to climate change,"* and not only on one of co-benefits -water, without relating it to forest ecosystems. Otherwise, it must technically justify the reason for changing the category of the analysis from *"vulnerability of major forest ecosystems"* to the category of analysis *"vulnerability of hydric resource".*
OBJECTIVE 5: To implement a virtual research and communication environment, including environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, to support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration among decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists (users), in relation to REDD+ initiatives.
• It is necessary to define strategy and protocol of how the project´s results will be included as a unit. To define common geographical units. • Work a strategy for the virtual environment sustainability after this investment time ends. It is recommended to explore alliances with other virtual environments, especially with SNIT. • The project is working in workshops with different actors to show progress on this objective. It is recommended to inquire more about psychographic and conductual characteristics of decision makers in the Central America REDD+ region.
OBJECTIVE 6: To design a capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy for the Central American region, based on lessons learned by Costa Rica at implementing REDD+ early actions.
• Logical integration of results. The lessons learned by Costa Rica in the REDD+ process, are derived from it. • Identification and characterization of strategic alliances with key decision-makers and organizations related with REDD+ in Central America. Start the process ahead of when it was timelined on the logical framework.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

a. A review of the conceptual framework, which led the project, and its logical framework is needed; focusing on the project´s execution, on the interrelation among: forest ecosystems functions – biodiversity – mitigation/adaptation to the climate change and it´s link with human welfare.

b. INBio-CATIE team must stop and discuss a driving thread that would let them have unity, coherence, relevance, consistency, feasibility and viability to meet the overall objective and project´s expected impacts, from concept that gave it birth.

c. The project team should regain the Project´s Logical Framework from a sequential implementation perspective to achieve the strategic objective of the project (see Annex #1 with a project´s schematization). The objective´s results should generate feedback for each other.

d. It must be defined how all results will integrate, in function of the main objective. The document “Methodological Approach” should be reviewed by the INBIO-CATIE team to ensure that it is consistent and coherent with the original proposal and logical framework. Methodological and conceptual conduction, results integration and knowledge management need to be strengthened.

e. The project team decided that it will not address the second D (Degradation) of REDD+; they consider that there is insufficient information and to build it is out of the reach with the time and budget available in the project. The evaluation team believes there is an opportunity in this project to address this issue; especially because the theme is one of the great failings of the worldwide REDD+ discussion. We recommended to technically justify this decision (with a concept paper) and a path for the future methodological address of this topic.

f. The issue of biodiversity should have a high relevance as it is one of the co-benefits defined in REDD+ and the institutions running the project have a great scientific background on this field.

g. Anticipate possible need of budgetary movements, from objective 5, to meet the other results. This objective is well advanced in its execution and the tasks, still required, can be carried out with a tighter budget that the one that was planned, allowing the possibility of some additional financial resources to comply other results that have a much more adjusted budget, as it is the case of objective 6. (See Annex #2 with summary of executed budget and budget to be implemented)

h. The achievement of results must have an integral vision from the INBio-CATIE team, so that the strengths of both institutions are used. It requires a greater knowledge management. There are very solid internal capabilities at the INBio-CATIE team; but it requires better articulation of such knowledge and skills for an innovative and creative approach, methodological speaking, in such novel topics as addressing the second D and biodiversity in the REDD+ topic. There are human resources, experience, knowledge, strengths and creativity to do it.

The evaluation team is of the opinion that, Costa Rica, in its final product in REDD+, may not be distinguished by the amount of carbon emissions reduced by avoiding deforestation, nor by the amount of carbon they sequester by reconverting deforested areas in new forests; it will be distinguished by the quality of the biodiversity of that carbon sinked by existing forests, in resilience by restoring landscapes, in conservation of forest ecosystems and co-benefits, this latter placed on table by our country.

The project is well conceived and the administration is adequate. The idea of merging two institutional teams with different strengths is laudable and worthy of replication. Some results are overdue and need to quicken the pace, adjusting the timeline to allow the results to logically feedback one another, as was established in the logical framework. They are in a good time for a constructive and critical reflection to focus towards the objectives, results and expected impacts of the project.

The evaluation team believes that in Costa Rica, as it has already been done with coffee (fine and gourmet coffees), the country could compete in REDD+ for quality rather than quantity. At the end, if two countries have the same offer on REDD+ to compete for carbon credits possibly it will win one with the greater conserved biodiversity offer and the greater co-benefits. Costa Rica is classified as a middle income country, co-benefits as water or fighting poverty will not be its great attraction. If the carbon market will not develop because no bidders or because the country decided not to go down that path, conservation of biodiversity will be the attractive for international cooperation.

In the current Costa Rican government, there is a discussion on this topic. The new authorities want to give more relevance to degradation, biodiversity and other co-benefits of REDD+.

In the political, scientific and academic world, current REDD+ discussions highlight, with very different points of view, key issues such as: What is meant by forest degradation?, What areas include the plus and how far to go without it becoming rural development programs, losing their superior goal which is a payment based on measurable sequestration results?, What are and how to measure the co-benefits defined in Cancun (biodiversity, water, landscape, governance and combating poverty)?, What is the contribution to biodiversity and its relationship with the quality and quantity of carbon sinks?, What value (transaction, change, use, symbolic and ethical values) should be assigned to biodiversity in a market of avoidance emissions from deforestation and forest degradation?.

The project can contribute to this discussion with applied science and factual evidence. Both, CATIE and INBio, have the strengths to achieve it. There is no doubt that the contribution will be invaluable. The evaluation team is confident that this project is a great opportunity for both institutions to project themselves as experts in methodological approaches to these issues in Central America and the rest of the world. INBio and CATIE have all the capabilities and strengths to do it.

2. BACKGROUND

The National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) implements the Project *"Lessons learned and development capacity to implement REDD+ initiatives: the experience of Costa Rica" (CAM-0025-HR-13/0001),* financed by the Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway, started on April 2013.

