

# Ex-post evaluation

## Municipal regional planning and environmental protection in Rio Plátano, Honduras



<b>Title</b>	"Municipal regional planning and environmental protection in Rio Plátano" (PROTEP)		
<b>Sector and CRS code</b>	41030: Environmental policy, protection, sustainable use of natural		
<b>Project number</b>	2006 661 31 (investment project); 2016 70 124 (accompanying measure for follow-up support)		
<b>Commissioned by</b>	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development		
<b>Recipient/Project-executing agency</b>	Instituto Nacional de Conservación y Desarrollo Forestal (ICF)		
<b>Project volume/Financing instrument</b>	EUR 6.62 million (investment projects); EUR 3.0 million (accompanying measure for follow-up support)		
<b>Project duration</b>	2010 – 2017 (investment projects); 2017 – 2021 (accompanying measure for follow-up support)		
<b>Year of report</b>	2022	<b>Year of random sample</b>	2021

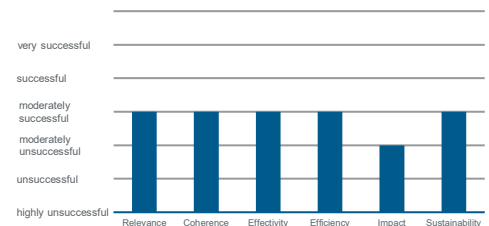
### Objectives and project outline

At outcome level, the project was intended to contribute to residents, administrations and the ICF implementing measures for sustainable management and the protection of natural resources in the Rio Plátano biosphere reserve (RPBR) and its zone of influence. At impact level, it was intended to help the RPBR better fulfil its conservation, development and logistics functions and improve the livelihoods of local residents (ultimate objective). The project supported the establishment of a land registry and the granting of rights of use/land titles in the catchment area, as well as for indigenous territories within the RPBR, invested in equipping municipalities and local institutions in the area of land registry, local economic development, as well as the monitoring and protection of the RPBR.

### Key findings

- Despite a high demand for capacity-enhancing measures and structural organisational changes, as well as high process complexity, the majority of activities (outputs) in the project area (land regulation) were carried out with a 21-month delay.
- Overall, the project was a striking example in the area of land regulation and also brought about structural changes in the project region.
- However, the project was unable to make any conceptual or actual contribution to the area of resource conservation, which is central to the project. A measurable reduction of deforestation based on the implemented (partially small-scale) measures already appears to be conceptually implausible in view of the diverse, massive sources of threats to the RPBR. Of seven outcome indicators, only one target value was achieved and two were partially achieved. There is therefore little evidence of improved sustainable management and resource conservation or improved fulfilment of the functions of the biosphere (impact objective).
- Only the land regulation measures were sustainable; this materialised in a change of awareness with regard to the relevance of land regulation and ongoing land registry management to this day (due to ever-increasing tax revenues of the municipalities). However, external factors, e.g. migration waves and illegal activities, jeopardise the durability of the effects achieved in the area of land regulation.

**Overall rating:**  
moderately unsuccessful



### Conclusions

- Land regulation measures should be accompanied by their own objectives (e.g. strengthening the rights of indigenous peoples); a direct contribution to resource conservation is only expected to be marginal.
- The inclusion and empowerment of local structures (particularly administrations) in land regulation around protected areas is central to their sustainability.
- Ownership by central governments is crucial in prosecuting illegal activities and improper land use.
- The land regulation measures may be successfully replicated in similar contexts insofar as there is state ownership of land.

## Ex post evaluation – rating according to OECD-DAC criteria

### General conditions and classification of the project

The project “Municipal regional planning and environmental protection in Río Plátano” (in Spanish “Proyecto de Ordenamiento Territorial Comunal y Protección del Medio Ambiente en Río Plátano”, PROTEP) was intended to contribute to the sustainable management and protection of natural resources in the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (RPBR) and its zone of influence. With an area of 832,332ha (around 7% of the national area), the RPBR is Honduras’ largest and (as an UNESCO World Heritage Site) **most important conservation area. It is divided into three zones:** the core zone (210,432ha<sup>1</sup>), the adjacent buffer zone (196,739ha), which primarily contains smallholder settlements, and the adjoining cultural zone (389,525ha) with a high proportion of indigenous populations. Sustainable use of resources by the local population is permitted in the buffer and cultural zones. Forestry and agriculture as well as livestock farming form the livelihood for the predominantly poor residents.

**German Development Cooperation (DC)** has been active in the region for more than 20 years with several financial and technical cooperation projects (FC and TC). Within the scope of the predecessor project “Río Plátano cooperative project” (in Spanish “Protección y Manejo de la Biósfera de Río Plátano”, PBRP), large parts of the core zone were secured from 1997 to 2007 (i.e. preventing human intervention or occupation in the core zone), in large parts of the RPBR a land register was created and all preparatory steps for the awarding of usage permits for settlers and two titles of ownership for indigenous groups were concluded. Sustainable development should also be promoted by supporting productive measures.

**Here, land regulation describes the measurement of land areas, their entry in a land registry system and the titling of land areas to landowners**, i.e. the legal granting of ownership rights.<sup>2</sup> Clear and legally registered ownership relationships around protected areas are generally of great importance because they are intended to define the boundaries around the land areas to be protected and to ensure that no human intervention or occupation occurs in the protected areas. Transparency in land regulation is helpful for monitoring the local residents’ proper use of the land, in the case of PROTEP, in the cultural and buffer zone.

At the time of the PBRP, several measures were implemented by the AFE-COHDEFOR (“Administración Forestal del Estado – Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal”), which later came to be known as the National Forest and Nature Conservation Institute (in Spanish “Instituto Nacional de Conservación y Desarrollo Forestal”, ICF). Firstly, the boundaries of the RPBR have been redefined and their functions and macro-zones have been specified. Secondly, a Regional Office for the management of the Río Plátano biosphere (“Regional Office Biosphere Río Plátano” – RBRP) was established and subsequently restructured to cope with the implementation of several special projects for the administration of the reserve under the RPBR’s management plan (in Spanish “Plan de Manejo de la Biósfera Río Plátano”). Thirdly, Decision no. 140 of the National Agricultural Institute (INA, 1997) transferred full ownership of land areas in the biosphere from the state to the AFE-COHDEFOR which existed at the time in 1997. For its part, AFE-COHDEFOR entered the biosphere into the “catálogo del patrimonio público” (in Spanish) catalogue of inalienable public forest heritage, which led to enormous controversies with the local population. Although the document explicitly stated that the titling did not affect the areas occupied by indigenous communities covered by ILO Convention 169, the indigenous population in particular felt that the registration would have negative consequences for the land areas they occupied and their rights of use.

### Brief description of the project

The FC measure was implemented from May 2010 to July 2017, but was originally conceived for the approximately seven-year shorter period of April 2008 to April 2012. The complementary measure for follow-up support took place from April 2017 to October 2021. The executing agency of the project was originally AFE-COHDEFOR, which was converted into ICF between project planning and the start of project implementation.

**The aim of the FC project** was to improve the sustainable management and protection of natural resources in the biosphere and their zones of influence (objective at impact level). This should help the RPBR to perform its

<sup>1</sup> The acreage of the three RPBR zones relate to the areas at the time of project design.

<sup>2</sup> Measured land areas and their owners are entered in the land registry. Titling is the task of the “Instituto Nacional de Conservación y Desarrollo Forestal”, ICF, in the case of PROTEP.

functions better (overall objective). To this end, support was provided for the establishment of land registers and the awarding of rights of use or land titles in the territories of the communities of Dulce Nombre de Culmí, Iriona and, with restrictions, Juan Francisco Bulnes as well as in indigenous territories within the biosphere. Investments were also made in equipping municipalities and local institutions in the area of registries (e.g. vehicles, computers and measuring devices), in local economic development (e.g. in the certification of cocoa and coffee production), as well as in the monitoring and protection of the biosphere. The capitalisation of an endowment fund intended for this context could not be realised because the environmental fund intended for this specific purpose (in Spanish “Fondo de Áreas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre”) did not meet KfW’s minimum requirements for endowment funds.

**The target group** was the predominantly very poor population of the biosphere and its neighbouring communities. Approx. half of the 70,000 inhabitants of the project region are considered to be mestizos, while among the indigenous people (approx. 45% of the population), the majority are Miskito people, followed by Garifuna, Pech and Tawakha.

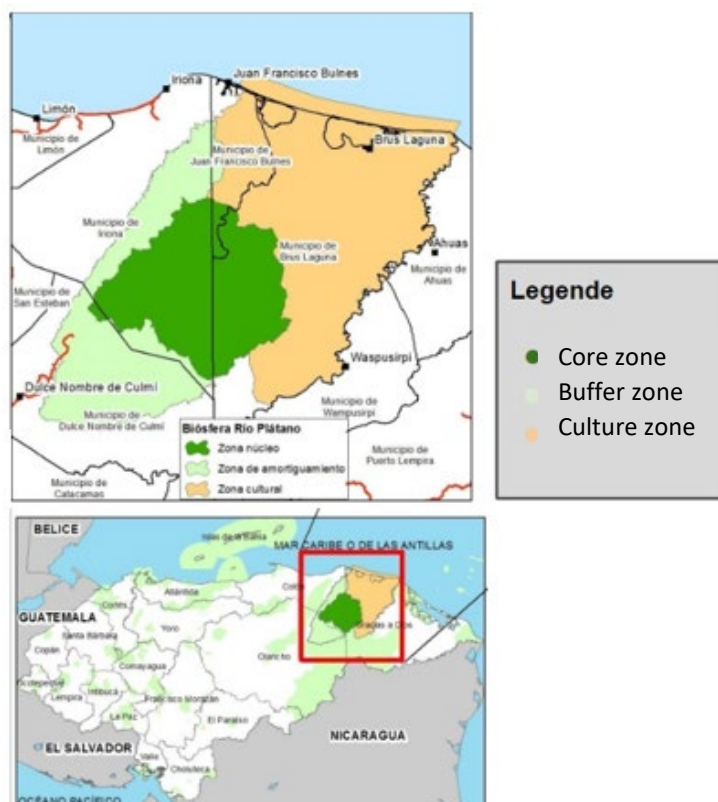
**The total costs** of the project amounted to EUR 7.7 million, of which EUR 6.6 million was provided as an FC grant; EUR 650.2 thousand was borne by ICF and the remaining EUR 220 thousand by TC. After the end of the project in 2017, residual funds of EUR 87.1 thousand were still available, which were to be used as part of the complementary measure for some of the necessary acquisitions. The total costs of the complementary measure, including the residual funds from the project, amounted to EUR 3.3 million, of which EUR 3.0 million came from an FC grant and EUR 0.3 million from the executing agency ICF. A total of EUR 2.9 million was disbursed for the complementary measures, the remaining EUR 9.4 thousand should be reduced.

