REPORT

FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW (MTR) OF THE

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE MANAGEMENT IN THE SEMIARID REGION OF NORTHEAST BRAZIL (SERGIPE)

PROJECT

ATLAS AWARD ID: 83642
PROJECT ID: 92018
PIMS #: 3066

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT: MARIA ONESTINI

DATE: NOVEMBER 22 2019

I. OPENING PAGE:

TITLE OF UNDP SUPPORTED GEF FINANCED PROJECT:

Sustainable Land Use Management in the Semiarid Region of Northeast Brazil (Sergipe) [1]

PROJECT ID#S:

Atlas Award ID:	83642
Project ID:	92018
PIMS #	3066

MID TERM REVIEW TIME FRAME AND DATE OF REPORT

Time frame: October - December 2019

Date of Report: November 21 2019

REGION AND COUNTRY INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT:

Latin America and the Caribbean: Brazil

GEF OPERATIONAL PROGRAM/STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

- Applicable GEF Strategic Objective and Program:
  - LD 1: Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services sustaining the livelihoods of local communities;
  - LD 3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape

EXECUTING AGENCY / IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

UNDP CO Brazil

RESPONSIBLE PARTNERS:

Department to Combat Desertification (DCD) of the Secretariat for Extraction and Sustainable Rural Development (SEDR) of the Ministry of Environment (MMA)

Sergipe State Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (SEMARH)

[1] Also known as the Caatinga Ecosystems Conservation Project or Sergipe Project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The mid-term review consultant would like to acknowledge and thank all who kindly shared their time, information, and inputs for the interviews and consultations that took place as part of this process.

DISCLAIMER

Be stated that the analysis and recommendations contained in this document only represent the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the analysis, views and opinions of the United Nations Development Programme, GEF, Governments nor any of the parties involved in the Project.

II. Table of Contents

III. Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABC - Brazilian Cooperation Agency

ADEMA - Administração Estadual do Meio Ambiente; State Environmental Administration (Sergipe)

AFS - agro-forestry system

ANA - National Water Agency (MMA)

ANATER - National Agency of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension

APL - Local Productive Cluster

APP - Area of Permanent Preservation

ASA - Semiarid Network (NGO)

ASD - Areas Susceptible to Desertification

ASF - Upper São Francisco

ATER - Technical Assistance and Rural Extension

BANESE - Bank of the State of Sergipe

BBZ - zero-base dam

BNB - Bank of the Northeast

BNDES - National Bank of Economic and Social Development

CAR - Rural Environmental Registry

CBD - Convention on Biological DiversityCBHSF - São Francisco River Watershed Committee

CEF - Federal Savings Bank

CEMA - State Environment Council

CFAC - Centro de Formação em Agropecuária Dom José Brandão de Castro; Dom José Brandão de Castro Agriculture and Livestock Training Center

CHESF - São Francisco Hydro-Electric Company

CODEVASF - São Francisco and Parnaíba Valleys Development Company (MI)

COHIDRO - Water Resources and Irrigation Development Company

CONAMA - National Environment Council

CONERH - State Water Resources Council

CPATSA - Agriculture and Livestock Research Center for the Semiarid Tropics

CSO - Civil Society Organization

CTASS - Territorial Commission of the Alto Sertão of Sergipe

CTF - Federal Technical Registry of Potentially Polluting Activities and Users of Environmental Resources

DAP - Declaration of Eligibility for PRONAF

DCD - Department to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation (SEDR-MMA)

DNOCS - National Department of Public Works Against Droughts (MI)

EEG - Environment and Energy Group (UNDP)

EEZ - Ecological and Economic Zoning

EFA - Family Farmer School

EIA/RIMA - Environmental Impact Assessment/Report on Environmental Impact

EMBRAPA - Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (MAPA)

EMDAGRO - Agriculture and Livestock Development Corporation

ES - ecosystem services

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization

FBB - Bank of Brazil Foundation

FIDA - International Fund for Agricultural Development

FNE - Northeast Constitutional Finance Fund

FNMA - National Environment Fund
FUNBIO - Brazilian Fund for Biodiversity
FUNDECI - Scientific and Technological Development Fund
FUNDEMA - Sergipe Environmental Defense Fund
G20 - twenty wealthiest countries
G77 - developing countries
GEB - Global Environmental Benefit
GIS - Geographic Information System
GOB - Government of Brazil
GPCD - Standing Working Group to Combat Desertification (Sergipe)
IABS - Brazilian Institute for Development and Sustainability
IADB - Inter-American Development Bank
IBAMA - Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (MMA)
IBGE - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (MP)
ICMBio -; Chico Mendes Institute of Biodiversity Conservation (MMA)
IEM - Integrated Ecosystem Management; Manejo Integrado de Ecossistemas
IFAD - International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICA - Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
INCRA - National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (MDA)
INPE - National Institute of Space Research
INRM - Integrated Natural Resource Management
INSA - National Semiarid Institute (MCTI)
IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LADA - Land Degradation Assessment for Dryland Areas
LECRDS - Low-Emission and Climate-Resilient Development Strategies
LR - Legal Reserve
MAPA - Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (GoB)
MCTI -; Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (GoB)
MDA - Ministry of Agrarian Development (GoB)
MDIC - Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade (GoB)
MDS - Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger (GoB)
MF - Ministry of Finance (GoB)
MI - Ministry of National Integration (GoB)
MMA - Ministry of Environment (GoB)
MMC - Movement of Peasant Women
MME - Ministry of Mines and Energy (GoB)
MONA - Natural Monument
MP - Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management (GoB)
MRE - Ministry of External Relations (GoB)
MS - Ministry of Health (GoB)
MST - Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra; Landless Workers Movement (NGO)
NCCD - National Commission to Combat Desertification
NGO - non-governmental organization
NTFP - Non-Timber Forest Products
OEMA - State Environmental Agency
OSC - Organização da Sociedade Civil; Civil Society Organization
P1+2 - One Land Two Waters Program
P1MC -Program for Social Training and Multiplication for Coexistence with the Semiarid: One Million Cisterns

PACTO -; A World for Children and Adolescents in the Semiarid

PAD - Fresh Water Program (MMA)

PAE - State Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Mitigation of the Effects of Drought (Sergipe)

PAF - Administrative Fiscal Process

PAM - Municipal Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Mitigation of the Effects of Drought

PAN - National Action Program to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought

PMFS - Sustainable Forest Management Plan

PNATER - National Policy for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension

PNC - National Program of Capacity-Building for Environmental Managers and SISNAMA Council Members

PB - Policy Board

POF - Family Budget Survey

PPA - Pluri-year Plan

PPG - Project Preparation Grant

PRONAF - National Program to Strengthen Family Agriculture

PRONESE - Sergipe Sustainable Development Agency

REDD - Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

Rede CLIMA - Brazilian Research Network on Climate Change

RESAB - Semiarid Education Network

RIOD - International Network of NGOs on Desertification

RTA - Regional Technical Advisor

SAF - Agro-forestry system

SAF - Secretariat of Family Agriculture

SAGI - Secretariat of Information Evaluation and Management

SAP - Early Warning System for Drought and Desertification

SAS - Sergipe's Alto Sertão

SASAC - Society for Socio-Environmental and Cultural Support

SE - Sergipe

SEAGRI - State Secretariat of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (Sergipe)

SEBRAE - Brazilian Service to Support Micro and Small Business

SEDETEC - State Secretariat of Economic Development and Science and Technology (Sergipe)

SEDR - Secretariat of Extractivism and Sustainable Rural Development (MMA)

SEFAZ - Finance Secretariat (Sergipe)

SEIDES - Secretaria de Estado da Inclusão, Assistência e Desenvolvimento Social; State Secretariat for Inclusion, Assistance and Social Development (Sergipe)

SEINFRA - Sergipe State Secretariat of Infrastructure (Sergipe)

SEMARH - State Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (Sergipe)

SEPLAG - State Secretariat of Planning, Budget and Management (Sergipe)

SEPLAN - State Secretariat of Planning and Budget (Sergipe)

SEPMULHERES - Special Secretariat for Policies for Women

SFB - Serviço Florestal Brasileiro; Brazilian Forest Service (MMA)

SFM - Sustainable Forest Management

SGP- Small Grants Program; (GEF)

SICAR - National Rural Environmental Registry System

SIE - State Inspection System

SIF - Federal Inspection System

SIM - Municipal Inspection System

SIRHSE - Sergipe Water Resources Information System

SL/WM - Sustainable Land and Water Management
SLM - Sustainable Land Management
SMCQ - Secretariat of Climate Change and Environmental Quality (MMA)
SRH - Superintendency of Water Resources (Sergipe)
SRHU - Secretariat of Water Resources and Urban Environment (MMA)
SSP - Secretariat of Public Security
STAP - Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (GEF)
SUASA - Single System of Attention to Agricultural Sanitary Standards
SUDENE - Superintendency of Development of the Northeast
TFR - Total Fertility Rate
ToR - Terms of Reference
TQ - Terra Quilombola; Maroon Land
TT - Tracking Tool; Ferramenta de Monitoramento
UC - Conservation Unit
UFS - Federal University of Sergipe
UNCCD - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF - United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
UNILAB - University of International Lusophone African-Brazilian Integration
WOCAT - World Overview of Conservation Agriculture Techniques
ZNLD - Zero net land degradation

1. Executive Summary

These sections will be summarized once the final text is settled (after draft report and comments process).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT PROGRESS SUMMARY

MTR RATINGS AND ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE

TABLE 1: MTR RATINGS AND ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE FOR THE PROJECT[2]

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory: ***MU***	As a composite, there are a number of shortcomings in the achievement of the objective. Although some outputs have been achieved, several other outputs, expected processes and outcomes that make up and articulate the objective have not been met at the expected mid-point levels. Delays in delivery have had an impact on the achievement of the objective thus far. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: Unsatisfactory: ***U***	Many shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness at the results levels and due to postponements in terms of implementation and delivery. Most of the end-of-project targets are not expected to be achieved. Bearing in mind that the end-of-project targets are in the policy arena, and this is where the Project has had the most difficulties to obtain products (technical directives, operational plans, revising licensing criteria for multiple land uses, etc..) and to obtain effects (implementation of plans, securing financial backing for SLM activities, implementing revised licensing criteria for multiple uses), therefore the general expectation is that these will not be achieved as planned in the remaining implementation period. Although, again, the demonstration capacity of the implemented pilots training, and studies carried out are not questioned, it's their institutional appropriation that is doubted. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: Moderately Satisfactory: ***MS***	The major achievements are that some expected products thus far have been partially achieved, but the expectations of the end-of-project targets is that they might be achieved at some levels but with significant shortcomings. Although, the demonstration capacity of the implemented URADs, training, and studies carried out are not questioned, it's their institutional appropriation that is doubted. Financing targets have also not been achieved at the time of the midterm review process and link with financing institutions has been weak. No shortcomings in terms of relevance.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Rating: Satisfactory: ***MU***	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to moderately satisfactory implementation. The adaptive management components (privileging of some outputs in one component over others, change of field sites) thus far have had positive aspects but also a series of negative impacts. There are strong delays in delivery associated to challenges with project implementation.
Sustainability	Rating: Moderately Likely: ***ML***	At the midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs will be sustained and carry-on after project closure. Although some outputs and activities should carry on after closure, a series of them are at risk of not being fully sustained if no further work is carried out in seeking sustainability from the mid-term review onward.

[2] Reference: The ratings for performance follow a six – point scale (Highly satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)). The rating for sustainability follows a four – point scale (Likely (L); Moderately Likely (ML); Moderately Unlikely (MU); Unlikely (U); Highly Unlikely (HU). The ratings explanations are found in annexes (see Annex 2: Rating Scales). In the text of this report full narratives with background for these ratings are found in the sections that refer to each of these components.

CONCISE SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

These sections will be summarized once the final text is settled (after draft report and comments process).

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

2. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MTR AND OBJECTIVES

As indicated in the monitoring and evaluation framework contained in the Project Document (PRODOC), the Project is to undergo an independent Mid-Term Review at the mid-point of project implementation. The MTR has as its purpose to determine progress being made toward the achievement of outcomes and to identify course correction if needed. It focuses on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; highlights issues requiring decisions and actions; and presents initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. Findings of this review also lead to recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the Project's term. The review follows methods and approach as stated in UNDP manuals, relevant tools, and other relevant UNDP guidance materials, including *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* and *UNDP's Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.*

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY: PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THE MTR, MTR APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS, LIMITATIONS TO THE MTR

This mid-term review has focused primarily on assessing the Project in light of the accomplished outcomes, objectives and effects. It includes the following scope and, as indicated in the above-mentioned *Guidance*, mid-term reviews should be mainly focused on:

- Assess progress towards achieving project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document.
- Assess signs of project success or failure.
- Review the project's strategy in light of its sustainability risks.

The approach for the review of the Project is determined mainly by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this assignment and it follows methods and approach as stated in UNDP and GEF guidance materials. The analysis entails reviewing different stages and aspects of the Project, including design and formulation; implementation; results; and the involvement of stakeholders in the Project's processes and activities. It has been carried out following a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, UNDP, project team, and other key civil society stakeholders.

In order to carry out this review exercise, several data collection tools for analysing information from the principles of results-based reviews were use. Following UNDP/GEF guidelines, the relevant areas of the Project are evaluated according to performance criteria and prospects of sustainability with ratings as summarized in the tables found in annexes.

The tools chosen for the mid-term review, with a mixture of primary and secondary data sources as well as a combination of quantitative and qualitative material, were selected in order to provide a spectrum of information and to validate findings. These methods allow for in-depth exploration and yield information that facilitated understanding of observed changes in outcomes and outputs (both intended and unintended) and the factors that contributed to the achievements or lack of accomplishments. Regarding specific methodologies to gather assessment information, the following tools and methods were used:

- *Document analysis.* In depth scrutiny of documentation was used as an instrument of analysis. The analysis examined documents formulated during the preparation and implementation phases of the Project (i.e. the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, etc) as well as technical documents produced within the Project and by other stakeholders/projects. A list of consulted documents is found in annexes.

  Key informant interviews: Interviews were implemented through a series of open and semi-open questions raised to stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with the Project. Key actors (stakeholders) were defined as governments actors, project staff, local actors, and civil society representatives. The interviews were carried out in person during the review mission. Stakeholders to interview were chosen to be the key actors from every group directly and tangentially involved in the Project. The array of stakeholders, therefore, was a representative sample of actors involved such as the implementing and partnering agencies, national government representatives, other levels (e.g. local) representatives, UNDP staff, and representatives from civil society stakeholders directly and tangentially involved with the Project. There were 44 stakeholders consulted and engaged: 11 at the national/international level; 19 at the state/municipal/and national institutions that act at the state level, 9 beneficiaries from three pilot communities, as well as 5 stakeholders from civil society organizations. Annexes contain lists of stakeholders contacted.
- *Site visit/direct observation.* During the mission a series of site visits took place, allowing for interviewing national, state-level and local stakeholders, beneficiaries, as well as to carry out direct observation at the Project's field sites. Specific details on this visit and overall mission schedule is found in annexes.