The project is executed by INBio and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Education Center (CATIE). Other strategic partners are the National Forestry Financing Fund (FONAFIFO), the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC), the National Meteorological Institute (IMN), the Department of Climate Change (DCC-MINAE), the Center for Monitoring World Conservation (UNEP-WCMC) and the Trondheim Biodiversity Group.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Main objective:

To contribute to maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative impacts of the implementation of REDD+ strategies in maintaining carbon sinks, biodiversity conservation, resilience and ecosystem services, through the use of computer tools, methodologies of analysis, scenarios and modeling.

Specific objectives:

- **a.** To analyze the available information and knowledge gaps in Costa Rica, to demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be derived from the REDD+ initiatives.
- **b.** To assess how and where REDD+ activities in Costa Rica may have a greater positive impact on the improvement of the status of the forest ecosystems, their services and their implications on human welfare.
- **c.** To analyze, with available information, how to guide REDD+ actions to ensure a greater resilience of carbon reservoirs.
- **d.** To propose REDD+ Costa Rica actions to contribute to climate change adaptation of the main Costa Rican forest ecosystems.
- **e.** To implement a virtual research and communication environment, including environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, to support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration among decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists (users), in relation to REDD+ initiatives.
- **f.** To design a capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy for the Central American region, based on lessons learned by Costa Rica at implementing REDD+ early actions.
- **g.** To manage the project in an efficient and effective manner.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY

Main objective:

To do a midterm review focused on the progress and effectiveness of the project to date, meaning, the degree to which objectives are being achieved.

Specific objectives:

a. To evaluate if the project is aimed to achieve their goals, outcomes/impacts and products according to the project document and logical framework. It should be considered and assessed whether the impacts (positive and negative) and deviations that may be happening in the execution of the project could affect final products generation.
b. To assess, insofar as the execution arrangements are allowing synergies development and partnerships with other initiatives related to the topic, both nationally and internationally.
c. To summarize lessons learned and best practices powering project execution.
d. To identify problems or limitations affecting project implementation and results achievement.
e. To propose recommendations of how to take advantage of the lessons and best practices, as corrective measures to ensure that the result, during the remaining implementation time, are reached.
f. To assess the project´s relevance relating to international negotiations on REDD+ under the framework of the UNFCCC.
g. To generate recommendations to guide the transfer from a national focus of the project to a regional and global profile.

5. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This midterm evaluation focused on examining the efficiency of the project implementation and effectiveness in meeting its objectives and partial results.

Analysis was made in the form and substance of the process interweaving the objectives; as well as the strategy, results and progress towards the expected impacts. Elements were also reevaluated in determining relevance, pertinence, consistency, coherence and feasibility of the project according with the conceptual framework and spirit that gave it birth.

Efficiency and effectiveness in resources use, cost-benefit, implementation strategy, institutional and inter-institutional arrangements, project coordination, problems and limiting factors, technical capability and quality of partial results were observed. In order to do it, the evaluation team did:

a. An analysis about relevance, importance, coherence, consistency and feasibility of the project, both in design and implementation.
b. An evaluation on the current situation of the project, regarding: **efficiency** (process), **efficacy** (partial results) and **effectiveness** (impacts), according to the established timeline.
c. A systematization of learned lessons, best practices and limitations.
d. An analysis of political viability in the different environments: internal, national, regional and global.
e. A sustainability and replicability/scalability analysis in other regional contexts.
f. A set of recommendations to:
    - Powering the expected results and impacts
    - Replicate or scale the project
    - Strengthen synergies and partnerships with other initiatives on the subject
    - Get the biggest benefits with the available resources

To respond the basic questionings of each of those approaches (questions included in the Work Plan) different techniques were implemented: group interviews with different members of the teams, personal interviews with officials of FONAFIFO, telephone interviews, focus groups with CATIE team and INBIO team, observation and documentary analysis of the factual evidence provided by the project.

The evaluation team conducted a comprehensive approach of the analysis in order to reach conclusions consistent with the review period (midterm) and give a set of recommendations about efficiency and effectiveness in the project implementation. Recommendations are also provided to the team in charge, to maximize the objectives and expected outputs, sustainability, replicability/scalability and impacts of the project.

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation team were presented. The observations enriched this document. A final meeting was also held to address some management aspects and give the latest recommendations from the evaluation team. The document was sent to INBio-CATIE team, who provided comments that were considered for this final version.

6. EVALUATION OF EFFICIENCY AND EFFICACY OF PARTIAL RESULTS

OUTCOMES	**PERFORMANCE** (EFFICIENCY)	**PARTIAL RESULTS** (EFFICACY) (ADVANCE ON EXPECTED RESULTS)
OBJECTIVE 1: To analyze the available information and knowledge gaps in Costa Rica, to demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be derived from the REDD+ initiatives.		
1.1 The actions implemented by Costa Rica in the past 25 years aimed at reducing degradation and deforestation, are characterized.	The work done so far has a procedural historical approach that comes together and analyzes international conventions, laws, policies, programs, projects and actors in forestry. The proposed survey has required a significant investment of time in achieving this result. But the purpose of the survey in relation to the expected results for this objective is unclear.	This work is a cornerstone in the construction of all outcomes to achieve the objective 1 and very important input for the rest of project results. This should have been ready and available for other researchers and consultants since June 2014. The document is still under construction. It´s necessary to perform a depuration of REDD+ actions that have been identified, some of them are actions, but other correspond to analysis tools or technical studies, for example: Costa Rican REDD+ Readiness Strategy, Costa Rican Program of Carbon Dioxide Emissions Reduction, Costa Rican Gaps Analysis in Conservation, are no concrete actions, they are studies. On page 7 of the document "*Characterization of the actions implemented by Costa Rica in forests and trees in the last 25 years",* in Table 1, fourteen measures were established as *"current and early measures to REDD scope"* and on page 9 of the document Methodological Approach (version October 3th., 2014), in Table 2, nine measures are raised as *"Major REDD+ Initiatives implemented in Costa Rica"*. Both documents speak interchangeably of actions, early actions, initiatives, measures, activities or contributions REDD+. These documents raise different actions.
1.2 Methodologies to measure impact of implemented actions, based on existing and accessible	There are several internationally proven methodologies to measure impacts of policies, plans, programs and ex post projects. The team should only	It is still necessary to address how (methodology) the measure of the main effects impact, of the identified actions, will be done.