The project was conceived as a so-called **cooperation project with the TC programme** “Promotion of Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Local Economic Development (PRORENA), Rio Plátano component”, which was **implemented from 2005 to 2013**. This was intended to strengthen the project-executing agency, the communities and indigenous/local organisations and to provide consulting services for local economic promotion and for the protection and monitoring of the biosphere. Since the FC measures only started after initial delays, the time overlap of the TC and FC measures (PROTEP and PRORENA) was lower than planned, which is why part of the TC activities relevant to the FC project were transferred to the FC project’s implementation consultant.

## Breakdown of total costs

		Inv. (planned)	Inv. (actual)	Accompanying measure (planned)	Accompanying measure (actual)
<b>Investment costs (total)</b>	<b>EUR million</b>	<b>12.06</b>	<b>7.75</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.30</b>
Counterpart contribution	EUR million	3.56	0.65	0.30	0.30
Co-financing	EUR million	1.80	0.22	0.00	0.00
Of which BMZ funds	EUR million	6.70	6.62	3.00	3.00

## Map of the project country including the three zones of the biosphere



Source: Plan de investigación y monitoreo de la Reserva del Hombre y la Biósfera del Río Plátano (2014–2026). ICF y Proyecto USAID ProParque 79, p. 6 (right figure).

## Rating according to OECD-DAC criteria

### Relevance

#### *Policy and priority focus*

At the time of the project appraisal and in the course of implementation – and also after several changes of government – PROTEP was **designed according to the national policies of the Honduran government and the priorities of German-Honduran DC.**

For example, the project focused on “Environmental policy, protection and sustainable use of natural resources” in the German-Honduran country strategy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), as well as the Honduran government’s poverty alleviation strategy (2001). Both pursued the goal of poverty reduction by promoting the sustainability of use and the protection of natural resources.

From 2016 – i.e. shortly before its end – the project was ultimately embedded in the Honduras 2016–2022 country strategy and in the DC programme “Environmental policy, protection and sustainable use of natural resources”. The objectives of the DC programme in Honduras were: “Protection and sustainable management of natural resources improve the living conditions of rural populations, reduce climate risks and contribute to the preservation of biodiversity”. The DC programme was based on the most important national strategies of the Hernández government (2014–2022) and was intended to contribute to their implementation (in particular the National Plan (in Spanish “Plan de Nación” (2010)), the “Plan for a Better Life for All” (in Spanish “Plan de Todos para una Vida mejor” (2014)), the Masterplan for water, forests and soils (in Spanish “Plan Maestro Agua, Bosque y Suelo” (2017)), the guidelines and programmes of the national forest and nature conservation programme (in Spanish “Programa Nacional Forestal” (2009)), the national strategy for climate change (in Spanish “Estrategia Nacional de Cambio Climático” (2011)), the national strategy for food security (in Spanish “Estrategia Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional” (2010)), and the biodiversity strategy (2017).

**The project was also intended to contribute to several international agreements.** This was in line with UNESCO's biosphere concept ("Man and the Biosphere"), which was launched in 1971. The project pursued the clarification of the rights of indigenous peoples within the meaning of ILO Convention 169, which came into force in 1991, and the protection of biodiversity and the recognition of traditional knowledge in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In addition, the project conceptually aims to achieve UN Millennium Development Goal 7 "Ensure environmental sustainability" adopted in 2000 and, subsequently, SDG 15 "Life on Land" after the introduction of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.

#### *Focus on needs and capacities of participants and stakeholders*

**The project provided targeted reinforcement for the needs and capacities of the ICF, the municipalities and the indigenous organisations** through i.) the promotion of communities and local organisations in the area of land regulation processes, through ii.) the strong participation of indigenous and other local organisations as well as communities in land regulation processes through individual investments (e.g. radio station, equipment for planning/environmental departments) and in particular by iii.) the complementary measure, e.g. in the application support of the local government's operational rules (in Spanish "Reglamento de Funcionamiento de la Administración Municipal", RFAM), an administrative plan that defines, among other things, a procedure for granting property titles. In addition, TC originally intended to implement target-group-oriented measures, including the analysis of conflicts of use, regional planning, strengthening of municipal environmental offices, updating of municipal development plans and financial management.

**The design took the needs of indigenous groups in particular into account** by making PROTEP clearly known for the implementation of ILO Convention 169<sup>3</sup> on indigenous and tribal peoples and by clarifying titles and rights of use through usage agreements (in Spanish "Contratos de Usufructo Familiar", CUFs).

**The need for effective land regulation at the time of conception was also explicitly expressed by the municipalities** prior to project implementation, among other things, by the municipalities of Iriona and Dulce Nombre de Culmí applying for a land registry of around 370,000ha. The need resulted from generally inadequate municipal land register management; in spite of numerous efforts, the legalisation of urban and rural land – managed by the municipal cadastral office – was of little importance, as the instrument generally did not cover more than 15% of the population, was outdated and non-transparent, according to the feasibility study of the project.

**The selection of AFE-COHDEFOR (at that time as the administrator of the RPBR) as the project-executing agency was appropriate**, as AFE-COHDEFOR was fully owned by the biosphere and was therefore responsible for its administration. Even after the transformation of the AFE into the ICF, it remained the appropriate project-executing agency, as it was the state agency with the highest local presence in the region. On the part of the project-executing agency AFE-COHDEFOR, the design identified insufficient funding and capacities (the establishments' competencies were more in the forestry sector than in land regulation and conservation) for effective management of the RPBR. With the switch to ICF as the project-executing agency, similar bottlenecks persisted, as ICF also had no expertise in the area of land registry. In order to address these capacity weaknesses, the design envisaged the use of a consulting company.

#### *Appropriateness of design*

**The problem analysis** of the project design was generally appropriate in the context of the progressive destruction of forests by i.) traditional use (fire clearance for agricultural and livestock farming) and ii.) legal and illegal exploitation of the forest for the extraction of forest products. In addition to forest fires, the feasibility study of the project estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000ha of the total 7,220,000ha of forest (value for 2010 according to Global Forest Watch) were deforested in Honduras each year. The selection of the RPBR as the project location made sense insofar as the RPBR, as an UNESCO biosphere reserve, was 7% of Honduras' national area and was Honduras' largest conservation area with the largest deciduous forest in Central America. The selection of the Iriona and Dulce Nombre de Culmí municipalities as priority project locations still seems reasonable today. On the one hand, these municipalities explicitly requested the creation of land registries, and on the other

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<sup>3</sup> ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples is the only legally binding international treaty that has comprehensive protection of the rights of indigenous peoples as its objective. The convention deals with issues such as the right to one's own way of life, culture, territory, religion and language, as well as discrimination in the social, health, training and occupational insurance sectors.

hand, the land area to be measured for the two municipalities included a total of 260,000ha out of a total of 832,332ha according to the appraisal report and housed approx. 60% of the regional population.

**The project's impact logic is largely coherent** (see Figure 1 for a detailed Theory of Change (ToC) reconstructed as part of the evaluation). The combination of promotion of i.) local economy, ii.) capacities in land registry management of the municipalities for improved land regulation and iii.) the organisational capacities of indigenous organisations is intended improve the sustainable management of natural resources in and around the biosphere reserve, while creating diversified (sustainable) income opportunities for households in the communities adjacent to the biosphere (outcome). In turn, this should lead to an improvement in the fulfilment of the conservation and development function<sup>4</sup> of the biosphere reserve (impact) (see Figure 1). An important conceptual assumption here is that sustained land use and clear land rights lead to holistic protection of the biosphere reserve in general, assuming that economic benefits directly lead to enhanced protection of the RPBR. **However, this assumption is very ambitious given the multiple sources of threats for the RPBR.** In order to further improve the fulfilment of the RPBR's logistics function, the concept included measures to develop a comprehensive monitoring system (SIMONI).

**In addition to the impact chains in Figure 1, outcomes and impacts outside of resource conservation are plausible**, in particular as a result of improved land regulation. These include increased tax revenues, professionalisation and efficiency increases in land registry management at municipal and regional level, decentralisation effects through the strengthening of local governments, an increase in trust between the local population, ICF and government, the strengthening of rights and empowerment of marginalised (indigenous) groups – particularly with regard to land rights – and the associated effects on identity and cultural diversity, food security and related poverty reduction processes.

The aim was to **improve sustainable, local forms of management** by continuing investments in small-scale projects in local cooperatives in the forestry, coffee and cocoa production department with a focus on value chain expansion and product certification. Forests, agriculture and livestock farming formed the livelihood for the predominantly poor population around the RPBR; at the time of conception, over 90% of the economically active population of the buffer zone were active in agriculture and livestock farming. Accordingly, the design of the promotional activities to promote the economy was consistent with the rest of the project. Nevertheless, in retrospect, this component, which was originally to be implemented by TC, was detached from the project components for land regulation; synergies between the components are not apparent in conceptual terms. Especially since the municipalities and the ICF were not involved in the component, it acted as a separate small project, which made small-scale individual investments without a clear link.

The approach taken by the project to implement land regulation only with **the involvement and awareness-raising of the municipalities and the (in particular, indigenous) population and organisations** is coherent and relevant in view of the controversies between the local population and AFE-COHDEFOR triggered by the registration of the biosphere in 1997 in the "Catalogue of Inalienable Public Forestry Heritage". The concept was also logically linked to two developments at the time. On the one hand, it was based on the previous FC project PBRP (1997–2007), which from 2004 supported measures to establish a land registry and land regulation in the buffer zone and in the cultural zone. On the other hand, the land registry issue was the political focus at the time of conception by a large World Bank project and the legal framework was favoured as a result.