A first tool developed for the review process was an evaluation matrix (which can also be found in annexes). This matrix guided the data collection process and, as the review proceeded, the matrix was used to collect and display data obtained from different sources that relate to relevant criteria and questions. The matrix contains Evaluative Criteria Questions (that is questions, and where relevant sub questions, related to each of the criteria contained in the review); Indicators; Sources; and Methodology.

A mission took place (with 9 days in-country), mainly for the international review consultant to maintain meetings and interviews with relevant stakeholders at the national level and sub – national levels, meetings UNDP personnel, review of materials with key stakeholders, and interviews with local stakeholders and with civil society representatives as well as site visits to the areas where the Project implemented pilots. As part of this mission site visits took place as planned (in annexes a mission schedule is included) in Sergipe, where the seat of the state-level government is and where the direct pilot interventions take place. Specifically, the itinerary for the mission was as follows: Brasilia - Canindé de São Francisco - Florestan Ferrnandes – Assentamento Modelo – Quilombo de Serra da Guia (Poço Redondo) – Aracaju- Brasilia.

STRUCTURE OF THE MTR REPORT

The mid-term review report is structured beginning with an executive summary, where project summary, ratings tables, progress, conclusions and recommendations of this report are summarized. A second section introduces methodologies, scope and information of the execution of the mid-term review. A third section contains an overall project description within a developmental context, including an account of the problems the Project sought to address, as well as its initial objectives. A fourth core

section of this report deals principally with review findings relating to the actual implementation of the Project. The fifth section of the present report entails overall conclusions as well as forward looking issues such as recommendations for future actions and future programming. Lastly, an annex section includes project and mid-term review support documentation.

3. Project Description and Background Context

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT: ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, INSTITUTIONAL, AND POLICY FACTORS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

As the Project Document states, land use changes have been experienced in Brazil over time. While for the country in its entirety 41 percent of the original plant cover has been cleared, for the Caatinga/Cerrado ecosystem there has been 50 percent clearing of original plant cover to date. These biomes are subject to long periodic droughts lasting for several years. Land degradation in the country as a whole and in Sergipe are key developmental issues.

The project has focused on the state of Sergipe. With an area of 21,918 km², Sergipe is Brazil's smallest state. The neighbouring states of the North-eastern region of the country have similar ecological and socioeconomic characteristics. Sergipe has what can be considered three ecological strips: 1) a semiarid north-western strip, known locally as Alto Sertão Sergipano (herein abbreviated SAS), a region with high risk of desertification and acute land degradation problems; 2) a central strip (Agreste) running along the north to south axis of the State that contains sub-humid dry areas at risk of desertification processes and has moderate levels of land degradation and 3) a narrow coastal strip (zona da mata or Atlantic Forest) with no desertification risk.

A total of nearly 75 percent of Sergipe's land area is classified as being susceptible to desertification (ASD). This is in part due to climatic and soil conditions. Average temperatures in Sergipe, range from 26 to 32 degrees Celsius and it has inconsistent precipitation levels. The state has high and increasingly frequent drought incidence. Water deficits are significant and inland river courses are irregular and intermittent, with the exception of the São Francisco River. Although a broad classification of degradation was established in the National Action Plan (PAN)[3], more detailed data on land degradation in the entire state is variable.

The socio – economic context of the North-eastern region of Brazil is dire, as is exemplified by statistics of Sergipe. Of the state's approximately 2 million inhabitants, 1.4 live in absolute poverty (with average household income of about have the country's minimum wage). The areas classified as susceptible to desertification have some of the worst human development indices of the region based on indicators such as poverty, education and mortality rates. In the Northeast in general illiteracy rates in the semiarid areas are high, with 36 percent of children age 7-14 unable to read and write, 43 percent of youth 12-17 years old and 60 percent of those 18 and over. The region is a target of several national and state social assistance programs. These are strengthened during drought seasons in semiarid areas, with drought stipends, water tank trucks and harvest insurance.

Small scale farming is the standard in the Northeast, including in Sergipe. The average area of rural establishments is of 15.1 ha., but median area is only 2.4 ha. The main crops of small farmers in the susceptible to desertification area are cassava, beans, maize and various vegetables. Cactus (palma) is also planted to provide animal fodder, including during dry periods and droughts. In the targeted area of the project many are land reform settlements. These sorts of settlements changed the North-eastern highly concentrated land tenure patterns. In Sergipe there has been quite an extensive agrarian reform program as to provide land for peasants and the landless, including squatters and sharecroppers and their

[3] National Action Program to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought.

descendants. There are also small quilombola settlements which are hinterland communities founded by descendants of slaves

The institutional and policy frameworks related to the Project's objective and scope are varied and multi – layered. It must be pointed out that, being Brazil a federal state, the institutional architecture is complex. There are national, state-wide and municipal institutions and their corresponding policy frameworks.

At the national level, at the time of design[4], within MMA desertification issues were under the mandate of the Department to Combat Desertification (DCD) of the Secretariat of Extractivism and Sustainable Rural Development (SEDR). Sustainable forest management fell under MMA's Secretariat of Biodiversity and Forests (SBF), which deals more with conservation, and the Brazilian Forest Service (SFB), also in MMA, dealing with use of forests for both timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Water resources fell under the National Water Agency (ANA) and watershed committees. Within the National Environment System (SISNAMA), states and municipalities can define regulations that are more restrictive, but not more flexible, than established standards. Most decisions about licensing have been decentralized to the states. There are national (NCCD) and state commissions to combat desertification. Some municipalities, are also attempting to develop Municipal Action Plans (PAMs) against desertification. At the federal level, at the time of design, agricultural development was the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA) for agribusiness and the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) for family farms. INCRA, under MDA, is the federal agency responsible for agrarian reform settlements. MDA's Secretariat of Family Agriculture (SAF) develops federal policy for the sector, including extension, credit and gender.

There are also national institutions with state offices in Sergipe, adding complexity the administrative framework that deals with environment, desertification, and agriculture. This is the case with the state office of the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), which is the federal environmental agency under the Ministry of Environment (MMA.)

The main government institutions responsible for environment in Sergipe are the State Environmental Administration (ADEMA), within the state Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (SEMARH), again at the time of design. Environmental agencies are subject to decisions by the National Environment Council (CONAMA) and a State Environment Council (CEMA), both of which are deliberative bodies involving civil society participation. There is a State Water Resources Council (CONERH). Rural development is the responsibility of the State Secretariat of Agriculture and Agrarian Development (SEAGRI).

Further to the above-mentioned institutions there are a myriad other national and state level institutions that either tangentially or partially deal with the matters linked to the Project's objectives, scope and subject matter. Moreover, there was (and there is) also a complex architecture of social development related institutions providing general social assistance (such as cash transfers and social inclusion programs), assistance to farmers (smallholders), and financial institutions aiding with micro – credit and small business support.

The corresponding policy framework is also complex and multi – layered. The main policies related to the Project's objective are linked to land use, sustainable land management, agriculture, livestock rearing issues, among a series of matters. Given the three levels of government in Brazil, policies are also at three levels. Minimal environmental standards for land use policies are set at the federal level,

[4] The national institutional framework dealing with these issues changed with the new government structure in place since January 2019. This matter will be dealt with in detail further along this report.

but states may develop specific tailored standards, as long as they do not fall below national specifications. Brazilian norms indicate that environmental licenses are required for the construction, installation, expansion or operation of any activity that uses environmental resources or is considered to be actually or potentially degrading/polluting to the environment. The National Environment Council (CONAMA) did away with the requirement for licensing for agrarian reform settlements, but passed the responsibility on to the settlers themselves, individually.

Specifically, there are a number of key policies, as well as plans and programs to confront land degradation and poverty. The National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought (2004), known as PAN-Brasil, with its four main objectives is the key national – level framework for this subject. Pan-Brasil's main objectives are (i) fighting poverty and social inequalities; ii) enhancing sustainable production capacities; iii) preservation, conservation and sustainable management of natural resources; and iv) institutional strengthening and democratic governance. Also relevant is the National Policy on Climate Change (NPCC) established in 2008, which highlights the need to reduce land degradation and deforestation from agriculture and other forms of land use to mitigate climate change. At the state level there are also other relevant policies, such as Sergipe's 2011 State Action Plan to Combat Desertification.

PROBLEMS THAT THE PROJECT SOUGHT TO ADDRESS: THREATS AND BARRIERS TARGETED

The Project tries to address a series of issues related to threats and barriers for combating land degradation in Brazil's North-eastern region, and specifically focusing on Sergipe. The threats identified by the Project are;

- Agriculture and livestock raising as drivers of land degradation
- Over exploitation of wood
- Hunting
- Infrastructure development
- Climate change.

The two specific barriers to be targeted are as follows:

- Limited governance framework to promote SLM in Sergipe
- Uptake of SLM impeded by knowledge/capacity and finance issues.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGY: OBJECTIVE, OUTCOMES AND EXPECTED RESULTS, DESCRIPTION OF FIELD SITES

The above is a contextual introduction to the Project. As the design documents indicated well, this project was designed to address land degradation (LD) in the state of the Sergipe in the Brazilian Northeast with a view to scaling up to the country's entire semiarid region. It is designed to optimize and coordinate existing programs to engender sustainable land management (SLM), reverting land degradation in a state where 74.2 percent of its land is susceptible to desertification (ASD) and only 13 percent of the original Caatinga vegetation remains. It is aimed to strengthen the state environmental governance framework to better address the main drivers of land degradation and desertification, focusing primarily on the escalating conflict of land use and unsustainable agriculture practices where LD

is causing soil erosion, soil nutrient depletion, damaging hydrological system integrity and undermining ecosystem services.

Key elements that are aimed to be strengthened via the Project include land use planning and appropriate environmental licensing and oversight to avoid, reduce and mitigate LD. Through strengthened institutional and smallholder capacities as well as facilitation of access to funding, it is intended that uptake of SLM practices will be increased and on-the-ground actions will be tried and tested in the Alto Sertao Sergipe (SAS), where LD is highest. This territory is a state priority and is targeted nationally in a program to reduce hunger and poverty.

By reducing LD and maintaining vital ecosystem services, the project expects to improve livelihoods in an area with high poverty and social problems. Strategic action at the national level through the Department to Combat Desertification in the Ministry of Environment's Secretariat of Extraction and Sustainable Rural Development [5] and the National Commission for Combating Desertification was expected to enable this state's SLM governance model to be disseminated to other states, thereby facilitating replication across the entire Brazilian Semiarid region and inducing further global environmental benefits in the middle and long term.

Total resources required for the project are US$ 21,148,208, of which USD 3,815,192 are GEF funds and with expected co – financing from the following sources: Government 12,483,040 USD; NGOs 2,125,734 USD; Private Sector 2,424,242USD; and UNDP 300,000 USD. The GEF executing agency for this project is the United Nations Development Programme. The national implementing / responsible partners are: Department to Combat Desertification (DCD) of the Secretariat for Extraction and Sustainable Rural Development (SEDR) of the Ministry of Environment (MMA) and the Sergipe State Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (SEMARH).[6]

Specifically, therefore, the Project's primary objective is *to strengthen SLM governance frameworks to combat LD processes in the semiarid region of the state of Sergipe in the NE of Brazil.* It is expected that this would be achieved through the following two outcomes and their corresponding expected outputs.

- ***OUTCOME 1***: Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe ASD
    - Output 1.1. Sergipe's state policy and planning framework supports integration of SLM in ASD
    - Output 1.2. State land use licensing processes stimulate appropriate measures to reduce LD
    - Output 1.3. Monitoring land use optimized for SLM implementation in ASD
    - Output 1.4. Knowledge management and national-level governance framework strengthened to increase adoption of SLM in Sergipe and facilitate replication in NE
- ***OUTCOME 2***: Uptake of SLM/SFM practices increased in Alto Sertão of Sergipe (SAS), with replication in rest of the State's ASD

[5] Which was the area of government in charge of these issues during the design phase and until early 2019.

[6] Again, these were the institutions that were relevant at the time of design, changes to the institutional framework affecting the Project are narrated in other sections of this report.

- Output 2.1. SLM best practices implemented in SAS provide guidance for licensing process so as to revert LD processes
- Output 2.2. State extension services incorporate SLM guidelines for ASDs and provide targeted support to SAS
- Output 2.3 State and national access to diverse funds improved for uptake of SLM in ASDs

These, in turn, are articulated through multiple and assorted expected sub-outputs, products, sub products and activities anticipated to take place throughout the implementation process. In summary, the Project is expected to bring about a strengthened state-level environmental governance framework to better address the main drivers of land degradation and desertification and to promote smallholders' capacities to combat desertification. Although the project centres upon Sergipe, and within that state on-the-ground actions were carried – out in several pilot sites, there is a strong emphasis on dissemination as well as replication to other north-eastern states of the Brazilian Semiarid region.

Project Implementation Arrangements: key implementing partner arrangements, short description of the Project Board and of Committees

The Project is implemented via UNDP's Direct Execution modality (DEX). The management arrangements include a Project Board; a Project Management Unit, a Project Advisory Committee and a regional Technical Commission. The MMA is the lead government partner and will have responsibility in technical oversight and management through its role in the Project Board, in the Project Management Unit, in chairing of the Advisory Committee and in coordination with the Sergipe State Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (SEMARH) and the Regional Technical Commission. MMA also designates staff for the delivery of different project activities who will work in close cooperation with UNDP.

MMA provides co-funding for cost-sharing and leads the Project's technical expertise and guidance. MMA appoints a National Project Technical Director (NPTD) who will be a senior staff member and will be responsible at the highest level for providing guidance on technical feasibility of the project ensuring that its implementation leads to the achievement of project results. The NPTD represents the Ministry on the Project Board and chairs the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). It is intended that this would be a part-time position continuing for the duration of the Project.

The Project Board provides managerial guidance for execution. Its main responsibilities are to analyse and discuss the development of Project activities and recommend changes, approve annual work plans and progress reports, analyse project achievements and assure these are used for performance improvement, accountability and learning. The Board is composed of UNDP, the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC) and MMA.

The Board benefits by inputs and recommendations from a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) which is a mechanism intended to provide technical coordination for the project. The PAC is to include representatives from the National Commission to Combat Desertification (NCCD) and other key institutions. Its main roles are to see that project activities lead to the required outcomes as defined in the Project Document; to review progress and obstacles; and to advice on strategic and critical Project issues.

PROJECT TIMING AND MILESTONES

The Project has an expected five-year duration. According to the ProDoc, it formally started in November 2014 and has an expected end date November 2019. The latest Project Implementation Report (2019) indicates a planned closing date of June 8, 2020

MAIN STAKEHOLDERS: SUMMARY LIST

At the design stage a stakeholder analysis took place. The purpose of this analysis was to identify main potential stakeholders and to consider their potential roles and responsibilities in the implementation and/or guidance of the Project. The list of stakeholders identified is as follows:

- Department to Combat Desertification (DCD), Secretariat of Extraction and Sustainable Rural Development (SEDR), Ministry of Environment -MMA.
- Sergipe State Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (SEMARH)
- National Commission to Combat Desertification (NCCD)
- Standing Interagency Task Force to Combat Desertification (GPCD)
- Brazilian Institute for Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA)
- Brazilian Forest Service (SFB)
- Public Environmental Funds
- Sergipe Environmental Agency (ADEMA)
- Sergipe State Secretariats (SEAGRI, SEDETEC)
- Alto Sertão Municipal government environmental authorities
- Banking Institutions
- Research, Education and Extension Institutions
- Agrarian Reform Institutions
- Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Institutions (ATER Institutions)
- Civil Society Organizations.