information, among other criteria, are identified.	determine pros and cons of the options, analyze what is more suited to the purposes, objectives and expected results, make any adaptations -if necessary- to determine what impact measurement methodology will be used.	There is an advance in the identification of the methodology (unanticipated impacts) but the methodological path for Impacts Evaluation is still not proposed. This document should have been ready for the time of this evaluation.
1.3 The impacts of applying implemented actions are assessed by applying methodologies selected with the available information.	The impact evaluation (measurement) of actions oriented towards reducing deforestation and degradation should have been ready, by the moment of the assessment, to be used as input in achieving other outcomes such as 2.2, 4.1, 5.3 and 6.1. According to the logical framework for achieving this objective, three outcomes have been planned: Outcome 1 –To identify and characterize type REDD+ actions in order to reduce deforestation and degradation, - While performing this characterization, direct and indirect effects of those actions are determined. With the outcome 2, a methodology is identified to measure those effects; and with the outcome 3, with the selected methodology, a value is given to the effect to determine impacts of those actions. ACTION ⇨ EFFECT ⇨ MEASUREMENT ⇨ IMPACT	The assessment of impacts of Costa Rican actions aimed at reducing deforestation and degradation has not yet been performed. This document should have been ready in June 2014.
OBJECTIVE 2: To assess how and where REDD+ activities in Costa Rica may have a greater positive impact on the improvement of the status of the forest ecosystems, their services and their implications on human welfare.		
2.1. The main pressures and drivers of change on the state of forest ecosystem, their services and their implications for human welfare are identified, characterized and spatially located.	This result has been focused on the historical analysis of deforestation geo-spatially assessing the differential rates of existence of forests, deforestation and forest regeneration in three historical periods. Their findings have resulted in significant differences about the cover forest change, which the country has officially promulgated. The methodology is solid, however the class definition presents some weaknesses, e.g. coffee appears as forest.	The geographical work comparing three periods is nearly complete and has important results about forest cover in the country. The work includes approximately 100,000 hectares of coffee as forest, which weakened the conclusions of the work. The document about the analysis of pressures and drivers of change that influence on the *"state of forest ecosystems, environmental services and human welfare"* should have been ready in June 2014.

	There is not still a discussion paper to identify, characterize and locate the pressures and drivers of change that influence the state of forest ecosystems For example, in the “Methodological Approach” document when referring to objective 2 (p.12-19), it is not spoken about pressures or drivers of change beyond the introduction. On page 15 of that document, the concept of *"threat"* is raised and is exemplified as such: agricultural activities, proximity to roads, access to markets, forest age and productive capacity of the site. Then a historical analysis to correlate other variables is mentioned: roads, slope, use category, forest age, management category and PES. Conceptual definition has not been clearly addressed for the entire project: • Unity of analysis of forest ecosystems. • Forestry ecosystem and it´s services. • Variables to analyze the state of the forest ecosystem. • Main forest ecosystems that will be included in the analysis. • Drivers of change in deforestation and degradation. • The reason why the second D: Degradation will not be addressed. • Definition of co-benefits to be included. With respect to co-benefits, it must be decided whether the analysis will be of: those defined in the COP Cancun or those arising in p.13 of the *Methodological Approach* document which are: *"biodiversity protection and ecosystemic services (hydric adjustments, erosion control, nutrient cycle, pollination, etc.)",* or those raised in the Picture 4 or the cited document, on Table 5, or those proposed on page 15. • What is understood by *human welfare* in the project.	

	• The category of analysis, whether it will be:"REDD+ type actions", "early action REDD+", "REDD+ initiatives," REDD+ actions "(terms used indistinctly in the approaches). • Distinctions in the categories of analysis: ecosystemic services, environmental services and/or ecosystemic goods and services.	
2.2. Analyzed the influence of the early REDD+ actions executed by Costa Rica, on the status of forest ecosystems, their services and the implications on human welfare.	The approach of this result may have pertinence problems with the expected result if scopes are not clarified. It has not been clearly established the difference respect to the outcome 1.3. The approach has not been focused on *"the influence of the early REDD+ actions on the status of forest ecosystems, their services and human welfare",* as it was established in the logical framework. This result requires a clear definition of early REDD+ type actions that will be analyzed in the project (it is expected that they be defined in the outcome 1.1).	Up until today, there is a generic document entitled *"REDD+ Initiative and economic assessment of co-benefits, a perspective for Costa Rica"*. A methodology isn´t defined in this document to address the influence of early REDD+ actions on the state of forest ecosystems and co-benefits, as set out in the logical framework. Although there is still a semester to fulfill this result, a strictly econometric approach may not be sufficient to the expected outcome.
2.3. A proposal to apply actions to maximize impact of REDD+ initiatives in relation to the status of forest ecosystems, their services and their implications for human welfare.	Not applicable.	Not applicable. According to the timeline this should be ready in the third quarter of 2015.
OBJECTIVE 3: To analyze, with available information, how to guide REDD+ actions to ensure a greater resilience of carbon reservoirs.		
3.1 Scientific evidence on the biodiversity-resilience relationship and of this relationship with carbon reservoirs is analyzed.	The approach of this result is coherent, consistent and relevant to the stated outcome.	The prepared document is solid and provides evidence from available sources about the relationship among biodiversity, resilience and carbon sinks. It only requires delving into conclusions about the importance of biodiversity conservation to maintain resilience of forest ecosystems as high carbon sinks.