**Despite the comprehensible impact logic, it is important for the evaluation to criticise the design for the fact that it did not reflect the land regulation components (components 1 and 2) in its objectives at either outcome or impact level.** In theory, a lack of ownership and usage rights created incentives for unsustainable resource management at the time of design and made it more difficult for the territories to defend themselves locally against external settlers; only 42% of smallholder farmers (defined as land ownership under 5ha) and 76% of large landowners (defined as land ownership over 50ha) had secure land rights at that time according to the project's appraisal report. **Conceptually speaking, however, a positive impact of increased, sustainable**

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<sup>4</sup> According to the International Guidelines for the World Network, biosphere reserves have the following functions (UNESCO 1996: Biosphere reserves. The Seville Strategy and the International Guidelines for the World Network. Bonn, 24.):

1. Protection: – contribution to the conservation of ecosystems, landscapes, species and genetic diversity;
2. Development: promotion of economic and human development – which is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable;
3. Logistical support: promotion of demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and environmental observation in the context of local, regional, national and global issues of protection and sustainable development.

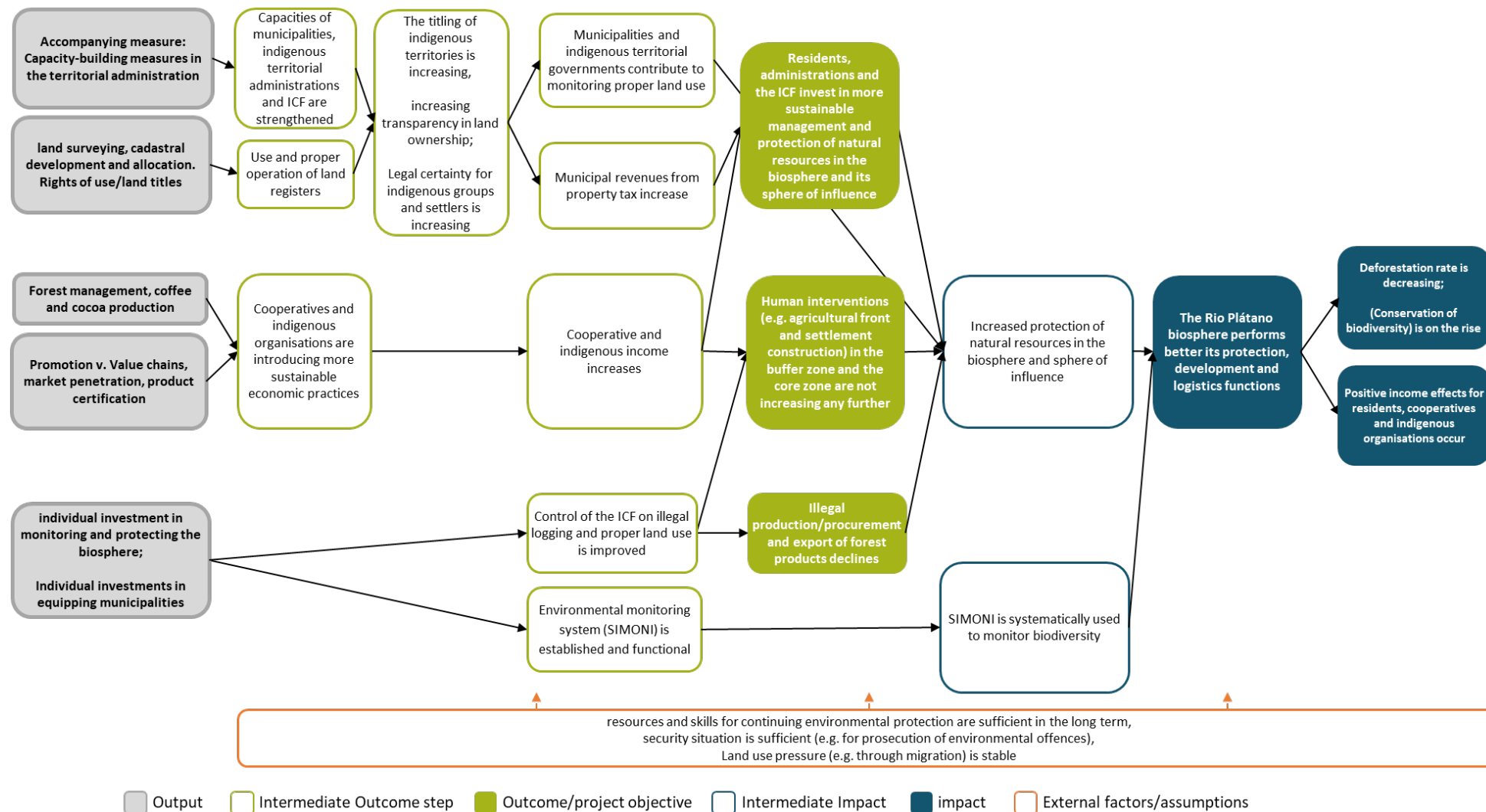
**land use on forested land can only be expected to a limited extent. However, positive effects of land regulation can plausibly occur in other areas (see above).**

In practice, the project is primarily classified as a land regulation project by all implementing actors in retrospect, in which the improvement of the sustainable use of natural resources played only a marginal, indirect role. This estimate confirms the cost distribution in which 75% was spent for the land regulation component (component 1) (see Efficiency). The inclusion of all sustainability dimensions in the design may have been reasonable in order to guarantee consistency with overarching development policy guidelines and accuracy of fit with an DC programme in resource conservation. **Nevertheless, a much more prominent presentation of land regulation in the outcome and impact objectives would have been important in order to realistically reflect the project priorities and the successes of the rather complex and ambitious measures in the area of land regulation in the formal project logic.**

**Pressure from external factors and risks**, primarily illegal deforestation activities in combination with dysfunctional law enforcement prevailing in the region, was a massive challenge for the project design and implementation. Since all the groups involved today agree that **mitigating these risks is the responsibility of the central government**, the cooperation of the project should also have been initiated at the highest institutional level. The same applies to the anchoring of created land registers in the national land register system, which should have been guaranteed by closer involvement of the central government, because a lack of consistency in land title data between national and regional levels increases the risk of land being assigned to different owners or resold.

The use of an implementation consultant for a large part of the measures was correct, mainly due to the project-executing agency's lack of land-titling-specific knowledge. Since the project was designed as an open programme, it was possible to continue the planned measures despite reduced TC activities. The project was implemented as what is known as a cooperative project. However, cooperative projects, which required the parallel implementation of closely linked FC and TC measures, have not proven effective due to FC's dependence on certain TC services (see Efficiency). As early as at the end of the project, it was determined that the implementation of separate FC and TC projects would have been more expedient as part of a joint DC programme based on the country strategy; however, this did not correspond to the status of DC at the time.

**Chart 1: Theory of Change**





### *Response to changes/adaptability*

PROTEP had to be adjusted several times before the start of the measures, as unforeseen events (e.g. coup) delayed the start of the project and subsequently the implementation of all activities between the feasibility study and implementation (see Efficiency).

Due to the initial delay of the FC measures, TC was unable to implement all planned TC measures before the end of its project. The implementation consultant then took over the implementation of these measures. This was straightforward due to the design of the project as an open concept.

The project's most important response to the delays was to implement the complementary measure after the original project term in order to secure the completion of PROTEP activities. Their completion and sustainability were severely endangered due to a lack of capacity of all participating groups and due to incomplete establishment of the necessary processes in land regulation.

Furthermore, the planned capitalisation of an endowment fund had to be discontinued, as the national environmental fund selected by the project-executing agency did not meet KfW's minimum requirements for capital funds for environmental and nature protection. It was possible to use the funds released from this to cover additional requirements in other components as part of the open programme. This made sense, as the extended implementation time also increased the costs for regulating land ownership.

**In general, the adaptability of the project is rated as high**, because it was possible to achieve most outputs in spite of different obstacles (e.g. increased wave of migration, delayed start of implementation, deterioration of the regional security situation, change of implementation organisations such as the executing agency or components 3) thanks to the adjustments. In this context, the implementation of the downstream complementary measure should also be understood as an adaptation measure that was absolutely necessary, taking into account the complexity of the structures introduced by the project, in order to sufficiently strengthen the capacities of target groups and partners.

### *Summary of the rating:*

**In one aspect**, the project was **a model example (land regulation) for relevance**, as it correctly identified and meaningfully addressed the capacities of all groups involved as well as the potential conflicts at the design stage. In addition, the project demonstrated a high degree of adaptability from the outset. However, it must be noted that the **objective at impact and outcome level did not primarily correspond to the actual project focus on land regulation**. In concrete terms, this means that the main measures (component 1) of the project only paid into the actual project and sector objectives to a very limited extent (in the area of resource conservation) with the use of the funds. The relevance is therefore rated as moderately successful.

**Relevance: 3**

## **Coherence**

### *Internal coherence*

The project **deliberately built on previous projects** and the long-standing presence of German DC in Honduras. The previous PBRP FC project secured large parts of the core zone (see framework conditions and classification of the project), created land registers in large parts of the RPBR and completed all preparatory steps for the awarding of usage rights for settlers and two ownership titles for indigenous groups. Sustainable development should also be promoted by supporting productive measures. At the time, GTZ supported AFE/COHDEFOR in management and coordination and provided specialist advice.

The organisation known as GTZ at the time was also active from 2005 to 2013 with the PRORENA TC environmental programme with measures that fell within the scope of intervention of PROTEP geographically and in terms of content. Through policy dialogue, it supported the reform processes in the sector (policy advisory component) and implemented measures (implementation component) in three regions of the country (Olancho, Occidente, Río Plátano) for i.) promoting municipalities in the decentralised exercising of their environmental responsibility and (ii) promoting local economic development and sustainable resource management through productive measures. The increased involvement of municipalities in environmental responsibility in general was also the

basis of both PRORENA and PROTEP. The exchange between the projects was mainly limited to regular exchanges of information, in which a PRORENA technical consultant was included in the PROTEP steering group. **However, originally anticipated synergies between PROTEP and TC measures could not be exploited due to the unscheduled shorter time overlap** (see Relevance).