For each of these stakeholders their roles were also analysed at the time of design. Not only their functions vis-à-vis the Project's issues but also their relevant roles regarding project implementation. A fairly systematic analysis was carried – out, sometimes even with detailed analysis of what outputs the stakeholder should be linked with. Furthermore, project design identified what were the potential problems for each stakeholder's involvement and what possible mitigation could take place to moderate these issues.

4. FINDINGS

PROJECT STRATEGY

PROJECT DESIGN

The design of the Project follows standard structure for these sorts of interventions with intended outcomes and outputs within a framework of an expected objective. Moreover, the formal logic of the Project identifies threats as well as barriers and plans to endeavour to act upon them in order to obtain products, processes and results. The overall approach is satisfactory, in the sense that barriers and threats are identified and ways to overcome these are recognised. That is, the design identifies the barriers and delineates processes/activities that could conceivably breach the gaps needed to obtain the objective.

The two expected outcomes are clearly established as intended short and medium-term effects of the intervention. That is, expected Outcome 1 (*Governance framework strengthened to avoid, reduce and revert land degradation in Sergipe state)* and expected Outcome 2 *(Uptake of SLM increased in Sergipe ASDs*) are fairly well expressed in the sense that they are established as anticipated results that would stem from the Project.

However, is overly ambitious given that it aims with specific outputs to implement radical changes regarding issues of sustainable land management and battling desertification in Brazil. For instance, it is highly ambitious as to the sheer extent of land which will be under sustainable land management practices in the State of Sergipe as a result of the Project and within the five-year timeline (i.e. Indicator 1. Area (ha) of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices are implemented in Sergipe: 70,000 ha on 2,000 rural properties). Moreover, several of the policy changes (such as in licencing structures) are changes that require more transformation than a project can impel within the framework of a project of this type. The most that a project with this temporality can do is generate dialogues, inform the decision – making processes, etc., promote partial policy reform, yet it cannot adduce that radical alterations would be made as a result of an intervention in the relatively short period of implementation these types of projects have.

Furthermore, it was too ambitious regarding the possibility of implementation of products or instruments. For instance, when expected products such as municipal Action Plans (MAP) are planned and drawn without fully considering the institutional capacity of municipal institutions to implement such plans given that no full capacity needs assessments was carried out to adequately appreciate the diverse capacity range that these plans would face in order to be implemented at the municipal level in the region. The design partially acknowledges this by stating "At the municipal level, despite Brazil's policy of decentralization, which promotes the increased assumption of environmental responsibilities by municipalities, the latter are ill-equipped to take on these new functions, including licensing and oversight of activities within their boundaries, especially the small municipalities in the interior which lack sufficient scale and the necessary financial and human resources.".[7] Nonetheless, although this assertion is made in the general introductory section of the report, when the design of actual outputs and effects are drawn there is no acknowledgement of this lack of capacity nor any accompanying measures drawn to bypass this matter.

Some of the risk analysis was weak. As will be seen further along in the sections of implementation and as indicated in the latest PIR, risks have been and are substantial. Although of course risks that have risen along implementation, such as radical changes in government and government policies to the degree

[7] Source: Project Document.

experienced in Brazil in the last few years, could not have been fully predicted many years before implementation, government changes and accompanying staff changes, are a constant. Therefore, to some degree this could have been presumed at a higher level of menace than what is stated in the risk analysis in order to have a robust risk managements mechanisms in place.

Several of the pilots sites chosen at design were deemed to be unsuitable at implementation. This caused several shifts when the implementation process began, causing not only functional delays but profound problems with the communities that were set aside and issues with the communities which were incorporated for pilots belatedly.

The design documents identify a number of other interventions with which the Project would link at some level and from which it would draw lessons learned. Furthermore, several of these other identified projects are indicated to be vehicles for the replication and upscaling that the Project aspires. Among the identified linked interventions is a previous GEF-funded project in the Caatinga ecosystem.[8] Other programs that deal with water in the north-eastern region of Brazil were also acknowledged as having potential links. Of particular interest there were and there are several programs and interventions dealing with rather similar issues and with similar approaches. These are the Dom Helder Câmara project (PDHC) as carried out by the Secretariat of Territorial Development of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) in the Northeast since 2001 with support from IFAD and GEF as well as the Dom Távora project, carried out by the Sergipe state government, also with support from IFAD. Furthermore, the Brazilian Climate Fund has been linked to the Sergipe Project given that it also deals with combating desertification and is implemented via several of this project's partners. The Sergipe Project also has synergies with the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program (SGP), which includes the Caatinga as a targeted area and which develops actions to support sustainable agriculture and forest management at the community level.

At the time of the Sergipe Project design there was also a proposal for a FAO-implemented GEF-funded project called "Reversing Desertification Process in Susceptible Areas of Brazil: Sustainable Agro-forestry Practices and Biodiversity Conservation." Due to the similarities in approach, it was intended that practices in sustainable land management developed within the framework of the Sergipe Project would be incorporated for uptake in the FAO-implemented intervention.

The Project appropriately addresses country priorities at different planes and it is in line with the national sectorial and overall development priorities and development plans of Brazil. As stated earlier in this report it is aligned with national and state level policies and plans and programs dealing with the link between poverty and land degradation. The National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought is also a key plan which the Project is aligned with. This Plan has four objectives: i) Fighting poverty and social inequalities; ii) Enhancing sustainable production capacities; iii) Preservation, conservation and sustainable management of natural resources; iv) Institutional strengthening and democratic governance. Therefore, the Project is fully aligned and explicitly designed to help meet these objectives.

Other policy (valid at design) with which the Project is fully aligned and aims to aid implement are Sergipe's 2011 State Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PAE-SE); Brasil sem Miséria (Brazil without Misery) policy to eradicate extreme poverty, as well as the National Policy on Climate Change (NPCC).

[8] For instance, MMA/UNDP/GEF project on the Caatinga (2004-2010) which validated Integrated Ecosystem Management approaches and the GEF/World Bank "Caatinga Conservation and Management - Mata Branca" project in Ceará and Bahia (2007-2013) will be used to include best approaches for successful mainstreaming of integrated ecosystem management practices in public policies.

Several gender issues were raised in project design. For instance, project design acknowledges gender differentials. To begin with, there are several general background statistics that are differentiated by gender (literacy rates, demographic situation, earnings, financial access) and other issues such as discrimination and violence against women. Much of this information is focused in the target region when data is available (i.e. North-eastern Brazil). Furthermore, the Project Document lists several specific institutions or government programs that are directed towards women in the region, such as Sergipe's Special Secretariat of Policies for Women (SEPMULHERES), MDA's Secretariat of Family Agriculture, and INCRA, institutions with which the Project would engage.

Broad statements are also made at design regarding women in relation to the Project.[9] It is indicated that the participation of women will be sought in different project events. Furthermore, specific mentions are made as to addressing the role of women in sustainable land management, for instance when it is indicated that there will be "*stressing and strengthening the role of women in family farming, especially in the social context of female-headed households, as well as the environmental context of water shortage and the use of firewood for cooking. Women also play key roles in sustainable livelihoods that offer alternatives to unsustainable production practices, such as use of native fruits and nuts and commercial handicrafts like basketry and bio-jewellery. Such new roles promote empowerment. Cisterns that provide availability of water near the house and reduced need for firewood relieve women and girls of heavy burdens of fetching water, washing laundry in streams and gathering wood.*"

Therefore, the design is mindful of several gender issues and has specific aims for some gender equality matters such as the reduction of women's workload in the household. Yet many of these are household matters and the Project does not a have a specific gender strategy to attend to other gender issues related to production, for instance, or equal access to productive resources and equal access to goods, services and markets.

Although as indicated in the paragraphs above, project strategy is relevant at several levels, the Project had several imprecisions at design. These matters as well as the over ambitiousness of some aspects, is having impacts on implementation, as will be seen further along in this report.

[9] For instance in the ProDoc it is indicated that women will be included in some aspects of the Project: "*Specifically, the project will address governance issues regarding licensing and oversight, multi-sectoral approaches, strengthening the capacity and integration of institutions working with desertification, improving access to credit for SLM and developing capacities of civil society, including women.*"

RESULTS FRAMEWORK/LOG FRAME

Indicators (baseline and end – of – project target) are analysed as to whether they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). Below is a chart extracted from the log frame with baseline and end of project target indicators. Immediately below the chart is the indicators' analysis.

FIGURE 1: LOG FRAME INDICATORS: BASELINE AND TARGETS AT END OF PROJECT

	Indicator	Baseline	Targets End of Project
Project Objective Strengthening SLM governance frameworks to combat land degradation processes in Sergipe ASD in NE Brazil	1. Area (ha) of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices are implemented in Sergipe. 2. Average tree density in forest patches < 50 ha. 3. Loss of vegetation coverage in SE-ASD (48 municipalities). 4. Production of small-scale farms for the four field sites. 5. Increase in the general score of LD Tracking Tool.	1. No recommended SLM practices disseminated to date. 2. < 800 tree/ha. 3. Projected rate of deforestation without the project 0.29% per year. 4. Projected rate of productivity 0.7 t/ha of main subsistence crops (manioc, beans, corn). 5. General score of LD Tracking Tool: 1	1. 70,000 ha on 2,000 rural properties, including replication areas. 2. >1,500 tree/ha 3. Rate of deforestation reduced to 0.14% per year. 4. 30% increase of productivity of crops by end of project. 5. General score of LD Tracking Tool: 3
Outcome 1: Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe ASD.	1. Improved norms and directives on SLM at State level. 2. Level of capacity of staff at SEMARH, key municipalities in SE-ASD and IBAMA, where appropriate, related to: SLM and LD issues; licensing of agriculture/livestock and forest management activities; and land use oversight/enforcement 3. Number of state licenses considering SLM criteria and practices for Alto Sertão Sergipano (SAS) 4. % of compliance with rural licensing processes in 2 SAS municipalities.	1. LD norms and technical directives are not in place at state level. 2. 01 State level Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PAE) and no municipal Action Plans (MAP) at the SE-ASDs. 3. Number of staff who are knowledgeable on SLM practices is nearly null. 4. Existing licenses do not take due account of SLM criteria in SAS. Baseline for compliance will be determined when final deliberation on CAR is made.	1. LD norms and technical directives developed and submitted to NCCD. 2. Revised PAE and 07 MAPs at the SE-ASDs prepared, approved with operational plans and budget for implementation. 3. Nuclei of SLM and LD issues established and trained in SEMARH, with participation of key municipalities in SE-ASD, IBAMA and ADEMA. 4. 10% increase in licenses with SLM criteria per year, post year 3 By end year 2: revised licensing criteria for multiple uses designed and proposed to ADEMA, GPCD and NCCD. By end year 4: revised licensing criteria for forest use designed and proposed to IBAMA, ADEMA, GPCD and NCCD.
Outcome 2: Uptake of SLM/SFM practices increased in Alto Sertão of Sergipe (SAS), with replication in rest of SEASD	1. Number of farming households implementing sustainable subsistence and commercial agricultural practices, improved grazing systems and integrated SLM practices in SAS 2. Reduced land degradation over 8,000 ha in 04 field sites. 3. Percentage of agricultural extensionists active in SAS delivering targeted support that includes recommended SLM directives 4. Investments in SLM practices in Sergipe	1. Fewer than 50 farms with recommended SLM practices adopted in SAS. Legal requirements for LRs and APPs not enforced. 2. Nearly 50% of the land area in 04 field sites is under accentuated and/or severe land degradation (soil loss by water erosion = 10 t/ha; and loss of soil carbon = 3 t/ha) 3. Practically none (0%) 4. Financing through commercial banks without SLM criteria. -US$18Million in financing through PRONAF to SAS in 2012 (nearly 12 thousand contracts) with limited SLM criteria. -US$995k through environmental funds to Sergipe (0.2% of total investment).	1. At least 2,000 farming households in SAS adopt sustainable agricultural practices, improved grazing systems and integrated SLM practices by end of project. 2. By the end of year 3: 500 families in 4 field sites with SLM strategies developed & implemented. By end of project 25% of land degradation in these 04 field sites (2,000 ha) reduced (soil loss by water erosion < 5 t/ha; and loss of soil carbon < 2 t/ha*; **) 3. 100% of extensionists active in SAS deliver targeted support that includes recommended SLM directives, with replication in SEASD 4. 20 % increase in investment in SLM practices in Sergipe. By year 2: SLM technical guidelines to support decision making by credit agents.

The Project design included baseline and target end of project indicators. The log frame does not have any mid-term indicators as such, therefore the same are not tallied in the PIRs. In some sections of the indicator table what should be achieved by year two of implementation is established but these are not adequately expressed as indicators.

When doing a SMART[10] analysis of end of project target indicators it can be said that they fulfil several of these parameters. For instance, they are specific (S) since they clearly communicate a description of a future condition and are measurable (M) since they are presented with metrics. They are relevant (R) since they aligned with Brazil's national development framework and time bound (T) given that they are expected to be achieved by the end of the intervention. Yet, and as will be seen in the implementation sections of this report, several of the indicators (particularly those in Outcome 1[11]) are overly ambitious and not within the capacity of the partners to achieve (A). The log frame does not include sex-disaggregated indicators.

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES ANALYSIS

In annexes is the Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis in chart form. This graph reviews the indicator-level progress reported in the most recent PIR (2018) as well as information from other sources. Following indications for Mid Term Reviews, the chart includes an analysis regarding achievements and categorises them with colour coding[12]: (a) has already been achieved (colouring table cell green); (b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the Project (colouring table cell yellow); or (c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the Project and needs attention (colouring table red). Furthermore, classifications following a Six - point Progress Towards Results Ratings is also added (Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)).[13] The Progress Towards Outcomes Chart also includes the specific outputs and sub outputs that were achieved as of the last reporting cycle (as expressed in the Project Implementation Review –PIR—2019). The following paragraphs contain a narrative of the

[10] S -Specific: Indicators must use clear language, describing a specific future condition.

M - Measurable: Indicators, must have measurable aspects making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not

A - Achievable: Indicators must be within the capacity of the partners to achieve

R-Relevant: Indicators must make a contribution to selected priorities of the national development framework

T -Time-bound: Indicators are never open-ended; there should be an expected date of accomplishment.

Source: *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects, 2014.*

[11] Outcome 1: Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe ASD.

[12] For further details on this sort of indications and analysis, see *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.*

[13] Explanation of rating scale is attached in annexes (in the section Progress Towards Results Rating Scale).

progress towards outcomes analysis and is linked to the mentioned chart. In the continuing sections other specific analysis are made regarding the Project's progress.