3.2 Proposal for REDD+ actions to improve resilience of carbon reservoirs.	Not applicable.	Not applicable. According to the timeline this should be ready in the first quarter of 2015.
OBJECTIVE 4: To propose REDD+ Costa Rica actions to contribute to climate change adaptation of the main Costa Rican forest ecosystems.		
4.1 The vulnerability of the main forest ecosystems of the country is analyzed.	The work done so far has focused on surface water resource for human consumption, agriculture, agribusiness, trade, tourism and its vulnerability to climate change. The variables defined to vulnerability analysis are mainly related to management. The analysis of the "vulnerability of major forest ecosystems to climate change", as stated in the logical framework, has been neglected.	The advanced so far is focused on water resource for human consumption and its vulnerability to climate change. It is a solid work. The analysis of the "vulnerability of major forest ecosystems to climate change", as stated in the logical framework, has been neglected.
4.2. The vulnerability of major forest ecosystems of the country is modeled, in terms of climate change scenarios and socioeconomic variables.	IDEM	There are significant advances in modeling, but with the limitation of the approach given to the work. Due to this, the work has no coherence or consistency with 3.1.
4.3. Proposal for REDD+ actions linked to the major forest ecosystems to contribute to climate change adaptation.	Not applicable.	Not applicable. According to the timeline this should be ready in the third quarter of 2015.
OBJECTIVE 5: To implement a virtual research and communication environment, including environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, to support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration among decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists (users), in relation to REDD+ initiatives.		
5.1 The technology requirements to perform the different studies, analyzes and modeling, are analyzed.	The analysis about required technologies is pertinent.	Proposal and provisioning of technology has been done properly and are completed.
5.2 Virtual research and communication environment is designed.	The design process has been conducted in accordance with the standards used in this field. Sustainability of neither this effort nor the strategic	The virtual environment is already designed and successfully meets this type of information platforms.

	relationships to its operation, after of the project ends, has not been sufficiently addressed. The project is working in workshops with different players to show the progress on this goal and get feedback.	
5.3. The virtual research and communication environment is implemented with environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, for decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists, in relation to REDD+, IPBES initiatives.	In development.	In development. According to the timeline this should be ready in the third quarter of 2015.
5.4. National capacities to use the virtual environment are developed.	A workshop was held to expose the design and there are others planned with key stakeholders.	A workshop with stakeholders was conducted. This outcome is not expected until completion of the project to be developed.
OBJECTIVE 6: To design a capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy for the Central American region, based on lessons learned by Costa Rica at implementing REDD+ early actions.		
6.1 Lessons learned in Costa Rica that are scalable to the region, are identified.	This objective and its results are still unaddressed. It is not yet its runtime according to the timeline.	According to timeline this should be ready in the third quarter of 2015.
6.2 The capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy, designed with support from UNEP-WCMC, is defined and implemented.	Not applicable.	Not applicable. According to the timeline this should be ready in the third quarter of 2015.
OBJECTIVE 7: To manage the project in an efficient and effective manner.		
7.1 The project is executed in an agile and efficient manner.	See next section.	There is a risk that the specific results of all objectives have no integrity and unity among them. Relevance, coherence and consistency of the results advanced so far, could be committed to meet the strategic objective for this project.

		The results presented do not have, so far, a driver base of unity, coherence, relevance, consistency, feasibility and viability to meet the overall target set for the project´s main goal: "*Contribute to maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative impacts of the implementation of REDD+ strategies in maintaining carbon sinks, biodiversity conservation, resilience and ecosystem services…".*
7.2. An external audit is performed.	The audit was conducted in accordance with international standards and on the established date.	An external audit were performed as time lined, attesting a proper management.

7. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

- The Project´s Logical Framework has a good logical sequence for its implementation, is relevant to the objective and purpose of the project, coherent and consistent among its parts and theoretically consistent with REDD+. There was a great job on the conception and design of the original project.
- The project has had trouble finding wholeness between objectives and results. It lacks of concepts homologation. Some approaches could not respond to the set out in the logical framework. There is a need to identify the common thread between them and urgently address this aspect. According to the criteria of the evaluation team, the document "Methodological Approach" there´s still no remedy to this deficiency.
- The co-executors divided the six objectives of the project, three for each executor, based on their expertise and institutional developments. A greater integration has been necessary, in the conceptual terms, for the co-execution of results, taking advantage of the strengths of both parties in different areas.
- The INBio-CATIE project´s team decided not to address the second D of REDD+, indicating there is not enough information on the degradation theme of forests (structure, composition and functionality) to perform this analysis. However, the evaluation team considers it is one of the most important contributions that both institutions could do to REDD+ theme. Generally, this issue is a weakness of the REDD+ strategies, in those countries designing and implementing them. Both institutions are scientifically robust to contribute to this topic.
- The subject of biodiversity was handled like the above case. It would have been expected that in the analysis of the state (integrity) of forest ecosystems, the ecosystem services, the co-benefits of REDD+, degradation, resilience of carbon sinks, vulnerability of forest ecosystems and maximization of the positive impacts of REDD+, the theme *biodiversity* and its relationship with the *functions of ecosystems* were outstanding, as were laid down in the conceptual framework (page number 3 of that document). This is even more expected when the project is managed by an institution as INBio, internationally recognized in the field.
- One of the key issues in the Project Proposal was: *How to design the national "safeguard information system" in a way that generates information about the impacts of biodiversity from REDD+ policies and actions?* The evaluation team did not find evidence of the executed results answering this question.
- Products delivered so far, are generally of good technical quality. What is required is that the analysis responds consistently to the established one on the logical framework. For example: If it was decided to analyze the vulnerability of hydric resource (objective 4), the analysis should be linked to forest ecosystems.
- The issue of co-benefits has not been clearly addressed by the project. In the partial results, different co-benefits are identified. There is no homologation.

- There´s still work to do on the operation sustainability of the virtual environment once this investment time is completed, and also on the political feasibility for decision-makers and stakeholders to use this input in REDD+ discussions.
- With FONAFIFO, there is a relationship of mutual trust, both CATIE and INBIO. This represents a great social capital accumulated for years. With this project everyone adds to increase such capital. In REDD+, governance is not only an important co-benefit, it is what gives political feasibility. CATIE and INBIO are part of consultation and technical instances of Costa Rica REDD+.
- The administration of the project is adequate. In administrative and financial terms, the auditor testifies the adequate management.