### *External coherence*

At the design stage, the project identified two projects from other donors with synergy potential. Firstly, the bi-national World Bank/GEF project “Corazón del Corredor Biológico Mesoamericano” (CCBM), which supported the strengthening of indigenous land rights, national conservation systems and municipal approaches to resource management, as well as the development of management plans. The intervention area included the Rio Plátano (Honduras) and Bosawas (Nicaragua) biospheres with the aim of establishing a transboundary biosphere reserve. In order to ensure an effective and efficient division of labour between the two projects in the RPBR, this close coordination was agreed. **In fact, however, the cooperation remained mainly in the exchange of information. This applies to the majority of external projects that were active in the region during the implementation of PROTEP.**

Secondly, it identified potential synergies with the World Bank project “Proyecto de Administración de Tierras Honduras” (PATH). PATH supported the Property Institute (in Spanish “Instituto de Propiedad”, IP) in meeting the prerequisites for more dynamic development of the Honduran capital market by establishing a land register and cadastre with decentralised access options. From the perspective at the time, the establishment of national standards offered great potential for synergy effects. In fact, cooperation and coordination measures for the two projects were implemented with the aim of advancing the land-use titling process required by indigenous and African-American peoples. Measures were also taken to train the staff of the municipalities with regard to the integration of land register information into the SURE system (IP’s land register system) and the associated land register maintenance. Nevertheless, the qualitative interviews of this evaluation show that the **cooperation with PATH was largely limited to the first years of implementation**. However, this was not effective, as can be concluded from the poor consistency of land registry data at regional and national level between ICF and IP.

### *Summary of the rating:*

The project was successful insofar as it was specifically based on the results and structures of previous FC and TC projects and insofar as it identified all related projects of other donors in the region and the associated synergy potential. However, since the synergy potential of the project was not actually exhausted and the planned cooperation with TC in particular was only achieved to a limited extent, the coherence of the project is rated as moderately successful.

**Coherence: 3**

## **Effectiveness**

### *Achievement of (intended) targets*

The outcome target adjusted as part of the EPE<sup>5</sup> is: residents, administrations and ICF implement measures to improve sustainable management and the conservation of natural resources in the biosphere and its zone of influence through local economic promotion and investment. Table 1 summarises the achievement of the outcome objective in line with the original indicators and those newly defined as part of the EPE.

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<sup>5</sup> Outcome objective according to project design: improving the sustainable management and protection of natural resources in the biosphere and its zone of influence.

**Table 1:** Indicators and target achievement at outcome level

Indicator	Status PA (2007)	Target value PA/EPE	Actual value at final inspection (2017)	Actual value at EPE (2022)
Modified indicator: (1) No human intervention in the core zone (measured as ha with evidence of intervention)	--	Low Presence of livestock breeders/  0ha with evidence of intervention (EPE)	2,200ha with evidence of intervention	Not achieved.  The latest multitemporal study <sup>6</sup> on deforestation in the RPBR in 2019 does not contain any data on the area with evidence of intervention (in ha) in the core zone, but shows that human intervention in the core zone also took place during and after the completion of PROTEP. Deforestation during and after project implementation was higher than before. 2012–2016: 879.9ha or 220ha annually (implementation of PROTEP) 2016–2018: 179.2ha or 90ha annually (implementation of complementary measure) 2006–2012 at 238.6ha or 40ha annually (before the start of the project).
(2) Newly defined indicator: Number of observed illegal settlements and instances of land occupation in the core zone	8 illegal settlers	No illegal land occupation/settlements (PA)	N/A	Not achieved.  Although the indicator was not systematically measured, according to the final report of the consulting company, the pressure on both the core and the cultural zone due to migration waves from external settlers was an increasing problem at the conclusion of PROTEP. The multitemporal studies also confirm that the above-mentioned zones were most likely increasingly affected by illegal settlements or occupation.  Even if settlers were not to stay permanently in the core zone, the local final inspection showed that illegally produced or procured products were exported from the settlements.
Modified indicator: (3) The agricultural frontier in the crop and buffer zone remains permanently stable or is decreasing (in ha).	9,800ha p.a.	< 9,800ha p.a. (PA)	13.000ha p.a.	Not achieved.  The latest multitemporal study on deforestation in the RPBR (Centro de Información y Patrimonio Forestal (2019)) does not contain any explicit data on the development of the agricultural frontier. However, as part of the EPE, the expansion of the agricultural frontier was rated as significantly increased by almost all interviewed people.

<sup>6</sup> Centro de Información y Patrimonio Forestal (2019): Análisis de cobertura Forestal 2012 para la Reserva del Hombre y Biósfera del Río Plátano y Análisis de pérdidas y ganancias para las temporalidades 2000–2006, 2006–2012, 2012–2016 y 2016–2018 Tegucigalpa.

<p>Modified indicator: (4) Number of measures implemented by ICF to control illegal logging.</p>	<p>0 measures</p>	<p>No target level specified</p>	<p>6 measures implemented</p>	<p>Partly achieved.</p> <p>Measures such as criminal charges, control measures to detect illegal trade activities and monitoring chains of natural products.</p> <p>According to the results matrix, these were only carried out between 2011 and 2014 and were not effective according to qualitative interviews. It is clear that the measures were only used selectively. The precarious security situation for staff during the control activities was decisive for this and at the same time an indication that the effect of the control measures taken was insufficient.</p>
<p>Newly defined indicator: (5) The total number of originally planned projects promoting the sustainable use of natural resources will be implemented.</p>	<p>0 projects</p>	<p>7 projects (PA)</p>	<p>6 projects</p>	<p>Partly achieved.</p> <p>Although the projects with cooperatives were largely implemented (six out of seven), the evaluation mission did not show any lasting changes in the use of natural resources: the three cooperatives visited during the EPE no longer produce the products promoted in PRO-TEP; a fourth cooperative no longer existed. According to EPE interviews, the majority of beneficiary households are currently focused on livestock farming.</p>
<p>Newly defined indicator: (6) All implemented projects meet at least 80% of their set targets<sup>7</sup> and outputs.</p>	<p>0%</p>	<p>100% of the implemented projects meet at least 80% of the targets and outputs set (PA)</p>	<p>100% of the implemented projects meet at least 80% of the targets and outputs set</p>	<p>Partially met (output value met). However, the expected individual project objectives have not materialised (see indicator 5)</p> <p>One visited cooperative continues to use the organic fertiliser introduced by the project, which was originally planned for the coffee plantations. The cooperative stated that the fertiliser increases soil quality and yield.</p> <p>Another cooperative stated that the coffee plantations were damaged by fungus. In addition, marketing processes were stopped by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

<sup>7</sup> Each individual project defined its own objectives, which were intended to promote the sustainable use of natural resources. The achievement of these individual project objectives is included here at outcome level, as the achievement of individual project outputs results from the achievement of project objective outputs.

<p>Newly defined indicator: (7) Investments in sustainable management by the local population and communities increase after the individual projects are implemented (Number/amount of investments in sustainable management)</p>	<p>--/--</p>	<p>--/--</p>	<p>Positive impacts were expected from incentives for longer-term investments in more sustainable management. These, as well as the successful individual investments in coffee and cocoa production, have materialised to some extent.</p>	<p>Not achieved.  The four visited initiatives (out of a total of six) no longer exist or are no longer functional. The EPE was unable to identify whether the local population made any new investments in sustainable management on site. On the contrary, the cooperatives intend to resell or lease capital goods for coffee production because coffee cultivation in the region is currently not profitable.</p>
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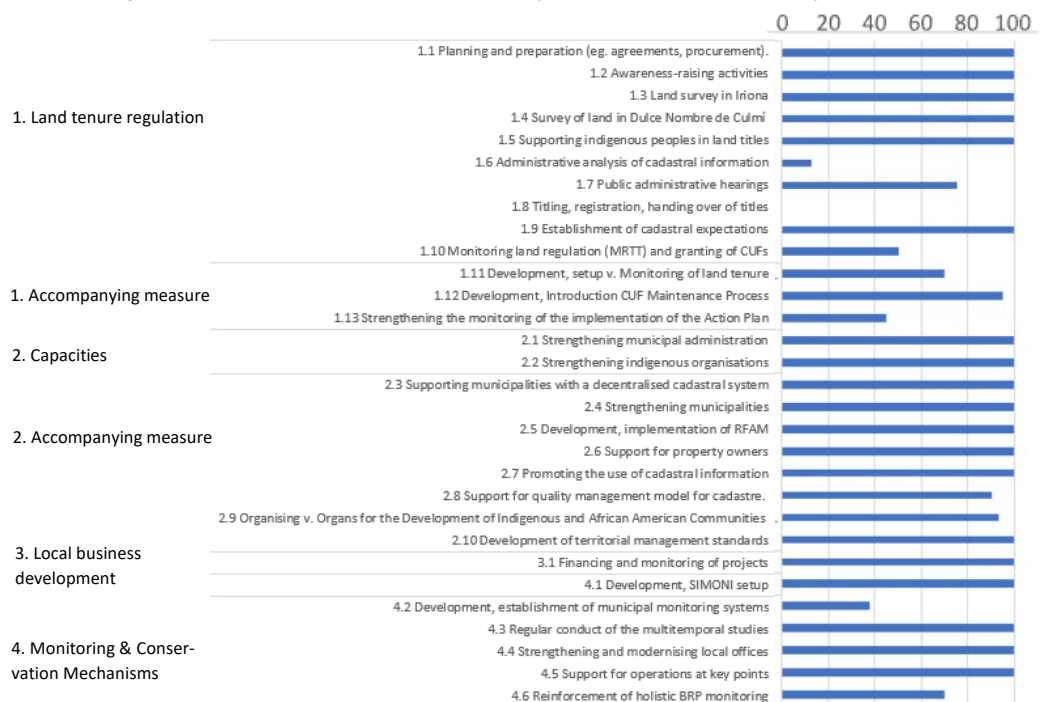
Table 1 shows that **five outcome indicators were not achieved at the time of the EPE and two indicators were only partially achieved. The low target achievement results from i.) Massive discrepancies between the project’s objective and the actual project focus, ii.) a sustained trend of high levels of deforestation in the region vis-à-vis small-scale measures and ambitious targets (e.g. stabilisation/reduction of the agricultural frontier) and iii.) insufficient involvement of the central government (e.g. in combating illegal activities).**

This low target achievement is in stark contrast to the massive successes of PROTEP in the area of land regulation (see below), which, however, do not correspond to the original formal objective and financing basis of the project and are therefore only included in the evaluation of this EPE to a limited extent.

### Contribution to achieving targets

PROTEP supported individual measures in two and, to a limited extent, in a third municipality (Francisco Bulnes) in the Río Plátano region. To achieve the above-mentioned outcome objectives, a variety of measures were planned and achieved at output level; Figure 2 summarises the percentage of output achieved across the four project components and the complementary measure.