The Sergipe Project has carried out a number of processes and products, summarised as follows:[14]

- *URADs.* The major achievement thus far within the Sergipe Project has been the implementation of the so-called URADs. These are field interventions based on a strategy named URAD (Units of Recovery of Degraded Areas and Reduction of Climate Vulnerability). The reasons for successful completion of this methodology are manifold. For instance, because these field interventions focus on sustainable land management practices with combined social, environmental and productive outcomes. The specific processes have entailed recovering springs, construction of dams to contain the sediments from soil erosion, the establishment of agroforestry systems, ecological stoves, cisterns for capturing and storing water for human consumption and production, as well as sanitary units with septic tanks built or recovered. Furthermore, the replicability of the methodology is broad given that they are adoptable low – cost simplified technologies. Their replication (which is already taking place in other areas within and outside of Sergipe) demonstrates that these are adoptable technologies, among other things, due to the factors mentioned above. Furthermore, the communities perceive immediate benefits which is also factored-in to their success and replicability. The active presence of the communities, suitable civil society organizations, and other stakeholders and engaging with them in all aspects pertaining to the URAD methodology, creates conditions for better development of plans as well as improved appropriation of the products. This in turn improves the probability of further implementation, continuity and sustainability as well as add demonstration value.

- *Platform and thematic mapping.* Although carried out as a means of verification for Project monitoring, there is an ongoing process to generate a robust series of data and mapping instruments that can have a broader effect than just monitoring. Monitoring platforms and thematic maps (dealing with subjects such as surface water, plant cover, land use, and primary productive factors) for the target region of Brazil are being generated. If this information and data (with open access) is appropriated by decision makers at the national level and subnational levels, they can further inform the decision-making process for the semi – arid region of North-eastern Brazil.

- *Policy instruments and policy uptake of focalized interventions.* These are the products and processes which are showing the greatest delays and issues, some of the products are already deemed as non-achievable by a number of stakeholders. Yet some of them such as the Municipal Action Plans have been drafted or are being drafted. Although the Project has provided relevant inputs for some stakeholders, or is in the process of providing, strategic policy plans for sustainable land management in the semi – arid regions of Brazil, these are not being implemented or there has been little uptake for a variety of reasons. For instance, although municipal action plans are being produced with the aid of the Project, the capacity of municipalities to implement such instruments is very weak in the region where the Project takes place. The issue of licensing is one that has faced greatest delays and most deficits, since the policy dialog necessary to foment an improved licencing process that considers the necessities of the farmers and producers

[14] Further information on these activities is found in Annexes in the Progress Towards Outcomes chart.

yet also promotes sustainable land management has not taken place within the context of the Project. Furthermore, at the state and national level there has been very little appropriation of the Project, and this implies that policy instruments and policy uptake of the practices and plans promoted by the Project has not taken place. Lastly, even the more straightforward inclusion of best practices promoted by the Project in extensionism has not taken place.

REMAINING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE

As seen above, some anticipated outputs have been achieved yet others are greatly lagging behind. To begin with the Project has had a slow set up and start up. the set-up process and the beginning of delivery of products (and evidently of outcomes) was very slow. The Project also has had several periods without a project coordinator, and with several changes for that position. The first coordinator only acted officially for three months in 2016, then the Project was without a coordinator for three months, and the next coordinator was nominated for 15 months. Since January of 2019 there has been no officially nominated national coordinator.

The political contexts that the Project has encountered in its implementation period has been extremely detrimental. Although much emphasis in reporting is placed on the delays and barriers for implementation experienced since the national and subnational election processes began in mid-2018, and due to new policies since the recent governments took office (at the national and at the subnational level), there have been other political shifts before this that have influenced (negatively) upon the implementation process. It should be noted that there were also changes in government in 2016 and these changes also brought about issues with implementation. For instance, due to governmental changes in 2016 the MMA indicated that intervention on the issue of licensing criteria was not the mission of the Department of Sustainable Rural Development and Combating Desertification (responsible for implementing the project within the Brazilian government), but a legal attribution of ADEMA (in Sergipe) and IBAMA (in the national level), which caused a radical shift in focus. Furthermore, the Project has been implemented within a context of economic crisis, making it difficult not only to leverage co – financing but also to engender policy structures within a context of declining economic factors. Other difficulties and impediments identified have been the extended period of droughts in the Northeast region of Brazil, which has hindered the implementation of several processes and have also had

The remaining barriers to achieving the Project's objective are varied. There are a set of remaining barriers that hinder progress, while some are design and conceptual issues others are more of an implementation/organisational nature.

They are listed and explained below:

- *Lack of formalization of national project technical coordinator post*. The Project has been without a formally nominated National Project Technical Director since January 2019. Considering that the tasks of this senior staff member are to be responsible at the highest level for providing guidance on technical feasibility of the project ensuring its implementation leads to the achievement of project's results, and that the person represents the Ministry in the Project's Board and chairs the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), this absence hinders implementation and decision – making processes at the highest possible level.
- *Shifts in MMA without specific restructuring of relevant areas*. Before the last change in government the Project was imbedded within the Ministry of Environment (MMA)'s Department to Combat Desertification in the Ministry of Environment's Secretariat of

Extraction and Sustainable Rural. Since the latest change in Government, this secretariat has been dissolved and its competencies partially transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture (MAPA), yet the Sergipe Project remains within MMA without an adequate institutional umbrella. A more general shift in the Ministry is the general outlook change within Brazil's government regarding environmental issues as a whole, which percolates to all environmental issues in the country.

- *Lack of fluid connection of the Project with the Ministry of Agriculture*. Although several of the competencies of the Project now fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, the Project does not have a fluid relation (neither at the political nor at the technical level) with the pertinent areas of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- *Weak dialogue between national and state-level government*. Ever since the new government is in place, there has been weak dialogue between the federal and the state government levels, in particular in several of the areas of interest for the Project (such as desertification as well as in sustainable and equitable land management).
- *Financial barriers*. The financial barriers to achieving the project objective can be examined at two levels: (a) how financial issues are impacting upon the implementation of the Project itself (for instance, how it impacts upon co-financing) and (b) how financial issues impact indirectly upon the expected results and outcomes and sustainability (for instance, of financing activities which are outside of the Project scope but which are based on practices and instruments derived from the Sergipe Project). First, due to the economic crisis in Brazil at the beginning of implementation (with a GDP decrease of 4.5% in the second quarter of 2016) has affected the Brazilian government ability to provide co-financing as committed.[15] Also, part of the co – financing was supposed to originate in the Brazilian Climate Fund system, via resources earmarked to be used in Sergipe. Nevertheless, the agreement through which the resources are transferred from the (national) Climate Fund to Sergipe have not been reactivated with the new governments since this accord's reactivation is still in negotiation. Also, IBAMA's environmental fines conversion program of last year was cancelled and the environmental fines conversion mechanism still awaits revision within the new national government guidelines. Therefore, the replication and upscaling activities which were supposed to take place (based on the Project outcomes) and be financed by this program are not proceeding as planned.
- *Other issues: gender, timing, technical question,* although not as severe as the issues mentioned above, there are group of other issues which have been identified as hindering some aspects of the Project.
    - *Gender.* Since the Project did not include a clear strategy for gender issues as they relate to productive matters (although it did include it in some other respects), the incorporation or not of products and activities linking gender with production is let to the freewill of whatever organization is implementing these matters. Although women's participation has been active, and there is a gender dimension incorporated (mainly for intra household matters), due to this design gap, very little attention has been paid thus far to the issues of gender and

[15] Although this matter has been countered by the devaluation of the Real, it cannot be denied that the general economic situation has had an impact on the Project.

production, neither as stand-alone matters nor as interweaved issues in other products and sought effects. The Project did carry out a grouped gender analysis of several GEF-funded UNDP-implemented projects in Brazil, including the Sergipe Project. Although this analysis is commendable, the effectiveness of this process is not very high since it was carried out after several of the activities have taken place and seemingly has not bolstered the inclusion of gender issues (including contributing to closing gender gaps in access to and control over resources) into sustainable land management policies.

- *Timing.* here have been several issues with timing which have hindered efficient implementation. For instance, delays in planting for the reforestation and for the fodder components of the intervention meant that most of the species did not endure the prevalent conditions since they were planted out of season. Therefore, not only those specimens perished but the opportunity to test which species are better adapted to of the Sertao in the right conditions was lost.
- *Technical issues.* Furthermore, there have been some technical issues with some of the URAD components, such as those that capture water or the chimneys for ecological stoves, which could be examined in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency. There has been no ex – post analysis as of yet of the interventions in pilot sites, from a technical as well as from an efficiency point of view, which can point out to the technical and effectiveness issues as well as positive factors.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The management arrangements were openly established at design. The management arrangements agreed upon project signature indicate that this would be direct implementation project. Therefore, the arrangements agreed have been as follows, with information on how they have been implemented added:

- UNDP would be the GEF Implementing Agency (IA).
- Project is implemented via Direct Execution modality (DEX).
- Project Management Unit it is supposed to consist of a full-time Project Manager, two Technical and Monitoring Consultants and one Administrative Assistant hired with GEF resources and a National Project Technical Coordinator (NPTC) assigned by MMA.
- A Project Board that provides managerial guidance for execution. Its main responsibilities are to analyse and discuss the development Project activities and recommend changes, approve annual work plans and progress reports, analyse project achievements and assure these are used for performance improvement, accountability and learning. The Board is composed by UNDP, the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC) and MMA.
- A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) which is a mechanism intended to provide technical coordination for the project. It is to include representatives from the National Commission to Combat Desertification (NCCD) and other key institutions. Its main roles are to see that the project's activities lead to the required outcomes as defined in the Project Document; to review progress and obstacles; and to advice on strategic and critical Project issues.

- Regional Technical Commission (RTC) constituted by technical focal points that will be the primary contact for the coordination of state and local activities with the national level.

Although the above have been the agreed management arrangements and the Project generally operated under these arrangements until mid – 2018, these have suffered great deviations from what was planned for approximately the last year and a half. The Project has been without a formally nominated National Project Technical Director for most of 2019. Furthermore, the last recorded Project Board meeting and the last Project Advisory Committee meeting took place in July 2018.

Regarding the Regional Technical Commission (RTC) it has not been active either. Furthermore, this RTC was to be supported by professional staff to work on the project at the state and local levels. Nevertheless, although it was staffed at one point, the responsibilities and professional profile of staff were not adequate nor at a category that could engage with state government nor coordinate activities.

Therefore, although the arrangements have been adequately implemented until mid – 2018 in general, they have not been applied adequately for approximately the latter half of the Project's implementation period. The lack of engagement from decision – makers and the lack of a national technical director have both hindered implementation at different levels.

WORK PLANNING

As indicated before, the Project has had some delays in project start-up which are related to some degree to work planning, and to some degree to other externalities and barriers. Project inception (workshop, etc.) began at an adequate time and up until mid – 2018, although there were delays, they were overcome to a great degree. While there was no national technical director for a period, activities continued to accrue however. Formally, work planning followed prescribed steps until mid – 2018. That is, project management gathered input from key implementation stakeholders (PAC, etc) and produced Annual Work and Budget Plans. However, since the mid – 2018 there has been a major standstill since these processes have not taken place as planned.

Adaptive management is defined as a project's ability to adapt to changes to the Project design (project objective, outcomes, or outputs) during implementation resulting from: (a) original objectives that were not sufficiently articulated; (b) exogenous conditions that changed, due to which a change in objectives was needed; (c) the Project's restructuring because the original objectives were overambitious; or (d) the Project's restructuring because of a lack of progress.[16] In a strict sense, in the case of the Sergipe Project, there have been several instances where adaptive management has taken place, with positive and negative consequences.

The main change that can be considered adaptive management has been to favour Outcome 2: *(Uptake of SLM/SFM practices increased in Alto Sertão of Sergipe (SAS), with replication in rest of the State's ASD)* over Outcome 1 *(Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe ASD).* Although the strength of this strategy can be seen in that it was easier to accomplish products and results within the second outcome, this has been in detriment of placing efforts upon the other expected outcome. Although putting most stakes on "low-hanging fruit" (i.e. the most easily achieved of a set of products) can generate quick and visible results, these products (that is, URADs) without a governance framework and without the institutional architecture to uphold them in time are not maintainable and are just experimental models. Furthermore, this goes against the essence of these UNDP – implemented GEF-supported projects whereby demonstration and pilots are

[16] UNDP-GEF. *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*, 2014.

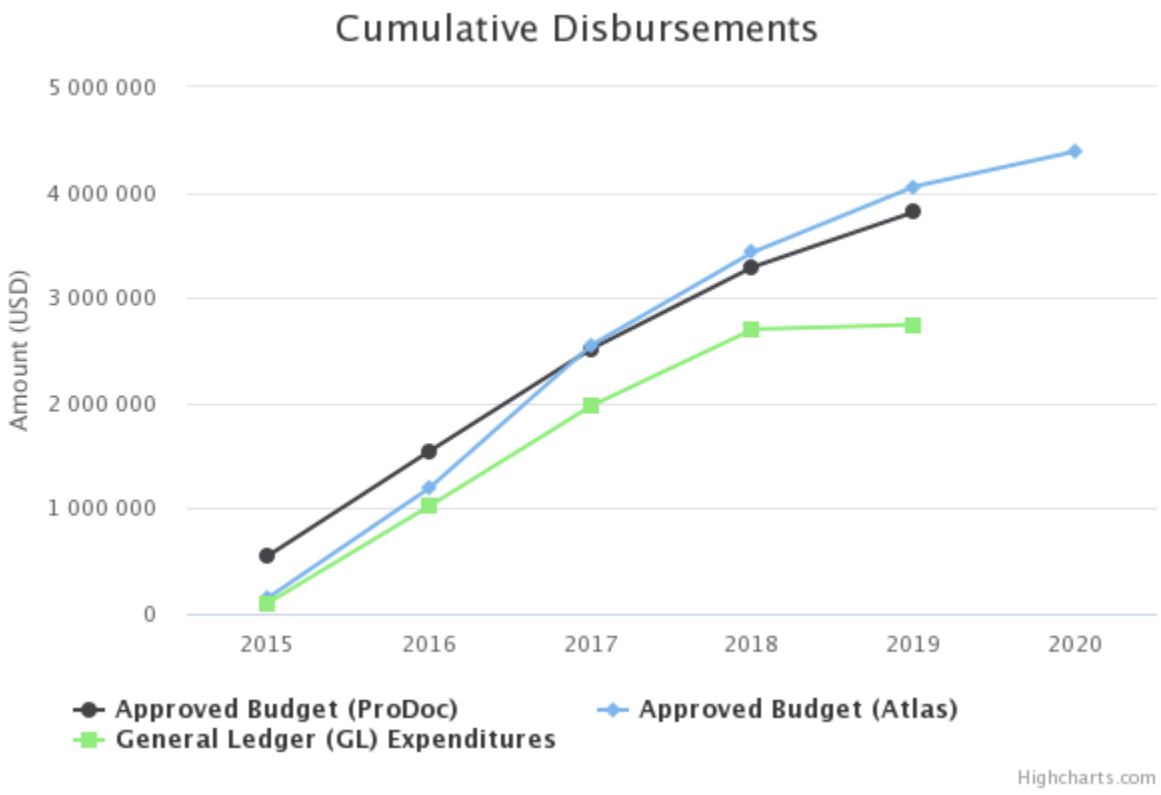
instruments to test and innovate while nourishing, supporting and strengthening broader institutional capacity in the countries where they are implemented.