8. LIMITATION, LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The idea of combining in a single project two institutions with a strong scientific and academic knowledge in all objectives, having also an international reputation, is an excellent idea, worthy of replicating. The limiting in its implementation has been presented for several reasons:

- Both institutions have different institutional identities, therefore different rhythms and practices. This has meant that the virtual and real spaces to interact, scientifically and technically, have not worked effectively. The objectives have been divided to be executed, half and half, without generating an inter-institutional dynamic to attain the expected results.
- A conceptual rector paper to align the results to faithfully fulfill the objectives was not worked, from the beginning. That would have made an integrated reading of the objectives and expected outcomes under the logic framework, defining the key concepts the execution of the project. The document "Methodological Approach", still under construction, has not until now solved this limitation.
- There has not been a clear technical-scientific conduction that harmonizes the results and permits a feedback of these in a logical sequence, as was established in the logical framework.
- The data information from other institutions, to feed the work of several results, has not fluid satisfactorily. There is a resistant institutional culture in the country to give data that is public but officials considered "sensitive" and private for the institution.
- The other limitation is that there have not been, except with FONAFIFO –with whom there is an excellent relationship-, successful results to bring the collaboration of other partners identified by the project on the national scope. This is the case of SINAC, the Climate Change Direction and the National Meteorological Institute. This limited the provision of important information.

The mentioned points are challenges for the project team to generate a dynamic inter-institutional work; not only for this initiative, but also for future experiences.

The project design based on a deep and relevant conceptual discussion, and with a well-constructed logical framework, are no guarantee that the project implementation runs through as it had been designed. The lesson about this regard is, it required a driver who aligns all parties and gives coherence and consistency to products, as defined in the objectives and expected outcomes. In the project time following, it is very important the knowledge management and coordination between the products they are working on.

The work process in which high quality and quantity of financial and human resources are invested should be very efficient. The project cannot be managed as the sum of the parts at the end. It should follow the logical sequence in which the first established results feed and determine the following results. The logical framework had this implementation logic and it was weakened by the first objective and its outcomes not being ready on time. The lesson is that the parties must comply with the agreement in time and scope. During the second part of the project, it is expected that this point has been resolved as soon as possible.

Always on the issue of efficiency, it is important that all parties have a common understanding of project design. Interpretation should be jointly and not according to particular opinions or purposes. The lesson is that everyone working on the project must have a complete mastery of the designed scopes in the project and how this is integrated as a unit. It is expected that in the second part of the project, all participants jointly reread the project to reach a common approach and agreements about expected scopes and outcomes.

The final lesson is that in every project, even more in these types of applied science ones, there should be an established theoretical and methodological framework from the beginning, not once it has already advanced. It is necessary that all participants are immersed at the same type of methodological and theoretical approach. It is important to coincide in a glossary to operate within the project.

Other best practice is the creation of a bi-institutional team, showing how knowledge can be maximized; where each institution contributes based on their skills, experience and technical and scientific knowledge. The formation of a team from two institutions with regional recognition, allows that the results obtained are subject to attention from major players in Central America.

Another best practice is the constant communication from the Project Coordinator, which has allowed the team members to be consistent with their work. The constant calls and emails have kept the team alert.

It is also important to note the relationship established with FONAFIFO and its REDD+ strategy. This allows information fluency and confidence to undertake new initiatives in these areas.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS BY OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDATIONS BY OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOMES	
OBJECTIVES / OUTCOMES	**RECOMMENDATIONS**
OBJECTIVE 1: To analyze the available information and knowledge gaps in Costa Rica, to demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be derived from the REDD+ initiatives.	
1.1 The actions implemented by Costa Rica in the past 25 years aimed at reducing degradation and deforestation, are characterized.	It is required, at the earliest time possible, the discussion and conclusion of the *"Characterization of the actions implemented by Costa Rica in the last 25 years aimed at reducing degradation and deforestation"*, framed in what has so far been approved by the Convention and the current discussion tables. It is necessary to plan an approach in a very short time (no more than 2 months) for determining the REDD+ actions, their effects and do the impact assessment. This objective is central to the implementation of the other outcomes.
1.2 Methodologies to measure impact of implemented actions, based on existing and accessible information, among other criteria, are identified.	It requires a precise methodology definition for the ex post impact assessment.
1.3 The impacts of applying implemented actions are assessed by applying methodologies selected with the available information.	Conclude as soon as possible, the impacts assessment to enable results 2.2, 4.1, 5.3 and most importantly the 6.1, use this information as an analysis base. This outcome should produce a quantifiable and concrete measure of the impact of REDD+ actions by the country in the past, through a defined methodology for this. ACTION ⇨ EFFECT ⇨ MEASUREMENT ⇨ IMPACT
OBJECTIVE 2: To assess how and where REDD+ activities in Costa Rica may have a greater positive impact on the improvement of the status of the forest ecosystems, their services and their implications on human welfare.	
2.1. The main pressures and drivers of change on the status of forest ecosystem, their services and their implications for human welfare are identified, characterized and spatially located.	It is fundamental that the project team make a stop along the way for a conceptual definition of: a) the unit of analysis of forest ecosystems, b) what is meant as forest ecosystem and what variables define it, c) what is meant as major forest ecosystems and state of forest ecosystems, d)

	what is meant by pressures and drivers, e) which co-benefits are going to work, and g) how the project understands human welfare. The analysis result of the differential rates of forests existence, forest regeneration and deforestation in three historical periods, shows a high political and social sensitivity to the internal and external of the country; that is why the evaluation team recommends an external experts forum to validate the results of the process outcomes Considerations should be made on options to handle this information in the public domain or the private sphere. The evaluation team external recommendation is to manage it privately to the Minister of the Environment, SINAC and FONAFIFO. The treatment of the coffee coverage as forest class in the analysis, may be questioned. Our recommendation is shielding the methodology to any questioning, to be sufficiently robust, to spread results in opposition to the official country´s data. It is important in the final result make notes on scopes and limitations of the used methodology. Progress must be made on the issue of *"pressures and drivers of change that affect forest ecosystem services and their implications for human well-being",* as stated in the logical framework. It is also necessary to work more on consistency and coherence of the variables to be analyzed. In *REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP),* Costa Rica already methodologically addressed deforestation risk using indicators such as land use, road density, land rent, rental alternate use, cost-opportunity land, mature forests and distance to markets. It is expected that the project contributes beyond what has already been propounded therein.