**Figure 2:** Percentage of outputs achieved, broken down by main and complementary measure



Source: Own data. Data source: annual reports from the implementation consultant.

**Figure 2 shows that most of the outputs were implemented according to plan** (achievement at 100%). The provision of most of the planned outputs can be explained in particular by the implementation, which was described as very systematic by the consulting company. The delivery of outputs was incomplete only in the following aspects:

- output 1) regulation of land ownership, including in the case of granted titles and entry in the public register (degree of provision of activities: 0%, but was followed up as part of the complementary measure), the administrative analysis of land registry information (12.5%), the granting of usage contracts (was followed up as part of the complementary measure, e.g. by developing and introducing an efficient and decentralised maintenance process for the usage contracts);
- output 2) establishment of monitoring and nature conservation mechanisms in the establishment of a municipal monitoring system and in the reinforcement of the holistic monitoring of the RPBR.

The combination of outputs made a plausible contribution to the outcome objectives by covering all four development dimensions: i.) enhanced land regulation intended to facilitate the monitoring of proper land use in and around the RPBR, ii.) a holistic monitoring system intended to systematically capture the general development of the RPBR, iii.) strengthening local governance was intended to reinforce the effectiveness and sustainability of enhanced land regulation and iv.) local economic promotion was intended to create economic incentives to introduce more sustainable economic practices and generally use land more sustainably.

**However, as can be seen from the target achievement in Table 1, the contribution to the outcome objectives was not sufficient to actually achieve them. Only outputs 1) and 2) are used, which is primarily reflected in the increased municipal tax revenues, but not in the planned target achievement.**

#### *Quality of implementation*

With regard to the project's management, no substantial deficiencies were criticised by any party during the evaluation, with the exception of a partial lack of commitment on the part of the project-executing agency, which was, however, remedied following an exchange within the ICF Regional Directorate in the Federal Republic of Germany. Regular meetings of the steering group were particularly effective for the agreement of all parties involved. **Cooperation with the consulting company was perceived as systematic to an above-average degree, which ensured, among other things, regular self-evaluation of the project implementation and results and thus led to high control and redirection options.**

#### *Unintended consequences (positive or negative)*

Unintended (or at least not formally defined) positive impacts of PROTEP resulted primarily from the massive efforts to grant titles for indigenous territories, in particular the Miskito areas, both during and after the end of the project and inside and outside the biosphere. This was made possible in particular by the fact that the signing of the contract with FC required legal clarity about the possibility and procedure for the granting of titles for indigenous territories and thus initiated clarification processes.

**The effective introduction and professionalisation of the land registry system at the municipal level achieved significantly positive, not formally intended impacts at outcome level.** Firstly, the systematic improvement of the system in Iriona and Dulce Nombre de Culmí led to increased tax revenues at the municipal level; since the introduction of the land registry system in 2012, these have risen almost constantly (by 87.6% between 2016 and 2020). Secondly, the improved transparency in land regulation has contributed to increasing the perception and appreciation of municipalities in the land registry department at national level as well. Thirdly, the improved regulation of land ownership has contributed to increased trust between the local population and their municipalities, as well as to closer cooperation between ICF and the participating municipalities. Fourthly, due to the partially successful introduction of the rights of use (CUFs) and the massive efforts to grant titles for indigenous territories, selective decision-making processes within ICF could be decentralised, which would reduce the duration of the CUF issuing process from ten months to approx. three weeks, according to estimates. The background to this is that the success of PROTEP convinced the central management of ICF to give the regional management of the RPBR the authority to independently determine processes in the land registry area, but also the granting of CUFs in particular. Overall, the granting of titles for indigenous territories was an absolute novelty in Honduras and contributed to significant empowerment within the affected indigenous groups.

In the future, multiplier effects in the area of land registry are plausible in adjacent municipalities, provided that the capacities in the municipalities continue to exist. The high quality of the land registry system led, for example, to the municipality of Iriona being invited by other municipalities to present the system as an example of success (e.g. at the "mancomunidad de los municipios Garifunas de Colón").

It should be noted that, in spite of land regulation, some land titles were fragmented; the municipal land registry office was not informed of this. In this way, areas regulated by PROTEP were also resold or used as a mortgage for debt. Over the course of implementation, the registered land survey was therefore increasingly outdated and no longer reflected the actual occupation of the land areas. In addition, it was not possible to subsequently add unsurveyed land areas for legal reasons because the project had set a deadline for completion of the land survey. Specifically, this means that occupied land could not be entered in the land registry, although there was a willingness to enter it.

### *Summary of the rating:*

The majority of the planned outputs have been achieved and are currently being used (in particular in the area of land regulation), but only three of the seven outcome indicators were partially met. **The achievement of the targets is therefore moderately unsuccessful and the contribution to this low target achievement is also moderately successful.** Based on **a successful assessment of the management quality and the unintended impacts (in the area of land regulation)**, the effectiveness is still rated as moderately successful.

**Effectiveness: 3**

## Efficiency

### *Production efficiency*

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) measure's project funds went to the four components of the PROTEP project, over which the total costs (excluding complementary measure) were distributed as follows:

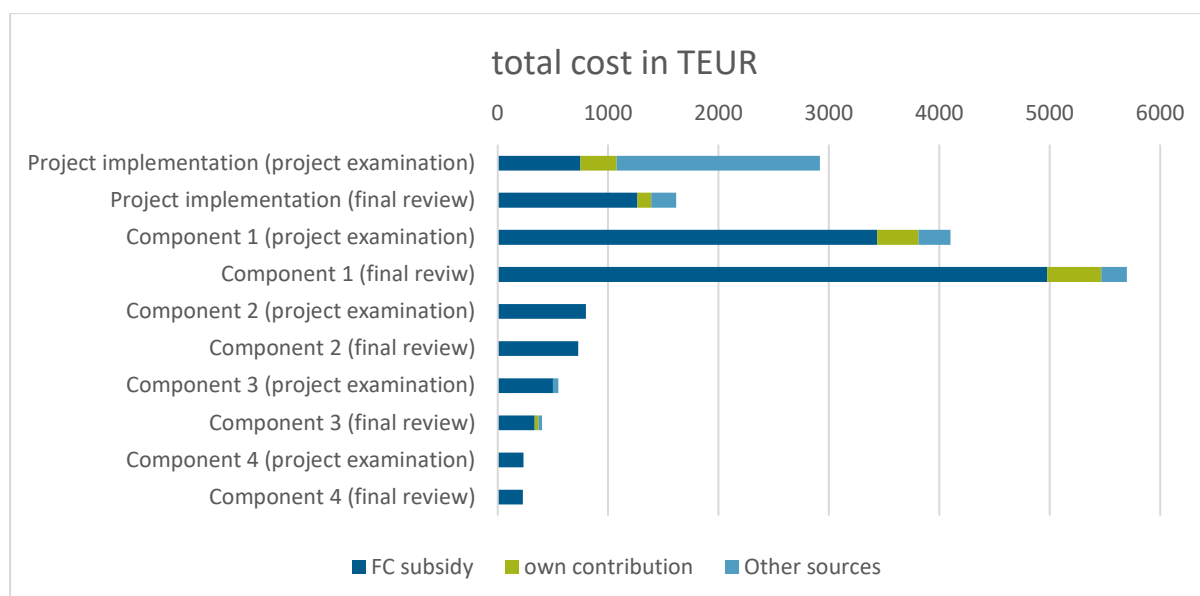
- i. regulated ownership of land: 75% or EUR 4.9 million
- ii. strengthened municipalities and local organisations: 8.6% or EUR 0.57 million
- iii. strengthened local economy; 5.1% or EUR 0.33 million
- iv. established monitoring and nature conservation mechanisms: 3.4% or EUR 0.23 million

Figure 3 shows that i.) the costs are strongly concentrated on component 1, ii) a large part of the costs were financed by the FC grant and iii.) the actual costs for project implementation and component 1 significantly exceed the costs envisaged at the time of the PA. The costs for using the implementation consultant (consultancy services under component 1) are close to EUR 3.5 million and thus 52% of the total costs, but are justifiable, as the implementation required very specific knowledge in the area of land registry, and the consulting company had to implement additional TC services.

**Figure 3<sup>8</sup>:** Cost distribution of components by source of financing (in TEUR)

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<sup>8</sup> The cost table of the final inspection does not show a clear cost breakdown with regard to all project components. For components 2 and 4, only the amounts corresponding to the FC grant were clearly broken down, which is why these bars do not contain any other sources of financing. The costs pertain exclusively to PROTEP.



Source: Internally prepared. Data source: PROTEP final inspection and final report from the implementation consultant.  
 Memo: The costs at the time of the PA represent the already reduced budget after the cancellation of the endowment fund.

An additional EUR 3.3 million was provided for the complementary measure, which was intended to secure the sustainability of PROTEP with follow-up measures for components 1 and 2.

The project's implementation period was set at four years at the time of the appraisal, but had to be extended by a total of 21 months. Even after this time delay, some outputs had not yet been fully generated; in particular, the capacities of the municipalities and the executing agency were not sufficient to continue land registry management independently. As a result, an extension of PROTEP to include a complementary measure after the deadline (follow-up measure) and a commitment of a further EUR 3.0 million in the FC grant were initiated. Delays at the start of the project occurred due to the necessary but (time-) intensive awareness raising for the target group, capacity-enhancing measures with municipalities and structural organisational developments in some instances. These measures were necessary to this extent and were decisive for the achievement and sustainability of outputs, but more time should have been planned in the design. Instead of the original four years, the project took a total of 11 years, including the subsequent complementary measure.

Due to the delay, the time overlap with the accompanying PRORENA TC project was much shorter than planned, which is why FC project's implementation consultant had to carry out most of the TC services from the original cooperative project. Due to the shift and the extended implementation period, the planned costs of regulating land ownership increased from around EUR 4.1 million to almost EUR 5.7 million.

Due to some savings (mainly due to the cancellation of the planned capitalisation of an endowment fund), the total cost balance of PROTEP was slightly lower than the planned total costs (after deduction of the funds originally earmarked and then cancelled for the endowment fund). However, further costs (EUR 3.3 million) were incurred for the complementary measure, which resulted in residual funds of EUR 9.4 thousand, which were ultimately reduced.

Overall, the use of the funds available in the project was appropriate, as intensive use of funds at several levels was necessary, particularly with regard to comprehensive land regulation. The extensions and implementation of the complementary measure were also reasonable and necessary in order to finalise the majority of the planned activities.