The second broad modification that can also be construed as an adaptation is the change of pilot sites. Although at project design there was an extensive scoping exercise for the selection of sites/municipalities where the pilots would take place, these were altered during the implementation process. The original sites were selected during the project preparation phase, and the scoping exercise with consultations and informed consent with the local communities as well as field visits. They were chosen because they presented several variables, such as what were the drivers for land degradation, and landscape analysis. Yet, as is conveyed in reporting documents, it was decided to replace three of the four field intervention areas of the project in Sergipe. Three agrarian reform settlements were defined as new areas, including a quilombola area. This change is supported by expressions in implementation reporting documents that the new selected pilots are more vulnerable to land degradation, and therefore it is assumed that this was a technical decision, although several stakeholders differ with this assessment. These changes caused further delays in implementation. Expenses that were made for meetings and training with the three communities that were eventually left out of the Project was an inefficient use of resources. Moreover, the new chosen communities did not benefit from the full preparation and induction processes that the other communities underwent for several years. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the trust of these communities in the Project and in the adoption of good practices for integrated sustainable land management has been lost.

FINANCE AND CO-FINANCE

A few months before this review process began place, the Project reports delivery against the total general ledger of total approved amount of GEF financing at 72 percent.

FIGURE 2: CUMULATIVE DISBURSEMENTS TO JULY 1 2019



The figure below are the funds and project co-funding committed and confirmed at CEO endorsement (i.e. planned funding).

Figure 3: Project financing and co – financing table (In US Dollars)

Financing and Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP		Government		GEF		Other		Total	
	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm	Planned	Actual at Midterm
	300,000		12,483,040		3,815,192	2,773,187	4,549,976		21,148,208	

The Project has been implemented in a context of economic crisis in Brazil. At the beginning of implementation (with a GDP decrease of 4.5% in the second quarter of 2016) has affected the Brazilian government ability to provide co-financing as committed. The Project Management Unit has done a simulation of the remaining project funds comparing their value in Brazilian Reais and US Dollars and, including factoring in inflation, it has been found that the remaining funds have had a capitalization of seven percent due to the devaluation of the Brazilian currency. Therefore, although the GDP decrease has been countered by the devaluation of the Reais, it cannot be denied that the general economic situation has had an impact on the Project.

PROJECT-LEVEL MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Monitoring at design included standard instruments and tools which are characteristic for monitoring and evaluation of UNDP-implemented / GEF – funded projects. In the monitoring and evaluation strategy drawn in the Project Document the following are the types of monitoring and evaluation activities that should take place within the Project's implementation time frame:

- Inception Workshop and Report
- Measurement of Means of Verification of project results.
- Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Progress on output and implementation
- ARR/PIR
- Periodic status/ progress reports
- Mid-term Evaluation
- Final Evaluation
- Project Terminal Report
- Audit
- Visits to field sites.

Therefore, design at entry for monitoring and evaluation is the standard for the Project's specific context. The inception workshop and report were generated early on (April 2016), the measurement and means of verification processes are undergoing a systematic development given that an information system is being established with suitable backing through mapping and generation of information, and the reporting has been carried out as planned.

Some of the specific reporting in the PIRs is flawed, however. For instance, reporting in the 2019 PIR goes beyond reporting for the objective. The objective's first indicator specifically states that the metric deals with area of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices have been implemented *in* Sergipe. Reporting, therefore, also deals with areas outside of that state. This is unsound given that indicators are intended to tally progress and results attributable to a project and not report as project achievements those that fall outside of the intervention.

The mid – term review (i.e. the process that gives rise to this report) has been greatly delayed. It was originally planned for implementation mid-point (that is in the first semester of 2018) but it was postponed until early 2019. However, this process is only taking place at the end of 2019.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As seen in the section on design, at the Project formulation stage there was strong stakeholder involvement in planning. The level of involvement then was from a diverse set of institutions and stakeholders since national, state, and local governments as well civil society organizations and what was then thought to be the direct beneficiaries of the Project pilot interventions were included in the planning process. The first implementation phase was also highly participative, with the exception of a participation issues when it was decided to replace three of the four field intervention areas. The engagement with civil society organizations that have supported the implementation of pilots has been very positive, in particular since these organizations had expertise and local insertion with the areas and communities where these pilots took place.

Stakeholder engagement from mid – 2018 needs to be analysed at two levels: local/beneficiary vs state and national institutional participation. At the local level, with municipal institutions as well as with civil society organizations, stakeholder engagement has been fluid and continuous and highly positive since it has engendered alliances with several of these stakeholders. This is also the case with the beneficiary communities and community members where the integrated sustainable land management practices have been implemented. Nonetheless, post mid-2018 engagement with and by Sergipe's governmental institutions, as well as with national government, has been weak and not proactive.

REPORTING

Reporting for the Project (as stated in other relevant sections of this report) is done following and fulfilling UNDP and GEF reporting requirements. This includes reporting as indicated in the monitoring plan and other reporting requirements (including PIRs, Tracking Tool, etc.). The PIRs, for example, to a great degree convey what activities and process have taken place as part of the implementation process, with only a few problems in reporting some of achieved indicators.[17]

COMMUNICATIONS

The Project does not have a formal specific communication pattern (internally nor externally) to express what the Project's progress is and has been, as well as indicate what it is achieving. However, it has featured in several communication media, such as web pages (web pages belonging to the Project partners as well as those belonging to external institutions and organizations) and even in mass media.

The Project, to date, has not generated materials that can be understood as knowledge management products. For instance, it has not produced any thematic documents to be shared at large

[17] As indicated in section PROJECT-LEVEL MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS of this report.

and within the Project, or capacity building materials, nor user-friendly materials to be shared with local beneficiaries.

SUSTAINABILITY

Mid-term reviews, when dealing with sustainability, assess the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project termination. Sustainability is normally considered to be the prospect of continued benefits after the Project ends. Consequently, the assessment of sustainability considers the risks that are likely to affect the continuation of project outcomes. Guidelines for GEF – funded / UNDP- implemented project evaluations and reviews establish four areas for considering risks to sustainability: financial, socio – economic, institutional framework, and environmental. That is, at mid-point, evaluations attempt to recognise early identification of risks to sustainability.

Although to date it is difficult to ascertain which of the expected outputs and outcomes will be fully achieved within the framework the Sergipe Project, in general terms several of the risks can be outlined in order to begin exploring how sustainability can be assured. Given the above, the sustainability rating for the Project is *Moderately Likely (ML)* given that at midpoint, and as a composite assessment, there are moderate risks regarding the sustainability of some components, but there are expectations that at least some of the outputs and outcomes will be sustained and would carry on after project closure. Although some outputs and activities should carry on after closure, a series of them are at risk of not being fully sustained if no further work is carried out in seeking sustainability from the mid-term review onward. Below are assessments of risks to sustainability divided by each of the components.

FINANCIAL RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding financial issues, an evaluation ascertains if there are financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes as well as the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once granted assistance ends. In the case of the Sergipe Project there are serious risks as to the likelihood of financially supporting the majority of outcomes and outputs after external funding ends for several motives. At the national level, first due to the low budget assignations and operational funds that these sorts of issues have within the context of Brazil's new environmental and poverty policy outlook, particularly due to the changes in the last few months. Furthermore, a mechanism that was to be used for financing (especially centring upon the sustainability, replication and upscaling of the Project's results), tIBAMA's environmental fines conversion program, was cancelled for a year and the environmental fines conversion mechanism still awaits revision within the new national government guidelines. Therefore, the financial sustainability of the Project's achievements is not assured at this point.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

The socio - economic risks to sustainability are low. Due to several different matters, the Project's results thus far (that is the pilot innovations) have carried wide acceptance, not only at the local beneficiaries level but at the institutional and civil society levels also. An indicator of this is the transfer and replication of the URAD practices that are taking place outside of the Project's realm and the appropriation that these practices have had by the direct beneficiaries. The practices have been incorporated in other projects and interventions in other states of Brazil's Northeast. Also, youth groups have taking some of these practices and are incorporating them into their educational programs. Moreover, beneficiaries have appropriated these practices and are implementing them in other settlements in the region on their own.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Although the consolidation and upgrading of institutional frameworks that can strengthen sustainable land management frameworks to combat land degradation in North-eastern Brazil is the main explicit objective of this project, it is here where the Project faces the greatest challenges, thus far, in obtaining results and therefore in harnessing governance sustainability. Although much of the responsibility for this lack of effects in governance and policy is placed on the changes of government in the last year, this problem lingers from before these changes occurred. For instance, simpler issues that are not strictly related to the country's new environmental and development policies, such as capacity building within the extension institutions to appropriate the good practices implemented by the Project did not take place. This capacity building is agreed upon by relevant institutional stakeholders and it is not in contradiction of new policies, therefore it can be carried out even with the new context. This is imperative if the practices are to be assimilated at a system level and not remain as pilots or demonstrations only. As the next stage of implementation unfolds, the Project should carefully consider what institutional and governance framework components can be impelled in order to support the integration of sustainable land management practices for small farmers, not only to obtain results but also to anchor actual and future achievements in the national and state levels' institutional framework.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding environmental risks to sustainability, these are quite present, specially and evidently threats of desertification. This not only due to the historic factors and drivers of desertification in the Northeast of Brazil but also due to how these are exacerbated by climate change. The Project experienced delays to some degree due to the impact of climate change in the region. For instance, the area suffered from overextended droughts during most of the implementation, droughts which have been associated to climate change factors.

EXTENSION REQUEST

Given the delays, issues with execution, political changes, and other similar matters that have hindered the implementation process of this project, it is recommended by this midterm review that an extension should be sought, and eventually granted.

This evaluation ascertains that the Project has had a series of setbacks in implementation processes, making an extension request a necessity. The reasons for delays, as indicated previous sections of this report, are varied. In short, the project has had changes in its director three times so far, it has had extensive periods without a director (including this past year with no director being officially nominated), and it has had a virtual standstill since the national and state – level elections took place in late 2018. The elections have not only produced a shift in some of the personnel attached to the Project per se or involved in the intervention either directly or tangentially, they have also brokered a sweeping shift in political context and development/environment policy within Brazil. These issues have caused hindrances in implementation, generated setbacks in implementation and programming, in obtaining products and, of course, in obtaining results and achievements. Therefore, it is considered that an extension request ought to be granted based on the issues explained here.

The request (as is the present midterm review) can also be an opportunity for the Project (including all relevant stakeholders) to reflect as to what is necessary to reformulate or carry out in order to have a successful completion of the Project. An extension would allow for the Project not only to conclude properly with an appropriate closing period but also to strengthen the replication, upscaling and sustainability aspects of results achieved thus far. That is, with an extension, the Project would have a better likelihood that its results and good practices be incorporated into Brazil's institutional policies and programs that deal with related issues. Specific suggestions regarding these matters are part of the recommendations section of this report.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned represent knowledge generated by reflecting on the actual results of a project until the time of this review and on the experience that has the potential to improve future programming and actions. The Project gives rise to and motivates a series of lessons learned such as those extended below.

- When a project has a strong presence at the sub-national level, it should have staff on site [focal point, technical professional, etc.] in order to anchor it properly in the state or region where most sub-national actions take place and to engage in dialogue with the authorities. The recruitment should be carefully considered, in order to incorporate staff that has a technical background in the subject but also that can engage in dialogue with the policy sector. The responsibilities for this post(s) should be strong so that it does not fall merely into administrative matters.
- With regard to the comprehensive gender approach of an intervention, these cannot be let to the freewill of whatever actor is implementing parts of a project. It should be included in design strategically. It must be noted that the mere participation of women in events (i.e. the participation of women in any field or activity that a project promotes) although commendable is not a comprehensive approach to gender equality. Projects should consider gender integration strategies from planning and starting an intervention. These strategies should understand gender equality objectives such as equality in decision-making; access to productive resources and goods, services and markets and not confine gender aspects of a project just to household issues.
- Risk analysis should be thorough and candid. Risk should be adequately and openly valued, and a mitigation strategy drawn at the planning stages. As soon as a risk is flagged, mitigations measures need to begin to be applied.
- Projects in their planning stages ought to carry out a capacity assessment in addition to needs assessment, being attentive to weak policy absorption capacity and weak governance, as well as frail budgeting structures that hinder implementation of policies. For instance, as in the case of the Sergipe Project, the capacity of absorption by local governments of the municipal action plans to combat desertification has not been considered. Therefore, the instruments and plans being generated might not be applicable (and therefore not applied) in the context of the institutional capacities present.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The *Sustainable Land Use Management in The Semiarid Region of Northeast Brazil (Sergipe) Project* has as its primary overall objective to strengthen the sustainable land management governance framework to combat land degradation processes in the semiarid region of the state of Sergipe in the north-eastern Brazil. It is expected that this would be achieved through two highly interlinked outcomes and their corresponding expected outputs. The first expected outcome (*Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe's areas susceptible to desertification)* specifically targets this objective. Nevertheless, this is not to be done in isolation. It is to be done in close linkage with the second expected outcome (*Uptake of sustainable land management and sustainable forest management practices increased in Alto Sertão of Sergipe with replication in the rest of the State's areas susceptible to desertification*). The second component (i.e. the component that deals at different levels with piloted and tested best practices which are implemented by the Project) feeds into the policy and institutional processes for institutional and governance strengthening as well as uptake for the practices.

The Project has encountered a series of setbacks, among them the rapidly changing political context that Brazil has gone through in the last few years. Therefore, these changes have had, explicitly and tacitly, a great deal of impact upon implementation, upon ownership, and upon financing of project activities and its possible upscaling.

It cannot be denied that the demonstration aspect of the implemented practices has been highly positive. They are concrete practices that take an integrated ecological, productive and social approach. They are inexpensive in the long run and have very rapid tangible benefits for the communities and productive units which implement them. These are the main reasons why they are assimilable and are being replicated, duplicated, and upscaled by other projects and even by the communities on their own.

Yet, the Project is not just those practices. The pilots (which are the major if not sole achievements thus far) are a part of the Project that needs to inform the decision-making process to provide guidance to improve and strengthen policy and institutional framework in the North-eastern sections of Brazil in order to comprehensively deal with desertification.

The remaining operational period for the Project can be decisive to adopt and implement policy, planning instruments and key strategies to generate a better framework to deal equitably with desertification in Northeast Brazil. Following is a set of recommendations that could enhance and enrichen the implementation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations presented here reflect suggested corrective actions for the implementation, of the Project, proposals for future directions underlining main objectives as well as actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the Project. A first set of recommendations are linked to an extension request while the second set are more general recommendations for the Project's remaining implementation period.