2.2. Analyzed the influence of the early REDD+ actions executed by Costa Rica on the status of forest ecosystems, their services and the implications on human welfare.	The project must address as it is stated in the logical frame, *"the influence of early REDD+ actions on the state of forest ecosystems, their services and co-benefits".* It is necessary to define a single list of early

	actions and a single list of co-benefits to be worked in all objectives. It is also necessary to conceptually define human welfare and the indicators to its measure. Several results are based on this methodological proposal and are the conceptual basis for others. It is necessary to perform an exercise to harmonize the results 1.3 and 2.2. The 2.2 must retake what has been defined in Objective 1; therefore it must be finished as soon as possible. There must be coherence, consistency and consequence between both results.
2.3. A proposal to apply actions to maximize impact of REDD+ initiatives in relation to the status of forest ecosystems, their services and their implications for human welfare.	Not applicable as timelined.
OBJECTIVE 3: To analyze, with available information, how to guide REDD+ actions to ensure a greater resilience of carbon reservoirs.	
3.1 Scientific evidence on the biodiversity-resilience relationship and of this relationship with carbon reservoirs is analyzed.	It is important to address in a much more forceful way the conclusions on the strategic importance of biodiversity conservation to maintain the resilience of forest ecosystems that are high carbon sinks. It is recommended to generate an additional executive document, in an agile style, to be easily used by decision-makers, according to the profile identified by the project for these decision-makers. The spirit or project´s motivation is based on the interrelation between the functions of ecosystems, biodiversity, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and its link to human welfare. This goes beyond the REDD+ Costa Rica official proposal. The material generated in this analysis (objective 3) should also provide feedback to the Objective 2 and Objective 4.
3.2 Proposal for REDD+ actions to improve resilience of carbon reservoirs.	Not applicable as timelined.
OBJECTIVE 4: To propose REDD+ Costa Rica actions to contribute to climate change adaptation of the main Costa Rican forest ecosystems.	

4.1 The vulnerability of the main forest ecosystems of the country is analyzed.	Discussion should re-take the expected outcome: *"vulnerability analysis of the major forest ecosystems to climate change,"* and not only one of co-benefits, water, without relating it to forest ecosystems. Otherwise, it must technically justify the change.
4.2. The vulnerability of major forest ecosystems of the country is modeled, in terms of climate change scenarios and socioeconomic variables.	Idem
4.3. Proposal for REDD+ actions linked to the major forest ecosystems to contribute to climate change adaptation.	Not applicable as timelined.
OBJECTIVE 5: To implement a virtual research and communication environment, including environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, to support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration among decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists (users), in relation to REDD+ initiatives.	
5.1 The technology requirements to perform the different studies, analyzes and modeling are analyzed.	It is necessary to define a strategy and protocol of the manner in which the results of the project will be included as a unit. It is therefore urgent to work within a framework of conceptual definitions for the entire project (mentioned above, objective 2) and common geographical units for the project.
5.2 Virtual research and communication environment is designed.	To work a strategy for the virtual environment sustainability after this investment time ends.
5.3. The virtual research and communication environment is implemented with environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, for decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists, in relation to REDD+, IPBES initiatives.	The previous recommendation also applies at this point: it is necessary to know specifications for the future WEB hosting. It is recommended to explore alliances with other virtual environments, especially with SNIT -National Registry and Cadastre- the official Costa Rican system.
5.4. National capacities to use the virtual environment are developed.	The project helds workshops with different actors to show progress on this objective. It is recommended to inquire more about psychographic and conductual characteristics of decision makers (benefits sought, user status, personality, social class, lifestyle, and circumstances of use) in the Central America REDD+ ambit.
OBJECTIVE 6: To design a capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy for the Central American region, based on lessons learned by Costa Rica at implementing REDD+ early actions.	

6.1 Lessons learned in Costa Rica that are scalable to the region, are identified.	Development outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4 will provide lessons learned from Costa Rica in the REDD+ process; it is urgent to define how the logical integration of these results will be done.
6.2 The capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy, designed with support from UNEP-WCMC, is defined and implemented.	Not applicable as timelined. However, the evaluation team recommends an early start to the identification, characterization of strategic alliances of key organizations and decision-makers in Central America regarding to REDD+.
OBJECTIVE 7: To manage the project in an efficient and effective manner.	
7.1 The project is executed in an agile and efficient manner.	See next section.
7.2. An external audit is performed	

10. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

a. A review of the conceptual framework, which led the project, and its logical framework is needed; focusing on the project´s execution, on the interrelation among: forest ecosystems functions – biodiversity – mitigation/adaptation to the climate change and it´s link with human welfare.

b. INBio-CATIE team must stop and discuss a driving thread that would let them have unity, coherence, relevance, consistency, feasibility and viability to meet the overall objective and project´s expected impacts, from concept that gave it birth.

c. The project team should regain the project´s Logical Framework from a sequential implementation perspective to achieve the strategic objective of the project (see Annex #1 with a project´s schematization). The objective´s results should generate feedback for each other.

d. It must be defined how all results will integrate, in function of the main objective. The document "Methodological Approach" should be reviewed by the INBIO-CATIE team to ensure that it is consistent and coherent with the original proposal and logical framework. Methodological and conceptual conduction, results integration and knowledge management need to be strengthened.

e. The project team decided that it will not address the second D (Degradation) of REDD+; they consider that there is insufficient information and to build it is out of the reach with the time and budget available in the project. The evaluation team believes there is an opportunity in this project to address this issue; especially because the theme is one of the great failings of the worldwide REDD+ discussion. We recommended to technically justify this decision (with a concept paper) and a path for the future methodological address of this topic.

f. The issue of biodiversity should have a high relevance as it is one of the co-benefits defined in REDD+ and the institutions running the project have a great scientific background on this field.

g. Anticipate possible need of budgetary movements, from objective 5, to meet the other results. This objective is well advanced in its execution and the tasks, still required, can be carried out with a tighter budget that the one that was planned, allowing the possibility of some additional financial resources to comply other results that have a much more adjusted budget, as it is the case of objective 6. (See Annex # 2 with summary of executed budget and budget to be implemented)

h. The achievement of results must have an integral vision from the INBio-CATIE team, so that the strengths of both institutions are used. It requires a greater knowledge management. There are very solid internal capabilities at the INBio-CATIE team; but it requires better articulation of such knowledge and skills for an innovative and creative approach, methodological speaking, in such novel topics as addressing the second D and biodiversity in the REDD+ topic. There are human resources, experience, knowledge, strengths and creativity to do it.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER TO CENTRAL AMERICA

Recent literature (CEPAL: 2014) mentioned that REDD+ Costa Rica Strategy is the most advanced in the region, with an important approach in the "+" elements of REDD+. The project, through the results of Objective 1, can be the basis to show both regionally and globally, what has been the process to achieve this advances, lessons learned and barriers related to the "+" elements.