**Allocation efficiency**

Most impacts (see Impact section) were achieved through the land regulation measures, even though these were partially outside the project's actual objectives. The cost allocation made sense in that it reflected the project's focus on land regulation. Consideration of these impacts in the target system paired with an even stronger focus on land regulation, i.e. the entry of further areas and municipalities in the land registry, would have increased the



impacts and thus the allocation efficiency of the project. However, a high willingness of the additional project locations to regulate land – as is the case in the actual project locations – would be highly relevant in the case of such an expansion.

In retrospect, the measures for local economic promotion were neither successful in the selection of individual investments nor sufficient in terms of quantity/area coverage to sustainably ensure the conservation of the regulated land areas; results were only achieved to a minor extent. Given the low target achievement, the allocation efficiency of these measures is also relatively low for this component in spite of the low funding amount of EUR 0.33 million. The same applies to the measures for establishing follow-up and nature conservation mechanisms, the results of which are not used and therefore do not contribute to achieving the objectives (see Effectiveness).

Although the need for the complementary measure arose from the need to further strengthen local capacities (component 2), the sole increase in financial resources may not have been sufficient here, as it took time (as the awareness-raising measures showed), above all, to achieve the necessary level of required capacities.

In retrospect, the additional involvement of a component to improve the governance of the institutions involved (such as ICF and IP) at a higher political level would have been necessary to effectively implement the necessary structural changes in the area of a national land registry (see Relevance).

Overall, the planned allocation efficiency with a clear focus on the measures in the area of land regulation made sense. As the less effective components 3 and 4 showed little success, a cost redistribution in favour of these components would most likely not have improved or even worsened the allocation efficiency.

#### *Summary of the rating:*

Due to the almost two-year extension of the main measure and the fact that the need for a subsequent complementary measure was not planned at the design stage, the project implementation was extended by a total of seven years. Given the complexity of all relevant processes and the (albeit delayed) achievement of many planned results, the funds used were largely appropriate; with regard to the general allocation of costs, the budget correctly reflected the project's focus on land regulation. Only allocation efficiency should have been included by including governance measures at a higher political level for enhanced coordination between ICF and IP. The efficiency is therefore rated as moderately successful in spite of the long delay.

#### **Efficiency: 3**

## **Impact**

### *Overarching developmental changes (intended)*

The impact-level objective, which<sup>9</sup> was slightly adjusted as part of the EPE, was: the project helps to ensure that the Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve can better fulfil its conservation, development and logistics functions and improves the livelihoods of the local population (overall objective).

Table 2 shows the target achievement at impact level along the original<sup>10</sup> and the newly defined or changed indicators as part of the EPE:

<sup>9</sup> Overall objective according to project design: The project helps to ensure that the Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve can better fulfil its functions.

<sup>10</sup> The original impact indicator "Degree of biodiversity conservation" could not be assessed as part of the evaluation due to a very imprecise definition of the indicator ("views of jaguars, tapirs and sea turtles") as well as unsystematic monitoring data and missing secondary data.

Table 2: Indicators and target achievement at impact level

Indicator	PA status (2007)	Target value at PA (2007)	(Optional) actual value at final inspection (2017)	Actual value at EPE (2022)
<p>(1) Deforestation rate (in the three RPBR zones)</p> <p>According to FAO measurement method (1996)<sup>11</sup> (measured as loss of wooded land):</p> <p>According to <a href="#">Global Forest Watch</a><sup>12</sup> (measured as loss of<sup>13</sup> tree cover):</p>	<p>0.66% annual average (2002–2006)</p> <p>0.36% (2002–2006) annual average</p>	<p>&lt; 1% annually</p> <p>--/--</p>	<p>2.38% annual average (2013–2016)</p> <p>1.17% (2013–2016) annual average</p>	<p>--/--</p> <p>1.88% (2018–2021) annual average</p> <p>Not achieved.</p> <p>Observations by those interviewed as part of the EPE and two quantitative data sources also confirm this:</p> <p>at 2.38% at the time of the final inspection, the annual deforestation rate was significantly above the target value (&lt;1%).</p> <p>The multitemporal study carried out as part of the complementary measure shows a decrease in the deforestation rate compared to the period of the project appraisal. This has also fallen slightly since the conclusion of PROTEP and is not comparable with the (annual) deforestation rates specified in the project.</p> <p>At the time of the EPE, the annual deforestation rate of <a href="#">Global Forest Watch</a> was 2.1% and was therefore significantly higher than in 2007 and above the target value (year of project appraisal).</p> <p>The last satellite image analysis for 2018 (Centro de Información y Patrimonio Forestal (2019) showed an area of almost 1,500ha in total with recognisable human interventions in the core zone and deforestation of 179.2ha since the conclusion of PROTEP between 2016 and 2018.</p>
<p>Newly defined indicator:</p> <p>(2) Self-declarations by the local residents on their net income development during the course of the project</p> <p>(Proxy indicator is based on subjective, random re-</p>	--/--	--/--	--/--	<p>Not achieved.</p> <p>Four focus group discussions with two indigenous organisations and two cooperatives (18 people in total) did not reveal any significant improvement in the income of the local population. Mainly members of the cooperatives reported individual positive income effects due to the productive measures</p>

<sup>11</sup> FAO (1996): Forest resources assessment 1990. Global Synthesis. FAO Rome.

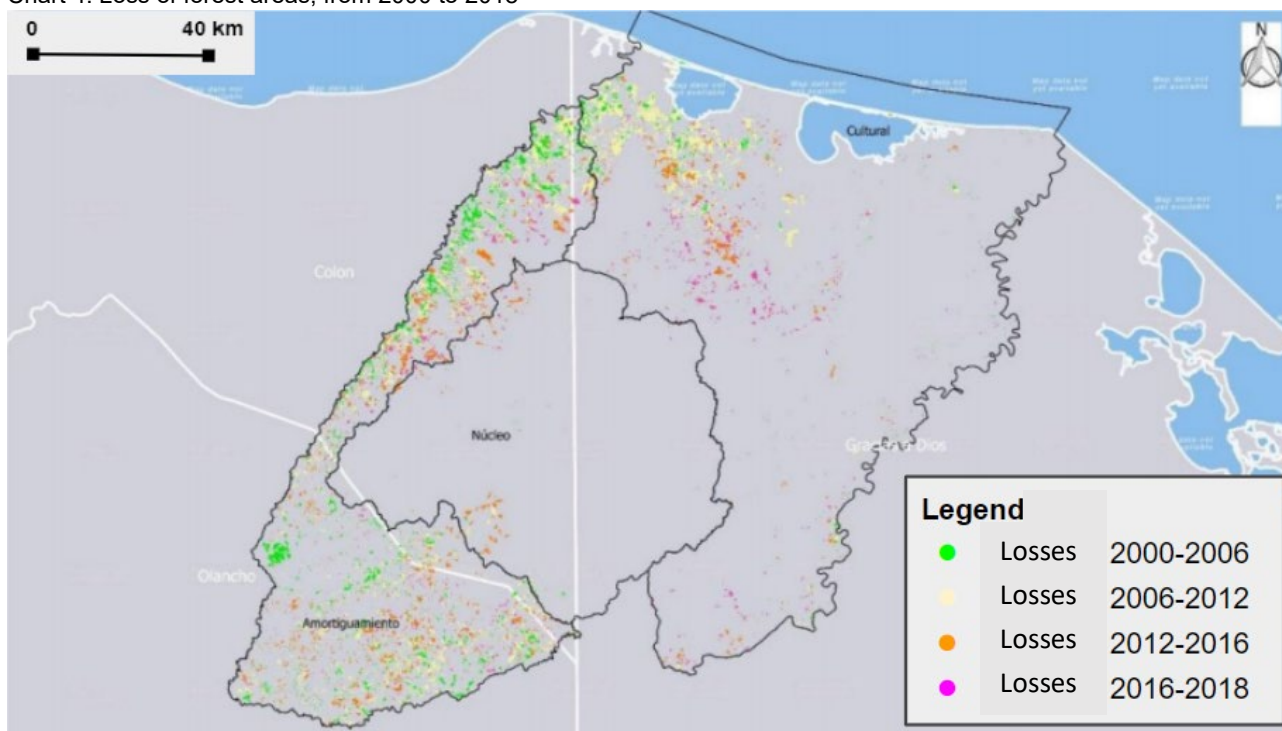
<sup>12</sup> As part of this EPE, the data on the loss of tree cover by Hansen et al. (2013): High resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change. Science. 342, 850–854, which can be viewed on [Global Forest Watch](#), was used. These represent the best freely available spatial data on global forest development due to their multi-decade time span, annual update frequency and 30-metre pixel resolution.

<sup>13</sup> Global Forest Watch uses the tree cover (in ha) from 2000 as the base value for the calculation.

ports from the local population to measure impacts on development function).				promoted by PROTEP (e.g. sale of certified coffee). However, these effects proved unsustainable; both cooperatives visited during the EPE no longer sold coffee and would like to rent or sell the inputs received from PROTEP (e.g. bean dryers).
Newly defined indicator: (3) Frequency of SIMONI system updates	--/--	At least once a year	--/--	Not achieved.  According to a report by the project-executing agency, the system was upgraded in 2016.  None of the stakeholders interviewed used the system or were aware of the system update.  According to the state of knowledge of the evaluation mission, there are currently no studies that directly use SIMONI as a source.

Figure 4 shows the geographical and time distribution of the net loss of forest stocks between 2000 and 2018 based on data from the multitemporal studies carried out by the project. It shows particularly sharp declines in the buffer zone, followed by the cultural zone and minor declines in the core zone. The latter mainly correspond to the periods between 2006–2012 and 2012–2016, in which the PROTEP was largely implemented. It should also be noted that between 2016–2018 (accompanying measure), losses are particularly visible in the cultural zone. The core zone remained largely protected during this period. The annual average downturn between 2000 and 2006 was 0.26% (not shown in Table 2). Based on data from Global Forest Watch, the trend of tree cover area loss is also increasing over the same time periods with an annual average loss of 0.36% (2002–2006) and 1.88% (2018–2022). However, it is not possible to prove whether the negative trends in the RPBR would be even more critical without the project due to a lack of a suitable reference scenario.

Chart 4: Loss of forest areas, from 2000 to 2018



Source: Centro de Información y Patrimonio Forestal (2019), p.30.