RECOMMENDATIONS LINKED TO AN EXTENSION REQUEST

1. An extension for the Project should be requested. Should an extension request be presented, it is the consideration of this review that it should be granted given the implementation delays that the Project experienced. In order to assure that this extension is used properly, this request should be seen as an opportunity for the Project (including all relevant stakeholders) to bring up to date and clear-out several implementing, planning and programming issues that hinder to some degree a successful implementation process. For this, it is recommended that this potential request should be accompanied or supported by the following actions.
2. A re launching of the project with the new authorities at the national, state, and local levels, in order to bring them up to date regarding the project and to generate buy in, not only with the partners already established but with new partners if applicable.
3. A workshop for this re – launching is recommended so that partners can be brought up to date quite quickly and buy in generated at once.
4. Re formulate the Project's log frame as far as possible in order to streamline. For instance, it is proposed to do away with proposed products and deliverables that already deemed as inapplicable and which are considered not to have potential effects or results at this time. Also, in line with this reconsider if any of these outputs need to be reformulated in order to be more feasible to implement in the period left.
5. Specify which of the products that would be dropped or realigned in a programmatic manner.
6. Generate a clear chronogram or road map of the activities, processes and products the project aims to obtain in its remaining period of implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMAINING IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

7. The Project needs to have an effective institutionalization within the MMA as soon as possible. For this, there should be a formal nomination of the national technical project director, with clear statements of his/her duties, responsibilities, and recognizing the institutional roles of national government in this Project.
8. Reactivate all the mechanisms that provide direction to the project (such as the Project Board, Project Advisory Committee, Regional Technical Commission), starting to meet and deliberate regularly in order to provide managerial and technical guidance for the Project as a whole, provide technical inputs and guidance as to how the outputs are leading to the expected outcomes, and to guide coordination between national and state – level activities in Sergipe.
9. Reinstate dialogue between and among the main Project partners at all levels, not only with the formal committees as above but also through different activities where dialogue and information sharing can take place within the participating institutions. Include other partners, especially those that due to the restructuring of national government are now relevant or that have absorbed functions that were formerly within the MMA's domain (for example, the national Ministry of Agriculture).

10. Accelerate implementation of Outcome 1 outputs (and those in Outcome 2 which were left behind) regaining the vision with which the Project was planned. That is, that the Project's objective is to strengthen the policy/institutional framework and governance structure for combating desertification in an equitable manner and that the demonstration activities need to nourish policy and become sustainable and replicable though their insertion and uptake in the institutional framework at all relevant levels.
11. Renew work on sustained financing mechanisms (such as the fine reconversion schemes, lines of support by financial institutions, etc.) for the uptake, replication and upscaling of the Project's achieved results.
12. Ascertain and verify that an integrated gender dimension is incorporated in all plans, instruments, capacity-building activities and policies that are adopted at all levels (not only in local demonstrations, but also in state-wide and national levels). Establish that this gender dimension is integral and not attend only to household issues focus to matters related to production, for instance, or equal access to productive resources and equal access to goods, services and markets.
13. Document and capture the achievements through the generation of documents and knowledge management products that depict the implementation of pilot experiences, what they have achieved, what the benefits, impact, effects and efficiency of these pilot experiences have been, as well as the lessons learned. Generate different types of materials catering to the different users (technical, for beneficiaries, etc.). Generate user friendly tools and publications where practitioners, communities and beneficiaries can easily assimilate and use (such as specific tool kits).
14. Start generating knowledge management mechanisms to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise that is being created throughout the Project and sharing best practices and lessons learned. Use knowledge management-oriented products internally to exchange information among and between the Project practitioners as well as externally with other actors (donors, media, etc.).
15. Seek repositories of the information generated by the project (for example the maps and other materials) that is widely available, decentralized, with open access, seeking ways that these repositories are maintained and open after project conclusion.

6. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: MTR TERMS OF REFERENCE

ANNEX 2: RATING SCALES

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.
Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The Project can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the Project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

ANNEX 3: MEETINGS AND MISSION SCHEDULE

2019

TIME	AGENDA	INSTITUTION
	Wednesday,	
6-7am	Conference Call	UNDP

date

TIME	AGENDA	PARTICIPANTS
6-7am	Meeting	
	Site Visit	

ANNEX 4: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED AND STAKEHOLDERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN MTR ACTIVITIES

	Name	***Institution***
1.		

ANNEX 5: LOG FRAME

	Indicator	Baseline	Targets End of Project
Project Objective Strengthening SLM governance frameworks to combat land degradation processes in Sergipe ASD in NE Brazil	1. Area (ha) of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices are implemented in Sergipe. 2. Average tree density in forest patches < 50 ha. 3. Loss of vegetation coverage in SE-ASD (48 municipalities). 4. Production of small-scale farms for the four field sites. 5. Increase in the general score of LD Tracking Tool.	1. No recommended SLM practices disseminated to date. 2. < 800 tree/ha. 3. Projected rate of deforestation without the project 0.29% per year. 4. Projected rate of productivity 0.7 t/ha of main subsistence crops (manioc, beans, corn). 5. General score of LD Tracking Tool: 1	1. 70,000 ha on 2,000 rural properties, including replication areas. 2. >1,500 tree/ha 3. Rate of deforestation reduced to 0.14% per year. 4. 30% increase of productivity of crops by end of project. 5. General score of LD Tracking Tool: 3
Outcome 1: Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe ASD.	1. Improved norms and directives on SLM at State level. 2. Level of capacity of staff at SEMARH, key municipalities in SE-ASD and IBAMA, where appropriate, related to: SLM and LD issues; licensing of agriculture/livestock and forest management activities; and land use oversight/enforcement. 3. Number of state licenses taking into account SLM criteria and practices for Alto Sertão Sergipano (SAS) 4. % of compliance with rural licensing processes in 2 SAS municipalities.	1. LD norms and technical directives are not in place at state level. 2. 01 State level Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PAE) and no municipal Action Plans (MAP) at the SE-ASDs. 3. Number of staff who are knowledgeable on SLM practices is nearly null. 4. Existing licenses do not take due account of SLM criteria in SAS. Baseline for compliance will be determined when final deliberation on CAR is made.	1. LD norms and technical directives developed and submitted to NCCD. 2. Revised PAE and 07 MAPs at the SE-ASDs prepared, approved with operational plans and budget for implementation. 3. Nuclei of SLM and LD issues established and trained in SEMARH, with participation of key municipalities in SE-ASD, IBAMA and ADEMA. 4. 10% increase in licenses with SLM criteria per year, post year 3. By end year 2: revised licensing criteria for multiple uses designed and proposed to ADEMA, GPCD and NCCD. By end year 4: revised licensing criteria for forest use designed and proposed to IBAMA, ADEMA, GPCD and NCCD.
Outcome 2: Uptake of SLM/SFM practices increased in Alto Sertão of Sergipe (SAS), with replication in rest of SEASD	1. Number of farming households implementing sustainable subsistence and commercial agricultural practices, improved grazing systems and integrated SLM practices in SAS 2. Reduced land degradation over 8,000 ha in 04 field sites. 3. Percentage of agricultural extensionists active in SAS delivering targeted support that includes recommended SLM directives 4. Investments in SLM practices in Sergipe	1. Fewer than 50 farms with recommended SLM practices adopted in SAS. Legal requirements for LRs and APPs not enforced. 2. Nearly 50% of the land area in 04 field sites is under accentuated and/or severe land degradation (soil loss by water erosion = 10 t/ha; and loss of soil carbon = 3 t/ha) 3. Practically none (0%) 4. Financing through commercial banks without SLM criteria. -US$18Million in financing through PRONAF to SAS in 2012 (nearly 12 thousand contracts) with limited SLM criteria. -US$995k through environmental funds to Sergipe (0.2% of total investment).	1. At least 2,000 farming households in SAS adopt sustainable agricultural practices, improved grazing systems and integrated SLM practices by end of project. 2. By the end of year 3: 500 families in 4 field sites with SLM strategies developed & implemented. By end of project 25% of land degradation in these 04 field sites (2,000 ha) reduced (soil loss by water erosion < 5 t/ha; and loss of soil carbon < 2 t/ha*; **) 3. 100% of extensionists active in SAS deliver targeted support that includes recommended SLM directives, with replication in SEASD 4. 20 % increase in investment in SLM practices in Sergipe. By year 2: SLM technical guidelines to support decision making by credit agents.

ANNEX 7: MTR EVALUATIVE MATRIX

(CRITERIA WITH KEY QUESTIONS, INDICATORS, SOURCES OF DATA, AND METHODOLOGY)

ANNEX 8: PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS MATRIX

Objective/Outcome Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target Level at end of project	Cumulative progress since project start	Mid term Level & Assess-ment[18]	Achi e-vem ent Rati ng[19]	Justification for Rating
Objective: Strengthening SLM governance frameworks to combat land degradation processes in Sergipe ASD in NE Brazil						
Area (ha) of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices are implemented in Sergipe.	No recommended SLM practices disseminated to date.	70,000 ha on 2,000 rural properties, including replication areas.	1. Area (ha) of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices are implemented in Sergipe Currently, the project's intervention areas total 15,195.15 ha in Sergipe and 11,133.29 ha in replication areas in the Brazilian Northeast, totaling 26,328.44 ha. Also, 486 families will receive training to apply SLM practices on their properties, 168 families in the already installed intervention areas in Sergipe and 318 more families in replication areas. Field interventions in the project´s focus areas were completed in November 2018. The intervention was based on the URAD (Units of Recovery of Degraded Areas and Reduction of Climate Vulnerability) strategy, developed by the Brazilian Ministry of Environment (MMA), which combines social, environmental and productive management and soil, water and biodiversity conservation, using simple and low-cost technologies, with the participation of local communities. The project implemented URADs in 2 (two) municipalities of Alto Sertão Sergipe (de São Francisco and Poço Redondo) and directly benefited 168 families from Florestan Fernandes (32 families), Modelo (35 families), João Pedro Teixeira (30 families), Flor da Serra and Quilombo Serra da Guia (71 families) communities. These 168 families use SLM practices on their properties and, with the support of the project, today have 08 (eight) recovered springs, 97 (ninety-seven) successive dams to contain the sediments resulting from soil erosion and avoid its transport to rivers and reservoirs, as well as areas for crop, livestock and forest integration (ILPF, in Portuguese) and Agroforestry Systems (ASF). They also received 105 (one hundred and five) ecological stoves, 90 (ninety) cisterns for capturing and storing water for human consumption and also for production, and 125 (one		MU	The objective is expected to achieve some of its end-of-project targets. However, this is expected to be done with several major shortcomings. Although field interventions have been successfully piloted, the target indicator of 70 000 is not expected to be achieved within the project's implementation period the achieved target at the time of the midterm review (which takes place only a few months before planned Project conclusion) is of 22.5 percent of target. Note: reporting in the PIR goes beyond reporting for the objective. The objective specifically states that indicator deals with area of rural properties in which recommended SLM practices implemented ***in*** Sergipe. While reporting deals with areas outside of that state. Indicators are supposed to tally progress of projects and results attributable to a Project. The demonstration capacity of the implemented URADs is highly positive, yet their institutional appropriation is uncertain at this point. Processes of dissemination have also been started but not to the degree necessary for upscaling and replicating. At the product level other achievements have been made, or are in the process to be achieved, such as thematic maps and instruments that should not only be used as verification means for the present project but also as a way to monitor land degradation

[18] Following indications for Mid Term Reviews, the analysis also concludes whether the end-of-project target: a) has already been achieved (colouring table cell green); b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the project (colouring table cell yellow); or c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the project and needs attention (colouring table red). For further details on this sort of analysis, see *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews Of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

Indicator Assessment Key

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

[19] Six - point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU. Explanation of rating scale is attached in annexes (Annex 10: Progress Towards Results Rating Scale).

			hundred and twenty-five) sanitary units with septic tanks were also built and / or recovered. The project has demonstrated that it is possible to recover degraded areas using low-cost social/environmental technologies, and this has contributed to the dissemination and replication of good SLM practices. MMA itself has invested in the replication of the URAD strategy into other states in the semi-arid region of Northeast Brazil, with its own resources, using the pilot experience of Sergipe as a reference, as described below: - State: Piauí (PI) • 01 URAD • Number of families: 30 • Municipality: Santo Antônio de Lisboa • Community: Sítio Salvador • Institution contracted through IICA / MMA Public Notice: Foundation for the Protection of the Environment and Ecotourism (FUNPAPI) • Implementation period: 02/05 to 11/2/2018 - Extension: 07/25/2019 • Phase: under implementation - State: Bahia (BA) • 01 URAD • Number of families: 30 • Town or City: Sento Sé • Community: Fartura • Institution contracted through IICA / MMA Call Notice: Regional Institute of Appropriate Small Farmers (IRPAA) • Implementation period: 24/07 to 24/12/2018 Extension: 07/24/2019 • Phase: under implementation - State: Maranhão (MA) • 03 URADs • Number of families: 90 • Town or village: Chapadinha • Communities: Canto do Ferreira, Cercadinho and Rodeio • Institution contracted via IICA / MMA Call for Proposals: Training and Development Center (CETREDE) • Implementation period: 28/08 to 25/12/2018 Extension: 07/24/2019 • Phase: under implementation The five URADs mentioned above were financed by federal government resources (co-financing) from the National Climate Change Fund (Fundo Clima), and are implemented in partnership with the Inter-American			and of desertification risks in Brazil's semi-arid region if these instruments are properly used, maintained, and with open access in the future. Although Municipal Action Plans to Combat Desertification (MAPs) have been drawn or are in the process to be drawn, given the low capacity to absorve these maps and implement them at the local/municipal level. .

			Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), through Project BRA / 14/001, with a total budget of R$ 2.3 million. In this context, it should be noted that currently there are 9 (nine) URADs installed and / or in implementation under the coordination of MMA and with the support of partners, directly benefiting a total of 318 families: • Sergipe: 168 families in 04 URADs • Maranhão: 90 families in 03 URADs • Piauí: 30 families in 01 URAD • Bahia 30 families in 01 URAD As recorded in PIR 2018, due to technical issues, there was a change in the areas of direct intervention of the Sergipe project. These changes ended up impacting the project's capacity to achieve the target results, especially because of the withdrawal of the Jacaré Curituba settlement, which implied a reduction of about 21,000 ha and 800 families from the planned targets. Besides Jacaré Curituba (20,940 ha, 700 to 800 families), the project's initial intervention areas proposal (22,943 ha and 914 families) also included the communities of Poço Preto (750 ha, 50 families), Valmir Mota (429 ha, 33 families) and the Florestan Fernandes (824 ha, 31 families). With the change of areas of intervention, only Florestan Fernandes settlements remained and the Jacaré Curituba and Valmir Mota settlements were replaced by the Modelo (791ha) and João Pedro Teixeira (3,701ha) settlements. The Poço Preto community was replaced by the Flor da Serra settlement (302.16ha) and the Quilombo Serra da Guia community (9,013.18ha). Considering the total area of the settlements and communities in which recommended SLM practices are implemented, as specified in the PRODOC, an area of around 15,195.15 ha is recorded in Sergipe. These numbers will be expanded with the replication areas of URADs in other states totaling about 11,133.29ha, thus distributed: • Maranhão / municipality of Chapadinha: 6,038.54ha, encompassing the Rodeio communities (1,948.24 ha), Canto do Ferreira (2.110,87ha) and Cercadinho (1,979.43 ha). • Piauí / municipality of Santo Antônio de Lisboa: 3,661.43ha, in the Sitio Salvador community. • Bahia / municipality of Sento Sé: 1,433.32 ha, community Fartura. It is worth mentioning that the data referring to the extension of replication areas indicated above will be confirmed by the MMA when interventions in Maranhão, Piauí and Bahia are concluded Adding the areas of Sergipe (15,195.15 ha) with those of the other states (11,133.29ha), a territory corresponding to 26,328.44 ha is recorded. The planning of project execution for the period 2019 considered the expansion of these areas. However, progress has not been achieved yet because, since January 2019, the Sergipe project remains without a national director due to recent structural changes within the federal government, including MMA, which also means that			

			the strategy and initiatives to be adopted jointly by UNDP and the MMA to reach the final results of the project are still uncertain. A public call was launched in March 2018 with a view to financing new URADs in the Parnaiba River Basin via the national program for conversion of environmental fines into environmental services, a program that is coordinated by Ibama. The preliminary selection results were published in December / 2018. With the inauguration of the new federal government, all the calls under the fines conversion program were suspended sine die. A presidential decree published in April 2018 determined that fines conversion via public calls is subject to subsequent regulations, which have not been published to date. The other cooperation projects referred to in PIR / 2018, with the possibility of synergies and the provision of resources for the improvement of SLM governance and the development of good practices, are also being reviewed in the current institutional context. As recorded in PIR / 2018, the implementation of SLM practices in municipalities will be guided by the Municipal Action Plans to Combat Desertification (MAPs). It should be noted that the MMA changed the methodology of elaboration of the MAPs and created a tutorial to guide projects in the implementation of URADs, including the MAPs (see document uploaded to the PIR Library). The methodology was applied in the development / updating of the MAPs for Canindé and Poço Redondo / SE, in November 2018. However, it was not possible to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the methodology applied to the MAPs due to the electoral process and the resulting changes in federal and state government structures.			
Average tree density in forest patches; 50 ha	800 tree/ha.	2.1,500 tree/ha	Progress on the indicator was also greatly impacted by changes in the Brazilian government since the new national government took office, last January, once the Secretariat in the Ministry of Environment (MMA) that was responsible for the project was dismantled in January 2019 and no national director for the project was appointed. As a result, the development of the online platform that will register progress on indicators needed to be halted. As registered in 2018, verification of the indicators will be carried out by means of a platform for monitoring the degradation of lands and risk of desertification in the semi-arid region of Brazil, under development by MapBiomas / APNE. In 2018, the workspace and dashboards of the monitoring platform, named MapBiomas Árida, were built and published in MapBiomas' cloud (http://arida.mapbiomas.org/). Additionally, the following thematic maps were developed and integrated into the platform: • Map of Water Surface (2000-2017) delimited by the official border of the Brazilian Northeast, including Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. • Map of Plant Cover and Land Use (2000-2017), adapting the classes of use and coverage to those that are applied worldwide in the LDN (land degradation neutraly) indicator. • Plant Cover Transition Map (2000-2017), based on the official limit of the Brazilian semi-arid, allowing for			

			the quantification of the areas for a better understanding of the landscape dynamics. • Carbon flux mapping delimited by the official Brazilian semi-arid boundary, allowing quantification of carbon dynamics and its relation to vegetation through satellite image using the CO2Flux index. • Map of net primary productivity (2000-2017), delimited by the Brazilian semi-arid official border, reflects the amount of biomass present in the photosynthetically active vegetation. The five thematic maps are available on the platform dashboard, based on the year defined by the GT - Desertification (2000), until the year 2017. There are eighteen maps for each theme, a total of 90 (ninety) maps available for monitoring. In November / 2018, the version of the monitoring platform was presented at the "National Conference on Neutrality of Land Degradation (LDN): Strategies, Results and Perspectives". The event was conducted by MMA in Brasilia-DF, with the support of the Project and the UNCCD, including the presence of a UNCCD representative. Also during the LDN Conference, the set of maps was presented and endorsed by the GT-Desertification Experts (GTED) and other specialists present. The entire platform part for data storage and analysis was completed in December / 2018. The availability of the system, measurement of indicators and training workshops were planned for 2019. However, due to the reform of the federal government's public administration, with significant changes in the organizational structure of the MMA, it was necessary to suspend the activities of the Letter of Agreement until the new national technical coordination in MMA project is defined. As for data on soil carbon, the studies of the National Forest Inventory of Sergipe (IFN-SE) were completed and published by the Brazilian Forest Service (SFB), in the Technical Report Series - IFN. However, there were no data available for the Carbon Flow mapping (needed for indicator 2.1, "Reduced land degradation over 8,000 ha in 4 field sites"). With the new structure of the Ministries the SFB was integrated the structure of the MAPA, thus requiring new coordination to obtain the carbon database on the soil of IFN-Sergipe. In regard to project actions related to this indicator, the project carried out field interventions via the URAD strategy area based on two sets of measures that contribute to an increased tree density: revegetation and crop-forest integration systems. Revegetation was achieved both by planting native trees in URAD areas, but also with water and soil conservation technologies, such as water springs restoration, installation of water reservoirs for animal and human consumption, and building of successive stone dams (barrage base zero, BBZ) and stone strands (cordões de pedra). Additionally, production practices in the intervention areas were based on forest integration systems. Agroforestry systems and crop-livestock-forestry integration systems were set up in individual and collective plots, where producers planted corn, beans and forage palms along			

			with leucena and gliricidia trees. Producers also received training on native vegetation sustainable management practices. For 2019, actions were planned to encourage the productive sectors of the Alto Sertão (agriculture and livestock) to adopt good practices in their properties, using URADs as demonstration areas. Knowledge dissemination should begin as soon as the Ministry of Environment designates a project director and approves the project's work plan.			
Loss of vegetation coverage in SE-ASD (48 municipalities).	Projected rate of deforestation without the project 0.29% per year.	Rate of deforestation reduced to 0.14% per year.	In order to achieve the targeted reduction in deforestation rates, the project has prioritized exchange of experiences, training and dissemination of practices for the efficient use of natural resources. Sustainable management of soils, vegetation and water reduce the impact on native vegetation and help diminish deforestation. Nevertheless, progress in the indicator was also impacted by changes in the Brazilian government, since activities have had to be postponed until the appointment of a National Director for the project. As registered in the 2018 PIR, verification of the indicators will be carried out through the monitoring platform of land degradation in the Brazilian Northeast semiarid. The platform is being developed via Letter of Agreement, formalized with Association of Plants of the Northeast (APNE) and MapBiomas network. Verification was supposed to occur after the field interventions via URADs were completed, which happened in November 2018. Yet due to the elections and transition period, field tests of the monitoring platform were held only in In March / 2019, when the MapBiomas / APNE team along with UNDP and the Ministry of Environment, visited the four intervention sites and tested the uploading of information to the platform. Demands for minor adjustments in the platform and in the data gathering methodology were identified and need MMA's endorsement to be put in place. Also, governance on data gathering itself and progress measurement and verification needs to be defined. Yet, as explained in the previous indicator, due to the federal government's reform of the public administration, with significant changes in the organizational structure of the MMA, it was necessary to suspend activities within the Agreement Letter signed with APNE/MapBiomas, until the new national technical coordination of the MMA project was defined.			
Production of small-scale farms for the four field sites.	Projected rate of productivity 0.7 t/ha of main subsistence crops (manioc, beans, corn).	30% increase of productivity of crops by end of project.	During the implementation of the four URADs, concluded last November (2018), communities were not only offered training courses on best practices for sustainable land management and the use of environmental assets, but also received solutions on apiculture, agroforestry systems and crop-livestock-forestry integration systems that were meant to provide producers with tools to increase crop productivity. Nevertheless, in registering progress on this indicator, the effect of rainfall irregularity on productivity must be considered, although it can be partly mitigated as communities received water cisterns. As mentioned previously, and registered in the 2018 PIR, verification of the indicators will be carried out through the monitoring platform for land degradation under development by the MapBioms / APNE Letter of			

			Agreement (LoA). The consolidation of this action, together with progress on other activities related to the LoA, is conditioned to the guidelance of the new national technical coordination of the project within MMA.			
Increase in the general score of LD Tracking Tool.	General score of LD Tracking Tool: 1	General score of LD Tracking Tool: 3	The tracking tool was updated by the project's technical team during PIR 2018. A general score of "2" was calculated. As a result of the limited progress in this reporting period due to the elections period and the structural changes in the Ministry of Environment (MMA) since the new federal government took office in January, it was not possible to increase the general score. It is expected that before the Midterm Review, with the definition of the project's location within MMA's new structure, the score will be updated. It should be noted that the project's field interventions via URADs should result in better scores for LD1 – Ecosystem services in production landscapes (agriculture, rangeland) / "Improved agricultural management", especially in regard to productivity and community vulnerability, and "Sustained flow of services in agro-ecosystems", as agroforestry systems and crop-livestock-forestry integration systems were set up in individual and collective plots of the beneficiary communities. Interventions and knowledge dissemination and training also contribute to improving the score on LD3 – SLM in wider landscapes (integrated management) / "Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities", which can also be improved once federal and state legislation on land restoration and combatting desertification are approved.			
Outcome 1: Strengthened governance framework contributes to avoiding, reducing and reverting land degradation in Sergipe ASD.						
Improved norms and directives on SLM at State level.	LD norms and technical directives are not in place at state level. 01 State level Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PAE) and no municipal Action Plans (MAP) at the SE-ASDs.	LD norms and technical directives developed and submitted to NCCD. Revised PAE and 07 MAPs at the SE-ASDs prepared, approved with operational plans and budget for implementation.	The election process in the second half of 2018 and the fact that new governments took office in January, at the national and state levels, resulted in delays in decision-making and changes in leadership that have greatly impacted the execution of activities planned in the last 12 months. During this period, Ministry of Environment (MMA) published a "tutorial" with a methodology aimed at supporting Brazilian states and municipalities in the design of URAD implementation projects, including guidelines for the development of Municipal Action Plans (MAPs). Two workshops were carried out in Sergipe in November 2018, aiming at developing and/or updating MAPs for the municipalities of Canindé de São Francisco and Poço Redondo. The MAPs proposals generated in the workshops were delivered to the focal points of the municipal governments for evaluation, possible adjustments and due formal endorsement. However, it was not possible to carry out an evaluation of the methodology's effectiveness, due to the electoral process and the changes in the government structures. The project's Work Plan for 2019 includes the execution of this assessment, however, a decision on whether the methodology will still be applied in the elaboration of MAPs is subject to guidelines to be defined by the new project's national director, yet to be appointed. As noted in 2018, support for the development of MAPs was included in the Technical Cooperation Agreement (ACT) signed by MMA with the municipalities of Canindé de São Francisco and Poço Redondo, in Sergipe, involved		U	The classification as Unsatisfactory is that, as it stands at the time of this review, most of the end-of-project targets are not expected to be achieved. Bearing in mind that the end-of-project targets are in the policy arena, and this is where the Project has had the most difficulties to obtain products (technical directives, operational plans, revising licensing criteria for multiple land uses, etc..) and to obtain effects (implementation of plans, securing financial backing for SLM activities, implementing revised licensing criteria for multiple uses), therefore the general expectation is that these will not be achieved as planned in the remaining implementation period. Although, again, the demonstration capacity of the implemented URADs, training, and studies carried out are not questioned, it's their institutional appropriation that is doubted. . .

			in the implementation of URADs. However, due to the changes in the organizational structure of the MMA, the procedures for executing cooperation agreements with municipalities are under revision and the ACT is yet to be implemented. Also as noted in 2018, between 2016 and 2017, the project made contributions to the review of Sergipe's Action plan on Desertification (PAE/SE), as Sergipe's pluriannual plan for 2016-2019 did include as a goal the "Implementation of PAE-SE, with the elaboration and implementation of municipal plans". Nevertheless, during the last twelve months, there was no progress towards the consolidation of the final document for the PAE/SE. Similarly, the draft document of the State Policy to Combat Desertification in Sergipe, prepared with the support of the project, is still under review at the state level. Due to the administrative reform in the Government of Sergipe, the Secretariat of Environment and Water Resources (SEMARH) was extinguished and its competencies were absorbed by the Secretariat for Urban Development and Sustainability (SEDURBS), which includes both the Special Superintendence of Water Resources and Environment (SERHMA) and the State Administration of Environment (ADEMA) in its structure. As a consequence, follow up on state policy and the action plan to combat desertification was delayed. Also, the work of the Permanent Group to Combat Desertification (GPCD), which functions as the state's center on SLM and LD issues (Indicator 1.2, "Level of capacity of staff at SEMARH […] where appropriate)", is subject to guidelines to be defined within this new structure of the public administration of Sergipe. Thus, the actions planned in the scope of the project that involve the GPCD and the establishment of the technical core of SLM management in Sergipe, will also need to be adjusted. In regard to national policies, the National Commission to Combat Desertification (NCCD) held only two general meetings (12/2015 and 09/2018) during the execution of the project so far. The commission is responsible for promoting the National Policy to Combat Desertification, in accordance with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Sergipe Project was presented to the NCCD in December 2015. In September 2018, seeking to resume the activities of the NCCD, the MMA held a meeting to foster reflections on the impacts of climate change in the Northeastern semi-arid region, as well as the inauguration of new member federal and state governments. The URAD strategy and activities implemented in the Alto Sertão Sergipanao (SSA) region were also presented. Since the last meeting, in September 2018, no new NCCD resolution has been published. Due to the restructuring of the MMA, still in progress, there has not been progress in what regards the work of the commission within the new national government. Similarly, there has been no progress regarding the approval of the decree that should regulated the national policy on desertification. Policy decisions on those matters are subject to guidelines that are still under development within the new national government. As part of the strategy to optimize the monitoring of land use and support government decisions on SLM and LD norms and directives, the project published the following studies in a digital version (and added to the PIR 2019 Library):			

			- Biomassa para Energia no Nordeste: Atualidade e Perspectivas (Biomass for energy in the Northeast: actuality and perspective). Available at: http://www.mma.gov.br/phocadownload/gestao_territorial/desertificacao/Livro_APNE_NE_AGO20.pdf. - Importância Atual e Potencial do Uso da Biomassa para Energia em Sergipe (Current and potential importance of the use of biomass for energy in Sergipe). Available at: http://www.mma.gov.br/publicacoes/gestao-territorial/category/79-combate-a-desertificacao.html?download=1445 Considering that desertification is yet to find its place within the Ministry of Environment's new structure and policy guidelines, it is not possible to indicate, at the moment, which strategies should be put into place to achieve the targets for this indicator. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the proposal for the new federal government pluriannual plan (PPA) does include a budget for desertification that includes management / governance actions (regulation of the National Policy to Combat Desertification, implementation of UNCCD commitments and the elaboration of the Brazilian Plan of Action) and promoting good practices for combating desertification and reversing land degradation. Therefore, synergies already exist between the project's targets (and work plan) and the new Brazilian government on those areas and should be further explored in meetings with the project's National Director, as soon as he/she is designated. Special attention should be given to MAPs, as MMA's tutorial on the tool, based on URAD implementation and within a participatory framework, do have the potential to be easily transformed into municipal policy. An evaluation of the methodology's effectiveness should be carried out in partnership with the first municipalities to receive it, Canindé de São Francisco and Poço Redondo, which should also include discussions on elaborating multi-municipality action plans, based on the successful consortium framework that was developed for waste management.			
Level of capacity of staff at SEMARH, key municipalities in SE-ASD and IBAMA, where appropriate, related to: SLM and LD issues; licensing of agriculture/livestock and forest management activities; and land use oversight/enforcement.	Number of staff who are knowledgeable on SLM practices is nearly null.	Nuclei of SLM and LD issues established and trained in SEMARH, with participation of key municipalities in SE-ASD, IBAMA and ADEMA.	From July 2018 to June 2019, the project trained about 667 people on issues related to SLM, land degradation and combating desertification, including farmers, technicians, public managers and civil society. Some 363 women participated in workshops, seminars and courses. It should be noted that representatives from SEMARH, Ibama, Incra, DNOCs and ASS city councils participated in the MAP workshops held in Poço Redondo and Canindé do São Francisco. These organizations were also present at the field intervention (URAD) results presentation seminars and in the National Land Degradation Neutrality Conference (LDN). For Adema, the project organized field visits to the URADs in December, 2018. In 2018, the Sergipe Project also supported the National Conference on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), held from November 26 to 27 in Brasilia The event, organized by MMA with support from UNCCD, gathered together communities, local and state governments (mayors, state vice-governors, heads of state level institutions), as well as government institutions responsible for formulating and/or executing policies on desertification, such as DNOCS (National Department of Public Works against Drought) and the National Commission to Combat Desertification, the Working Group of Specialists in Desertification			