The results of the objectives 2, 3 and 4 allow generating methodological recommendations to address issues such as pressures and drivers of deforestation, the relationship of early actions with the state of forest ecosystems and vulnerability of forest ecosystems. It also contributes to map algebra locating where the REDD+ actions will have more impact, from the point of view of carbon maintenance and sequestration and the co-benefits.

The evaluation team considered that the most important recommendation on this topic, is to make a prompt identification of the status of all REDD+ proposals in Central America; identifying the actors directly involved and their interests regarding REDD+, and specifically, about their needs to solve methodological problems as Costa Rica has faced .

This step is critical. The success of this task (objective 6) depends on a good identification of information and learning interests of the Central American stakeholders in REDD+. The interests of the audience are the main issue. Then, the project, as issuer, defines the information, knowledge and technologies that can satisfy those interests. As a consequent action, decisions about media to transmit Project and Costa Rican teachings about REDD+ are done.

It is also important to share these results and documents through presentations at conferences, forums and seminars held around the world in relation to REDD+. If possible, it can generate articles for various scientific and academic spaces working on the topic.

Although not yet applicable on timeline, the evaluation team recommends to start Objective 6 execution before scheduled. Advancing the identification, characterization (interests, capacities and trajectory) and establishing partnerships with key stakeholders in the region. Some of the leading organizations in this regard are: A-RED, UNEP-WCMC, forest official institutions, discussion tables around the issue and bilateral and multilateral projects related to the implementation of REDD actions in the countries.

12. FINAL REFLECTION BY THE EVALUATION TEAM ON THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND CURRENT REDD+ DISCUSSIONS

Clearly, when the Project was designed, there was a will to contribute to REDD+ Costa Rica and other Central America REDD+ strategies, inputs as the relationship between the maintenance or preservation of carbon sinks, biodiversity conservation, resilience, forest ecosystem services and other co-benefits (water, landscape, governance and combating poverty), defined on Cancun.

Biodiversity conservation is fundamental and it could be said, it is the contribution the world expects from Costa Rica in REDD+ topic. How to incorporate biodiversity in the analysis and implementation of REDD+? If there are gaps in these core issues related to biodiversity and degradation, then the project could make general suggestions on how Costa Rica and other countries could solve them.

The project is highly relevant in relation to actual international negotiations on REDD+. Discussions and works on *ex ante* methodologies to social and environmental impact of REDD+ projects. There are several institutions such as Meridiam, CIFOR, Trondheim Group, World Bank, UNFCCC and the UNFCCC, who have made proposals to identify REDD+ effects and measurement of their impacts, in order to be able to establish corrective measures to be included in the REDD+ project design in each country. The project has great significance because it is centered on these concerns and can make a great contribution.

There are also critical discussions about establishing baselines for REDD+ type early actions. Methodology and results of land use and forest cover comparison, in three different periods, will be a great contribution of the project to feed various global forums on REDD+.

There are different approaches: some focus on reducing deforestation/degradation risk (REDD), others on maintenance and increase of carbon stocks, there are those which seek recognition and monitoring of social and environmental benefits within the REDD+ mechanism (co-benefits) and others. All of them have both, supporters and opponents, due to the technical, financial, social and environmental implications. In this respect the results of the project can greatly contribute to discussions that have not yet concluded.

The global debate on REDD+ is a political economy discussion, dimensioning forests for conservation as highly valuable, beyond their goods (timber and other products) and even beyond environmental services. Currently there is talk of their value in ecosystem functions and, not only for their exchange or market values, but contributions to resilience, adaptation to climate change and even ethical values. Certainty, the project will contribute on this dynamic discussion.

The evaluation team is of the opinion that, Costa Rica, in its final product in REDD+, may not be distinguished by the amount of carbon emissions reduced by avoiding deforestation, nor by the amount of carbon they sequester by reconverting deforested areas in new forests; it will be distinguished by the quality of the biodiversity of that carbon sinked by existing forests, in resilience by restoring landscapes, in conservation of forest ecosystems and co-benefits, this latter placed on table by our country.

The evaluation team believes that in Costa Rica, as it has already been done with coffee (fine and gourmet coffees), the country could compete in REDD+ for quality rather than quantity. At the end, if two countries have the same offer on REDD+ to compete for carbon credits possibly it will win one with the greater conserved biodiversity offer and the greater co-benefits. Costa Rica is classified as a middle income country, co-benefits as water or fighting poverty will not be its great attraction. If the carbon market will not develop because no bidders or because the country decided not to go down that path, conservation of biodiversity will be the attractive for international cooperation.

In the current Costa Rican government, there is a discussion on this topic. The new authorities want to give more relevance to degradation, biodiversity and other co-benefits of REDD+.

In the political, scientific and academic world, current REDD+ discussions highlight, with very different points of view, key issues such as: What is meant by forest degradation?, What areas include the plus and how far to go without it becoming rural development programs, losing their superior goal which is a payment based on measurable sequestration results?, What are and how to measure the co-benefits defined in Cancun (biodiversity, water, landscape, governance and combating poverty)?, What is the contribution to biodiversity and its relationship with the quality and quantity of carbon sinks?, What value (transaction, change, use, symbolic and ethical values) should be assigned to biodiversity in a market of avoidance emissions from deforestation and forest degradation?.

The project can contribute to this discussion with applied science and factual evidence. Both, CATIE and INBio, have the strengths to achieve it. There is no doubt that the contribution will be invaluable. The evaluation team is confident that this project is a great opportunity for both institutions to project themselves as experts in methodological approaches to these issues in Central America and the rest of the world. INBio and CATIE have all the capabilities and strengths to do it.

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13. ANNEXES

ANNEX # 1:

SCHEMATIZATION OF THE PROJECT *"LESSONS LEARNED AND DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT REDD+ INITIATIVES: THE EXPERIENCE OF COSTA RICA"*

ANNEX # 2:
BUDGET SUMMARY: EXECUTED BUDGET AND BUDGET TO BE IMPLEMENTED

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES	EXECUTED BUDGET TO 9-30-14	BUDGET TO BE IMPLEMENTED	TOTAL	EXECUTED BUDGET TO 30-9-14	BUDGET TO BE IMPLEMENTED
OBJECTIVE 1: To analyze the available information and knowledge gaps in Costa Rica, to demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be derived from the REDD+ initiatives.	133.538	63.435	**196.974**	**68%**	**32%**
OBJECTIVE 2: To assess how and where REDD+ activities in Costa Rica may have a greater positive impact on the improvement of the status of the forest ecosystems, their services and their implications on human welfare.	115.451	128.885	**244.336**	**47%**	**53%**
OBJECTIVE 3: To analyze, with available information, how to guide REDD+ actions to ensure a greater resilience of carbon reservoirs.	65.258	34.616	**99.874**	**65%**	**35%**
OBJECTIVE 4: To propose REDD+ Costa Rica actions to contribute to climate change adaptation of the main Costa Rican forest ecosystems.	45.133	66.222	**111.355**	**41%**	**59%**
OBJECTIVE 5: To implement a virtual research and communication environment, including environmental, social and economic data and information of Costa Rica, to support multidisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration among decision-makers, stakeholders and biodiversity specialists (users), in relation to REDD+ initiatives.	222.347	231.570	**453.917**	**49%**	**51%**
OBJECTIVE 6: To design a capacity development and knowledge transfer strategy for the Central American region, based on lessons learned by Costa Rica at implementing REDD+ early actions.	7.112	205.332	**212.444**	**3%**	**97%**
OBJECTIVE 7: To manage the project in an efficient and effective manner.	163.337	241.674	**405.011**	**40%**	**60%**
Total before overhead and unforeseen	752.177	971.735	**1.723.911**	**44%**	**56%**
Overhead (10%)	75.431	96.960	**172.391**	**44%**	**56%**
Unforeseen (6%)	6.398	97.037	**103.435**	**6%**	**94%**
GRAND TOTAL	834.005	1.165.732	**1.999.737**	**42%**	**58%**

ANNEX # 3:
RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT BY THE EVALUATION TEAM QUESTIONS

The Ministry of Climate and Environment's response to questions from the mid-term evaluation team of the Project "Lessons Learned and Capacity Building to implement REDD+ Initiatives project."

1. What is the Project´ spirit-motivation?

The motivation behind the project was a need for increased knowledge and understanding of how REDD+ planning can maintain the carbon storage capacity, biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate change resilience of forests. These various values of forests have at times been thought to be dependent on trade-offs. It is hoped that this increased knowledge can guide national strategies and result in more robust and sustainable REDD+ implementation. Costa Rica was seen as the best positioned place to undertake such knowledge generation, given the unique state of knowledge on the country's biodiversity and ecosystem services. By supporting this project, the results of Norway's previous contributions to INBio can also be put to new and much needed uses.

2. What are the three most important impacts expected from this Project?

The three most important impacts expected from this project are:

- Increased knowledge on the relationships between carbon content, biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate change resilience in forests.
- That this knowledge is useful and used by decision makers in Costa Rica
- That the experiences of Costa Rica in using this knowledge prove useful for other countries in the region (and globally). Concretely, we hope that this will result in guidance on how:
    - Implement REDD+ in ways to seek to maximize carbon uptake, biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate change resilience.
    - Design a Safeguards Information System that enables cost-efficient and feasible identification of REDD+ impacts on biodiversity.

3. From the standpoint of Norway International Cooperation: In general, what are the expectations at international level for the Project?

We hope that the experiences and knowledge of the project can be spread throughout the international networks of INBio and CATIE, but also actively through UN-REDD (WCMC is connected to the project) as well as the Trondheim group.

We suggest that the project explores the possibility of making the generated knowledge relevant for Costa Rica's efforts in the World Bank Carbon Fund. Any guidance, products, methodologies, etc. that are used in the Carbon Fund will prove it's value to the international REDD+ community through practical implementation.

4. **Concerning the Project Objective 6: What are the <u>expectations about knowledge transfer to Central America</u>? Do you have specific recommendations for partnerships in this regard?**

We hope that the results of the project will prove their relevance for other countries in the region as well. Increased knowledge of the connection between the carbon storage capacity of forests and other forest functions, as well as experience on how to use such knowledge in activity prioritization and spatial planning of REDD+ can have great value beyond Costa Rica's borders. We therefore expect that the project works to catalogue the experiences that are made, in addition to explore where the project results may have the greatest relevance.

Specifically, we encourage the project to investigate whether there are any countries in the region that are involved in the World Bank Carbon Fund and which might be in a position to contribute from the project's results.

We encourage continued communication and collaboration with the partners of the Mesoamerican Environmental Sustainability Strategy (EMSA) such as Conafor and Conabio in Mexico.

5. **What is the <u>Costa Rican´s scientific and technical contribution expected</u> at the negotiating table and talks in REDD+?**

From our perspective, our expectations here are also answered in question 3.
The knowledge and experiences that we the project can develop may prove to be highly useful to aid countries in meeting two of the Warsaw-framework requirements; namely a National REDD+ Strategy and a Safeguards Information System. The focus on this project is in our opinion highly relevant in relation to safeguards for REDD+, particularly the issue of permanence. A solid fundament in the safeguards for forest co-benefits is a requirement for the sustainability REDD+. As such, we see the greatest value to be found in increased knowledge outside and beyond the UNFCCC negotiations.