Note: “Amortiguamiento” stands for the buffer zone, “Núcleo” for the core zone and “Cultural” for the cultural zone.

**Despite flawed follow-up and secondary data, it can be concluded from Table 2 that the overarching impacts anticipated by the project were not achieved:** three out of four indicators are not achieved and one indicator cannot be assessed. Overall, at the time of the EPE, PROTEP therefore did not achieve improved functional fulfilment of the RPBR on the basis of the impact indicators defined by the project or the interviews conducted as part of the EPE.

#### *Contribution to overarching developmental changes (intended)*

In view of the low target achievement, it is largely obsolete to discuss this project's contribution to this target achievement; a contribution to impacts, widespread impact or impacts for particularly vulnerable groups is not plausible. **The low impact target achievement results from low outcome target achievement despite relatively high achievement of the planned outputs.**

As already mentioned, the low target achievement results from i.) massive discrepancies between the project's objective and the actual project focus (i.e. outputs only contribute to outcomes to a very limited extent), ii.) a continuing trend of high deforestation in the region (see Fig. 5) vis-à-vis small-scale measures and ambitious objectives (e.g. stabilisation/reduction of the agricultural frontier) and iii.) insufficient involvement of the central government (e.g. in combating illegal activities). Plus iv.) increasing migration waves during implementation put increasing pressure on the RPBR, hampering both land regulation and monitoring of improper land use.

#### *Contribution to impact (unintended)*

At impact level, too, the general problem is that the project objectives at outcome and impact level did not sufficiently correspond to the actual project measures in terms of concept, and accordingly, the impacts achieved in other dimensions can only be included in the evaluation within the scope of this EPE to a very limited extent. **The effects not explicitly intended included, in particular, the massive granting of titles for indigenous territories, especially the Miskitos.** Especially for the indigenous populations, the legal granting of titles for their land was not only a novelty in Honduras, but also increased (as an unintended effect) the political recognition of their rights to land ownership. For the target group, this has contributed to a certain level of *empowerment* and legal security. At development policy level, this was a direct contribution to the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 169.

**As already assessed (Effectiveness section), there were also structural changes in the institutions involved and in the local population's perception of land regulation.** These have already provided the necessary basis for projects of other donors in the area of the RPBR's Sustainable Resource Management Department, such as GIZ or the EU (CliFor and Mi Biósfera), as the production-oriented measures supported there also required proper municipal spatial planning. In addition, the project contributed to recognising the relevance of municipalities in land regulation in Honduras at a higher political level, as demonstrated by the decentralisation of some land regulation processes (see Effectiveness section). In the future, this may lead to similar decentralisation processes taking place in other regions of Honduras and local governments becoming more involved in protected areas.

Qualitative interviews as part of the EPE also provide anecdotal evidence of unintended, negative effects of PROTEP on resource conservation. The misinformation was apparently spread, that only unforested land areas were measured or granted titles, which is why deforestation of larger areas was actively promoted to some extent.

#### *Summary of the rating:*

Three impact indicators were not achieved and one indicator cannot be assessed. In general, there is no evidence that the fulfilment of the functions of the biosphere reserve improved thanks to the project. As already mentioned, the low target achievement is also due to the incomplete target definition at both outcome and impact level. Due to the positive impacts outside the target system, e.g. the support for the decentralisation process, the overarching developmental impacts (impact) are still rated as moderately unsuccessful.

#### **Impact: 4**

## Sustainability

### *Capacities of participants and stakeholders*

In general, the project-executing agency (ICF) is relatively well positioned regionally and locally with offices and personnel and is well networked for a state institution. At regional level, ICF had three technicians and a lawyer who were exclusively responsible for land registry issues at the time of the EPE. **At the time of the EPE, there were three risks to the sustainability of the capacities generated as part of the project** within ICF (component 2): i.) the financing of staff, at least on the technical side, depends in part on funds from other projects (currently Mi Biósfera from EU funds), ii.) the capacities of the regional ICF office in the RPBR are not sufficient to meet the regular requests of the municipalities regarding the land registry and the CUF requests, iii.) capacity in ICF at regional level lies only with individuals, and iv.) changes in government generally pose a high risk of staff turnover and thus loss of the generated capacity. The latter risk already occurred as part of the EPE when, following the last change of government in January 2022, all staff of the regional ICF office in Marañones were dismissed at the end of June 2022, which was responsible for the RPBR and was active during the complementary measure.

**Furthermore, there is still a high risk that the municipalities will not continue to implement the laws on the environment, spatial planning and property, or that the technical capacities of the municipalities for land regulation, in particular in the area of land registration, will continuously deteriorate.** The risk results from i.) pooling of technical capacities to a few individuals, ii.) the tendency to also change out technical staff when there are local and national changes of government, iii.) an underestimation of the role of technical capacities – despite recognition of the relevance of the land registry by mayors – and iv.) municipal employee resignations due to a lack of appreciation.

In particular, the complementary measures were intended to strengthen the organisational capacities of indigenous organisations (component 2). These are generally still weak or continue to be conflicts of interest at management level and there is a clear gap between management and the basis of these organisations. Nevertheless, the finalisation of what is known as the “Planes de Vida”, which regulates the territorial administration of the organisations’ municipal land areas, speaks in favour of the sustainability of the project measures at organisational level.

With regard to local economic promotion and the establishment of follow-up and nature conservation mechanisms (components 3 and 4), the capacities are unsustainable insofar as these components did not generate any impacts (see Table 2). All of the cooperatives visited are either no longer functional or no longer exist, and the monitoring system developed as part of PROTEP is not regularly used or updated according to the interviews.

### *Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities*

At the end of PROTEP, neither the municipalities nor ICF had sufficient capacities to continue entering the land areas measured by PROTEP into the land registry and to finalise the title granting process (component 1). **As part of the complementary measure, PROTEP then established sufficient new capacities for ICF and the municipalities in dealing with high-quality land registry processes and increased the understanding of all participants for the high demands of the processes** (component 2). Specifically, the complementary measure strengthened the capacities of technical staff (both in ICF and in the municipalities) to such an extent that they could essentially also generate multiplier effects. For example, new employees could be trained in the land registry area, or the land registry system could also be presented to other municipalities in the region (see Effectiveness). In close cooperation with the implementation consultant, systematic implementation of RFAM, which served as a quality management tool and established clear management processes, improved land register management and reduced the risk of knowledge and capacity losses in the event of staff changes.

In addition, many local people were employed in land surveying, which can be seen as a one-off, direct contribution to locally generated capacities. In addition, many of these people were subsequently recruited by the municipalities in the area of land registry management, as they were already familiar with the procedures introduced in PROTEP, so that the generated local capacities were immediately used locally.

In summary, thanks to these measures, the executing agency and the municipalities in particular can be identified as having greater resilience to future risks. Both institutions not only have strengthened technical capacities, but professional land regulation has also been internalised in everyday working life. In addition, all groups have participatively developed management plans that at least partially mitigate the consequences of staff turnover. Evi-

dence of this is that, even after completion of the complementary measure, the municipalities continue to generate regular tax revenues through the land registry and that ICF is involved in other projects in the area of land regulation.

The contribution of PROTEP to the long-term capacities of the component target groups for local economic promotion and the establishment of follow-up and nature conservation mechanisms (components 3 and 4) is very small, as the components' outputs were no longer functional by the time of the evaluation.

#### *Durability of impacts over time*

Similar to the previous sub-sections, in summary for components 3 and 4 on local economic promotion and the establishment of follow-up and nature conservation mechanisms, it can be concluded that the lack of impacts of these components also precludes the durability of impacts as a result.

**The improved municipal land registry management considerably increased tax revenues and thus continues to provide a robust incentive for the municipalities to follow up on the land registry system** (component 1). One can say there has been a permanent change in awareness among both the local population and local authorities (component 2). As part of the EPE, it was confirmed that the municipal land registers in Iriona and Dulce Nombre de Culmi will continue to be used for administration purposes and will be operated properly. Furthermore, new projects in the region are based on the land register information generated in PROTEP. It is therefore likely that the possibility of further financing through new projects will become an incentive for the follow-up of regional land registry information for all participating groups (municipalities, ICF and indigenous organisations).

Another indicator of the sustainability of the impacts is the **improved relationship between key players in the RPBR**; for example, municipalities, ICF and local organisations were still in contact during the EPE, for example at a regional summit in July 2022 with all organisations involved in PROTEP.

At the regional office of the ICF in the RPBR, the project objectives for land regulation appear to be permanently internalised. The technical capacities in the area of land registry have since been institutionalised in the form of technical personnel at the regional office (although this is largely dependent on external financing).

These very clear indications of sound sustainability of land regulation measures are offset by **high sustainability risks due to a poor security situation**; illegal trade and the spread of (drug-related) criminality in La Mosquitia and the biosphere increased significantly over the course of project implementation. Threats are particularly common among ICF and municipal employees who report environmental offences. Accordingly, the current security situation poses a high risk to the sustainability of the results in the area of land registration, as land regulation personnel are too exposed with no effective law enforcement to consistently control the misuse and illegal resale of regulated land. It is also clear that the sustainability of all projects in the region is at risk if the central government fails to consistently engage in the prosecution of these offences as well as in coordination with other state institutions. From the perspective of all groups involved, effective law enforcement is only possible through military means.

#### *Summary of the rating:*

Land regulation is considered sustainable, at least at the municipal level, due to i.) ever-increasing tax revenues from land registry management, ii.) a broad change of awareness, iii.) established networking at regional level and institutionalisation of land regulation objectives within ICF. All three points listed can be understood as a direct contribution of the project. In particular, they demonstrate greater resilience to risks after completion of the project due to the established networking and the strengthened capacities of the target groups and partners. Despite this, there is a high risk that the durability of the impacts will decrease over time due to i.) (safety) risks due to external factors, ii.) because the strengthened capacity remains tied to specific individuals, and iii.) due to a high dependence on central government involvement. Sustainability is rated as moderately successful.

#### **Sustainability: 3**

## Overall rating: 4

With regard to the actual focus of the project on improved land regulation in the RPBR, the project succeeded in advancing complex structural changes in a challenging context. This required improving relations between different groups with high conflict potential, not least because land ownership issues are per se sensitive, as they may shift the boundaries of land ownership or expropriate former landowners altogether. The improved relationships and the population's increased trust in ICF and the municipalities alone represent a significant milestone. The project can therefore be regarded as an important foundation stone for municipal land regulation in Honduras as well as regionally for further nature conservation projects in the RPBR.

The formal overall assessment of the project is mainly impaired by the fact that the main measures did not match the objectives at outcome and impact level and therefore also did not meet the agreed objectives for the use of the funds. The project made no discernible contribution to these objectives. Especially due to the moderately unsuccessful effects (KO criterion, see below) the project as a whole is rated as rather unsuccessful.

## Contributions to the 2030 Agenda

The markers were appropriate (see Table 1), but the project was designed before the introduction of the 2030 Agenda and therefore did not explicitly include the SDGs. According to the design, the project was intended to ensure land titles were granted to men and women equally, both to promote gender equality (SDG 5) and to reduce inequalities (SDG 10). By means of productive individual investments in women's cooperatives, the diversification of sources of income to alleviate poverty should be supported and at the same time contribute to SDG 1 (No Poverty). In addition, this was intended to promote sustainable economic practices in the local population. This represents a direct contribution to SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) and an indirect contribution to SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) and SDG 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss).

The project's declared objectives were the sustainable management of natural resources (outcome) and the protection of biodiversity (impact). At outcome level, the objective intended to contribute to SDG 12 from today's perspective (in particular sub-objective 12.2: By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. At impact level, the intent was to improve the biosphere reserve's functions, which cover rural development, biodiversity conservation and monitoring. In this way, the project was also intended to contribute to SDG 2, SDG 13 and SDG 15.

The key to the effective implementation of the measures was the involvement and strengthening of the capacities of local administrations, indigenous organisations and the project-executing agency. The marker for participatory development / good governance was therefore not only consistent, but also a contribution to SDG 16 (in particular sub-objective 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

Table 3: Contributions to the 2030 Agenda

Markers	Final inspection	EPE	Contribution to the 2030 Agenda
Gender equality	GG: 1	GG: 1	SDG 5
Participatory development / good governance	PG: 1	PG: 1	SDG 16
Trade development	TD: 0	TD: 0	-
Biodiversity Convention	BTR: 2	BTR: 2	SDG 15
Adapting to climate change	CCA: 1	CCA: 1	SDG 13
Climate change, reduction of greenhouse gases	CCM: 1	CCM: 1	SDG 13

Environmental protection and resource conservation	UR: 2	UR: 2	SDG 12
Reproductive, maternal, neonatal and paediatric health	RMNCH: 0	RMNCH: 0	-
Combating desertification	DES: 0	DES: 0	-
Project-based approaches	PBA: 0	PBA: 0	-
Social infrastructure measures	SI: No	SI: No	-
Poverty orientation	AO: 2	AO: 2	SDG 1
Peace and security	FS: 0	FS: 0	-
Rural development and security of food supply	LE: 2	LE: 2	SDG 2
ESIA category	ESIA: C (no)	ESIA: C (no)	-



## Project-specific strengths and weaknesses as well as cross-project conclusions and lessons learned

*The project had the following strengths and weaknesses in particular:*

- Revenue from the land registry created local ownership in the area of land regulation
- Awareness-raising measures were effective in promoting the participation of the local population, including indigenous organisations, in land regulation
- Granting titles for indigenous land was a milestone for the implementation of ILO Convention 169 and effective for empowering indigenous groups
- The large-scale land survey in the RPBR and the subsequent land registration form the basis for most other projects in the RPBR.
- The effective inclusion of municipalities in land regulation and the strengthening of their technical capacities in the land registry area were essential in order to sustainably introduce the successful systematisation of land regulation in the region
- The project lacked an effective link between project implementation at local level and structural changes and ownership at the highest political level
- Certain details in land regulation contained weaknesses:
  - o The land survey carried out by PROTEP was outdated over the course of implementation and no longer reflected the actual occupation of land areas
  - o It was no longer possible to update the baseline of measured land areas because a deadline had been set for carrying out the land survey, which is why many occupied land areas could not be entered in the land registry, even if there was a willingness to enter them
  - o Monitoring the proper use of land was weak due to a lack of human resources and law enforcement in the region

### *Conclusions and lessons learned:*

In the case of active roles played by the state project-executing agencies in project implementation, projects should plan sufficient human and financial resources so that the institutions can carry out project-specific activities in addition to their regular work. It is also important that the project objectives are sufficiently internalised not only by the directly involved persons within the facilities, but also by the participating institutions, so that they provide the necessary personnel and, if necessary, financial resources to achieve the objectives.

In the case of land regulation projects, support from the highest institutional level is also required in order to develop the technical basis for the national land registry. Otherwise, the implementation of centrally taken decisions and measures at target group level is ineffective due to numerous bureaucratic hurdles at national level. This support should include advice and guidance from international experts in geodesy and land registry management. It is not enough to technologically update and digitalise an outdated cadastre and registration system; structural reforms based on internationally recognised concepts must also be considered. The example of PROTEP showed that the inclusion of municipalities in land registry management is crucial for the sustainability of the land registry information collected, especially at municipal level.

Projects involving nature conservation areas and biosphere reserves must systematically collect local sources of income in advance and take them into account in the design. In the present case, agriculture and livestock farming should have been included to a greater extent in order to implement appropriate measures for local economic promotion on a case-by-case basis and thus strengthen the sustainable use of resources more effectively. This in turn requires close cooperation with the relevant state institutions, in the case of the RPBR, that is the National Agricultural Institute (in Spanish: Instituto Nacional de Agrario (INA)).

All stakeholders interviewed agreed that the central government should have been much more active in law enforcement in the region to ensure the sustainability and proper use of the regulated land area, as neither the municipalities nor ICF have the resources for effective law enforcement. The increasing pressure from external factors (especially drug-related criminality) severely limited the results of PROTEP and its sustainability and will also limit the chances of success for future projects in the RPBR.

In general, the example of PROTEP also shows that structural changes, especially in nature conservation, are very protracted, so DC presence for a long period of time is crucial in order to effectively support these changes. To this end, the financing mechanisms must be stable over time in order to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the measures. The need to extend PROTEP through a subsequent complementary measure to complete its results and improve its sustainability is a clear example of this. The sustainability of the measures in the region continues to depend on new donor-financed projects.

Since nature conservation areas are usually conflict areas with multiple user interests, effective harmonisation of all parties to the conflict is a necessary basis for implementing the planned measures. This results in a need for long-term social awareness-raising measures, which – as the example of PROTEP and its initial delays showed – is often underestimated. Land regulation in conservation areas is already a massive task on its own, requiring structural changes at both micro- and macro-level. PROTEP has been successful in many areas, but both the objectives and the timelines should have been formulated more realistically. The planned implementation period of the project was therefore too short to achieve the ambitious project objectives. Although this issue is not serious in practice due to the existence of well-coordinated predecessor and follow-up projects or the FC's overall long-term presence in the RPBR, more realistic scheduling and objective planning is relevant for project management and measuring success.

Finally, a high level of coherence between target values and indicators and the actual project measures is important for the subsequent evaluation of successes in the project evaluation; the example of PROTEP shows that successes outside the conceptual design can only be evaluated to a limited extent. However, the appropriate and complete definition of objectives also ensures, in particular, i.) that all parties are committed to the same objectives, ii.) that the design is logical and, accordingly, does not ignore any important aspects, iii.) that the project monitoring tracks the actually relevant values and thus delivers management-relevant results and iv.) that the actual measures are in line with the political priorities of the partner country and German DC.

## Evaluation approach and methods

### Methodology of the ex post evaluation

The ex post evaluation applied the methodology of a rapid appraisal, which is a data-supported qualitative contribution analysis and constitutes an expert judgement. This approach ascribes impacts to the project through plausibility considerations which are based on a careful analysis of documents, data, facts and impressions. This also includes – when possible – the use of digital data sources and the use of modern technologies (e.g. satellite data, online surveys, geocoding). The reasons for any contradicting information are investigated and attempts are made to clarify such issues and base the evaluation on statements that can be confirmed by several sources of information wherever possible (triangulation).

#### Documents:

internal project documents, secondary specialist literature, strategy papers, context, country and sector analyses, comparable evaluations, project-related studies, media reports.

#### Data sources and analysis tools:

Global Forest Watch (satellite images), partner monitoring data, surveys, focus group discussions

#### Interview partners:

Donors, project executing agencies, target groups, municipalities, implementing organisation, other donors

The analysis of impacts is based on assumed causal relationships, documented in the results matrix developed during the project appraisal and, if necessary, updated during the ex post evaluation. The evaluation report sets out arguments as to why the influencing factors in question were identified for the experienced effects and why the project under investigation was likely to make the contribution that it did (contribution analysis). The context of the development measure and its influence on results is taken into account. The conclusions are reported in relation to the availability and quality of the data. An evaluation concept is the frame of reference for the evaluation.

On average, the methods offer a balanced cost-benefit ratio for project evaluations that maintains a balance between the knowledge gained and the evaluation costs, and allows an assessment of the effectiveness of FC projects across all project evaluations. The individual ex post evaluation therefore does not meet the requirements of a scientific assessment in line with a clear causal analysis.

#### The following aspects limit the evaluation:

Due to the fragile context and logistical challenges, only part of the intervention area could be visited by a local expert. The main expert therefore lacks personal impressions and observations from his own perspective. Unfortunately, it was also not possible to reach the KfW project manager at the time, which represents a significant information gap, as the project manager oversaw the project throughout the entire implementation period, including the complementary measure.

Furthermore, it was not possible to reach any technical employees of the project-executing agency in the area of biodiversity and data management. Finally, the data on the RPBR is not complete, which makes it impossible to evaluate several indicators.

### Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being **relevance**, **coherence**, **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, **overarching developmental impact** and **sustainability**, as well as the final **overall rating** of developmental effectiveness. The scale is as follows:

<b>Level 1</b>	very successful: result that clearly exceeds expectations
<b>Level 2</b>	successful: fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
<b>Level 3</b>	moderately successful: project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
<b>Level 4</b>	moderately unsuccessful: significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
<b>Level 5</b>	unsuccessful: despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
<b>Level 6</b>	highly unsuccessful: the project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

Rating levels 1-3 denote a positive assessment or successful project while rating levels 4-6 denote a negative assessment.

The **overall rating** on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all six individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Rating levels 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while rating levels 4-6 denote an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("overarching developmental impact") **and the** sustainability are rated as at least "moderately successful" (level 3).