			(GTED), and UNCCD itself. About 100 people attended the conference and were trained in LDN, implementation of URAD (social, environmental and production practices), and monitoring indicators related to combating desertification. In addition to the communities haring their experiences and workshops on URAD practices, a speech on " Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Land Degradation Neutrality" was offered by UNDP within a panel on LDN monitoring that also brought together Brazil's institutes on geography and statistics (IBGE) and on applied economic research (IPEA). In 2018, GTED provided support to decisions regarding both project targets and LDN indicators monitoring, as this group was responsible for proposing the partnership of the project with MapBiomas. As noted in the previous year, GTED is comprised of desertification specialists from MMA, from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), the Foundation of Meteorology and Water Resources of the state of Ceara (FUNCEME), the Federal University of Pernambuco (FPE), the Brazilian Forest Service (SFB), the State University of Feira de Santana (UEFS) and the University of Brasilia (UnB). GTED members participated in a field visit to the URADs of Sergipe, conducted by MMA and MapBiomas, in July 2018. Also regarding capacity strengthening, during this PIR period, professionals from ADEMA, IBAMA and the city of Canindé de São Francisco participated in the training offered by MMA on the URAD strategy in December 2018. Considering the recent organizational changes in national and state governments, and the delay in bringing into force updated federal and state level policies, is it necessary to review the project's initial strategy regarding setting up SLM and LDN nuclei in Sergipe. In order to do so, the project's 2019 work plan foresees coordination with the Sergipe Government, co-financing partners, and municipalities in the Alto Sertão Sergipano, so as to establish formal attributions and training actions including the use of the MapBiomas Arida platform to monitor SLM and LDN targets. In this context, for the next year of the project, as soon as the new national director/coordinator is designated, the project's team will propose action on reconnecting with local partners and strengthening institutional coordination with the state of Sergipe, including incorporating new partners who were involved in the process of implementing the project actions. Nevertheless, strategies under this indicator may be further delayed as they may depend on decisions regarding new national guidelines on desertification.			
Number of state licenses taking into account SLM criteria and practices for Alto Sertí£o Sergipano (SAS)	Existing licenses do not take due account of SLM criteria in SAS.	By end year 2: revised licensing criteria for multiple uses designed and proposed to ADEMA, GPCD and NCCD.	As recorded in the previous PIR, after changes in the national government in 2016, MMA indicated that intervention on the issue of licensing criteria was not the mission of the Department of Sustainable Rural Development and Combating Desertification (responsible for implementing the project within the Brazilian government), but a legal attribution of ADEMA (in Sergipe) and IBAMA (in the national level). Once the official elections period in Brazil started July 7th, it was not possible to carry out the project's strategy of reaching Adema via Semarh. After October 2018,			

		By end year 4: revised licensing criteria for forest use designed and proposed to IBAMA, ADEMA, GPCD and NCCD.	Sergipe's government, as well as the national government, were focused on transitioning to the new leaders. Additionally, as the project has yet to be assigned a National Director/coordinator within MMA, it was still not possible to reach out to the new Sergipe government in order to discuss including SLM criteria in state level environmental licensing. Thus, there was no progress on this indicator.			
% of compliance with rural licensing processes in 2 SAS municipalities.	Baseline for compliance will be determined when final deliberation on CAR is made.	10% increase in licenses with SLM criteria per year, post year 3	Regarding actions related to CAR (rural environmental registry), it should be noted that in 2019, due to the reform of the federal government's public administration, the national Forests Service (SFB), responsible for CAR in Brazil, was incorporated into the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA). According to information provided by SFB, under MAPA, the state of Sergipe presented the following CAR progress in May, 2019: • Area subject to registration: 1,482,437 ha (IBGE) • Total registered area: 1,540,555 ha • Percentage of registered area: Above 100% • Number of properties registered: 70,648 It is observed that there has been progress in the application of this environmental management tool (CAR) in Sergipe. The Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) was established by Federal Law 12,651/2012. It is a country-wide public, electronic, registration system, where all rural landowners must record how they use their land, that is, how much of their land is dedicated to agriculture and what areas are classified as Permanent Preservation Areas (APP), restricted use areas, legal reserves, forest remnants and other forms of native vegetation. The CAR is expected to become the government's consolidated database for controlling, monitoring, environmental and economic planning and also combating deforestation. The CAR is the first step for rural properties to obtain compliance with environmental requirements, which should be implemented by landowners via the Environmental Regularization Program (PRA). The PRA comprises a set of actions or initiatives, such as recovery, reconstitution, regeneration or compensation of vegetation loss, that are carried out by landowners with the purpose of adjusting their areas to comply with environmental regulations. Thus, it is expected that adherence to PRA by rural properties in the project coverage area can contribute to the achievement of goals related to the reduction of deforestation, recovery of degraded areas and increase of native vegetation cover. Regarding negotiations between the municipality of Canindé do São Francisco and ADEMA in order to decentralize environmental management to municipalities, ADEMA has indicated that discussions are ongoing and			

			depend on restructuring of the Municipal Tax Office, which is underway.			
Outcome 2: Uptake of SLM/SFM practices increased in Alto Sertão of Sergipe (SAS), with replication in rest of SEASD						
Number of farming households implementing sustainable subsistence and commercial agricultural practices, improved grazing systems and integrated SLM practices in SAS	Fewer than 50 farms with recommended SLM practices adopted in SAS. Legal requirements for LRs and APPs not enforced.	At least 2,000 farming households in SAS adopt sustainable agricultural practices, improved grazing systems and integrated SLM practices by end of project.	In November 2018, the project completed field interventions that resulted in the implementation of four URADs in Sergipe, in the municipalities of Canindé de São Francisco and Poço Redondo, directly benefiting 168 families / properties. The actions were carried out by two NGOs hired via competitive process (SASAC and CDJBC). As noted elsewhere in this PIR, the URAD strategy combines environmental, social and productive measures, associating practical and capacity building activities ("doing and learning"). With respect to sustainable production practices, URADs include environmental interventions aimed at soil and water management and conservation, such as recovering water springs and building successive stone dams (barrage base zero, BBZ) and stone strands (cordões de pedra) that prevent soil loss. With regard to production itself, the project's interventions make the most of the environmental assets of the communities via the implementation of agroforestry systems, integrated crop-livestock-forest systems and by fostering beekeeping / meliponiculture. In addition, social interventions to improve the quality of life of communities are carried out, with the construction of water cisterns for human consumption and production, ecological stoves and health facilities. The MMA, using budgetary resources, through a technical cooperation with IICA, has been executing the URAD strategy with 5 additional communities, directly involving over 300 families / properties in the states of Maranhão, Piauí and Bahia. In that regard, the project has fulfilled its role of fostering the dissemination of good practices on sustainable land management, showing both the effectiveness and large-scale replication potential of the low-cost social technologies adopted in the URAD strategy. Given that changes in the national and state government have halted decisions on important SLM practice dissemination strategies, such as Ibama's environmental fine conversion program, the project has to change its strategy regarding this indicator and mobilize partnerships for capacity building. Therefore, in order to replicate the SLM good practices on a larger scale, the project's work plan for 2019 includes a proposal to intensify knowledge dissemination within the productive sectors (agriculture and livestock) in the Alto Sertão Sergipano region. It is also important to intensify efforts to negotiate partnerships and raise funds for sustainable land management actions, involving government and private initiatives, to reach other regions in Sergipe and in other semi-arid states. Therefore, progress in this indicator will require extra efforts and the approval of the proposed strategy by the new national government.		MS	The outcome is ranked as moderately satisfactory since outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings. First, the number of households that have adopted practices is not nearly the number aimed at with the end of target indicator. Although, again, the demonstration capacity of the implemented URADs, training, and studies carried out are not questioned, it's their institutional appropriation that is doubted. For instance, although the extensionist institutions are aware of and value the URADs process there are no formalized institutional plans for the extension service nor for its extensionists active in SAS to deliver targeted support that based on these experiences. Financing targets have also not been achieved at the time of the midterm review process and link with financing institutions has been weak.
Reduced land degradation over 8,000 ha in 04 field sites.	Nearly 50% of the land area in 04 field sites is under accentuated and/or severe land	By the end of year 3: 500 families in 4 field sites with SLM strategies developed	As explained in the previous PIR, the project sought mechanisms to provide adequate information on this indicator and signed a Letter of Agreement with the MapBiomas initiative to develop an online platform through which progress would be registered and communicated. The platform would not only serve the project, but would register progress on all the Brazilian government initiatives regarding land degradation neutrality, as a tool to promote			

	degradation (soil loss by water erosion = 10 t/ha; and loss of soil carbon = 3 t/ha)	& implemented. By end of project 25% of land degradation in these 04 field sites (2,000 ha) reduced (soil loss by water erosion < 5 t/ha; and loss of soil carbon < 2 t/ha*; **)	transparency on national policy and the results of international commitments. Nevertheless, even though the platform was built, definitions on data entry methodology and system governance were never reached as the new national government has yet to designate a director/coordinator for the project. Currently, the project's intervention areas include 15,195.15 ha in Sergipe and 11,133.29 ha in replication areas in the Brazilian Northeast, totaling 26,328.44 ha where sustainable land management practices have been applied via the URAD strategy. Considering all URADs implemented or under implementation, currently 168 families are involved in Sergipe, 30 in the State of Piauí, 30 in Bahia and 90 in Maranhão, totaling 318 families in nine field sites with SLM strategies developed and implemented. It should be noted that the area covered and the number of field sites is higher than expected, although the number of families involved in SLM strategies is lower due the substitution of the Valmir Mota and Jacaré Curituba settlements by the João Pedro Teixeira and Modelo areas. Regarding loss of soil carbon indicator, data released by the Brazilian Forest Service (SFB) was insufficient. Thus, in order to properly analyze progress towards this target, as registered in last year's PIR, MapBiomas developed algorithms to obtain the CO2 flux index. Therefore, a carbon stock in the soil map was designed and represents the indicative of the carbon flux intensity, making it possible to verify where the carbon content is more critical.			
Percentage of agricultural extensionists active in SAS delivering targeted support that includes recommended SLM directives	Practically none (0%)	100% of extensionists active in SAS deliver targeted support that includes recommended SLM directives, with replication in SEASD	As recorded in previous PIRs, by force of federal law, rural extension in the project's intervention area is to be provided by INCRA (the national agency that supports rural settlements resulting from agrarian reform). INCRA was expected to hire partners to provide rural extension and technical assistance services, but budget constraints delayed decisions on the matter. Currently, INCRA is focusing on analyzing the status and providing property titles to people living in the settlements. Thus, progress on this indicator could not be achieved. As informed in the 2018 PIR, in December, 2017, INCRA issued a public call to hire technical assistance for Sergipe's settlements, including those in the project's intervention areas. By the time of the submission of the 2018 PIR, INCRA was still awaiting the release of financial resources to start providing the services. As a consequence, MMA started negotiations with the General Coordination of Environment and Natural Resources of INCRA (Central Administration), for the formalization of cooperation between MMA and INCRA to strengthen local capacities. However, due to changes in INCRA's presidency and MMA's directions since the elections, it was not possible to follow up. Therefore, since the project's field interventions were concluded, no technical assistance/rural extension services have been provided for the communities. However, the project's work plan for 2019, which needs to be approved by the national director/coordinator who is yet to be designated, includes a strategy to build on capacities already installed in Sergipe by offering SLM training to extension workers from other organizations in the region, including support for the development of training initiatives			

			aimed at municipal and state agricultural technicians, students and independent rural extension professionals. The goal is to strengthen local capacity so communities can seek partners or hire professionals to access rural extension services.			
Investments in SLM practices in Sergipe	Financing through commercial banks without SLM criteria. -US$18Million in financing through PRONAF to SAS in 2012 (nearly 12 thousand contracts) with limited SLM criteria. - US$995k through environmental funds to Sergipe (0.2% of total investment).	420 % increase in investment in SLM practices in Sergipe. By year 2: SLM technical guidelines to support decision making by credit agents.	Due to last year's general elections and the organizational changes in the national and state level governments, initiatives to insert SLM in programs aimed at increasing investments in good practices have not yet been consolidated. Also, due to both the economic crisis Brazil has faced in the last five years as well as changes in the credit market regulations, the rural credit offer has decreased in Brazil: according to the Brazilian Cooperatives Organization (OCB), R$ 34.2 billion were reduced from rural credit within the Ministry of Agriculture food production plan, "Plano Safra", in the 2018/2019 period alone. It is necessary to highlight that progress on this indicator was also delayed due to the strategy of the national coordination of the project in MMA to prioritize the implementation of field interventions in Sergipe, Bahia, Piauí and Maranhão, as highlighted in the previous PIR, to leverage SLM initiatives in areas susceptible to desertification. MMA also channeled the project's efforts into seeking funding sources for the implementation of new URADs, such as IBAMA's environmental fines conversion program. However, it is expected that greater investments in rural credit, announced by the new federal government, should allow actions in this regard. Synergies with another GEF funded project, Bem Diverso (PIMS 4659), were identified regarding increasing investment in sustainable management practices and the development of technical guidelines for credit agents, and should be explored as soon as the new project direction in MMA is selected. Government support and extra effort regarding negotiations with credit agents will be required to achieve progress in this indicator.			

ANNEX 10: PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS RATING SCALE

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice".
Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

ANNEX 11: CONSULTED DOCUMENTS

- Inception report. 2016
- Project Document.
- Project Implementation Report 2018
- Project Implementation Report 2019
- UNDP GEF. Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects). 2014.
- UNDP. Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.
- National Action Program to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought of Brazil. 2004.

ANNEX 12: SIGNED UNEG CODE OF CONDUCT FORM FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: Maria ONESTINI

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

Signed at Buenos Aires, Argentina on October 15 2019

Signature: