

Darwin Initiative Main: Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:

(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>)

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2024

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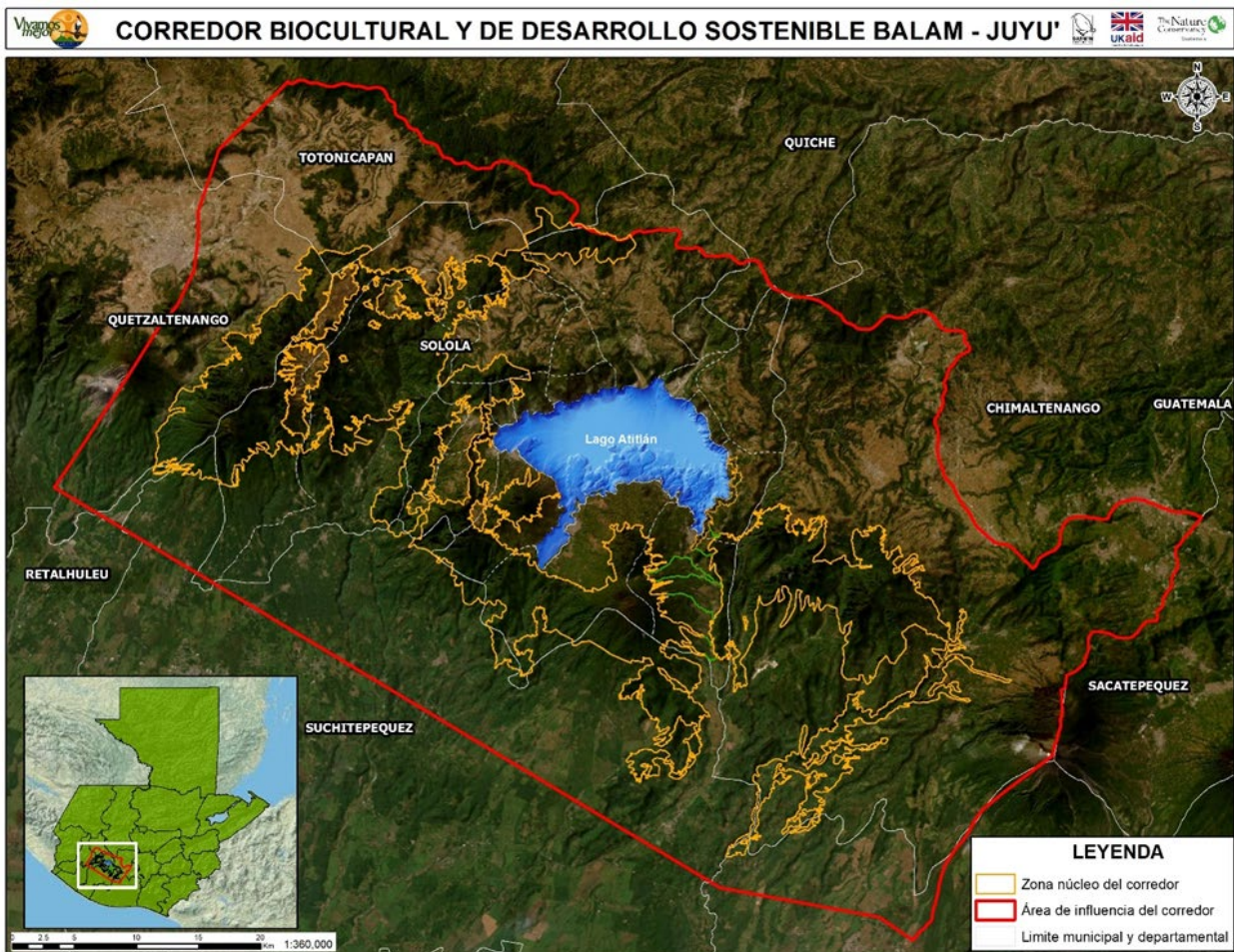
Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	30-006
Project title	Improving integrated landscape management on the Zunil - Atilán - Balam Juyu biocultural corridor
Country/ies	Guatemala
Lead Partner	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Project partner(s)	Asociación Vivamos Mejor (VMA)
Darwin Initiative grant value	GBP 598,996
Start/end dates of project	1 Jun 2023 – 31 May 2026
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2023 – Mar 2024) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	Jun 2023 – Mar 2024 Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Jorge Cardona
Project website/blog/social media	
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Project summary

- The Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural and sustainable development corridor (ZABC) consists of a core zone, a continuous strip of forest extending along the Guatemalan volcanic chain, and its area of influence, a mosaic of land uses surrounding the core zone. It is the ancestral home of several Mayan peoples (Tz'utujil, Kaqchikel and K'iche') who base their livelihoods on goods and services the forest provides while maintaining a deep spiritual connection to it through more than 25 ceremonial sites located within the corridor. In addition to its ecological and cultural importance, the area is heavily impacted by poverty and lack of government capacity to address populations' basic needs. The project is taking place in the department of Sololá, which has the second highest percentage of poverty (80.9%) and extreme poverty (40%) rates in the country, and a Human Development Index of 0.455. The Central Government and Sololá State Government have limited capacity for public investment and delivery of basic public services, disproportionately affecting indigenous and rural populations, this project's primary beneficiaries. The project operates in an area of high importance for biodiversity. The corridor's core zone consists of 63,000ha of forests, classified in 3 ecoregions: montane/cloud forests, pine-oak forests, and broadleaf rainforests. The cloud forests are an important source of Guatemala's freshwater and home to more than 150 listed

endemic and endangered species, including birds such as the horned guan, the blue-rumped tanager and the resplendent quetzal; endemic salamanders of the genus *Oedipina*; and mammals such as the margay and the spider monkey. Despite their recognized value to conservation, livelihoods, climate change mitigation, and cultural identity, the corridor's core zone forests are being lost at alarming rates (800ha lost in the last 10 years). According to situation analysis by TNC and VMA, the primary threats to the corridor's ecosystems include forest fires caused by poor agricultural and apicultural practices and aggravated by prolonged dry seasons linked to climate change, landslides (due to lack of forest cover), land use change for agricultural purposes, and unsustainable extraction of firewood by rural communities. These conditions are exacerbated by the government's inability to provide the socio-economic conditions and technical assistance to promote conservation, access to ecologically sustainable livelihood opportunities, and the participatory governance that ensures buy-in from relevant stakeholders.



The project contributes to halting the loss of megadiversity in the montane, pine-oak, and broadleaf forests of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú Biocultural Corridor (ZABC) caused by forest fires, inappropriate agricultural practices, and illegal logging. Using an integrated landscape management approach, we are strengthening the management capacities of state institutions, local governments, and indigenous communities; generating knowledge on local biodiversity; improving inter-institutional coordination and capacity for adaptive fire management; and strengthening indigenous cooperatives that provide improved livelihoods for rural poverty reduction through best practices in shade coffee growing, beekeeping and sustainable forest management local industries

1. Project stakeholders/ partners

- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has been working in Guatemala for over 30 years, focusing on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources, and

water management programs. It maintains strong relationships with national, regional, and local governments, other NGOs and SCOs and is well recognized by local partners. TNC has led the overall management (technical and financial) of the project, delivered technical and financial reports, fostered institutional relations at the national level (with the British Embassy and the Darwin Initiative), and provided global expertise in Integrated Fire Management and MEL.

For this project, TNC partnered with *Asociación Vivamos Mejor (VMA)*, a local organization with over 30 years of experience in the project's area of interest. VMA leads the engagement with local governments, institutions, and communities, implementing field actions for forest conservation, landscape restoration (including the native species cultivation in its own nursery) and sustainable livelihoods enhancement for local communities. VMA brings substantial experience in land use planning, multi-actor analysis, community-based conservation, and livelihood improvement, strengthened by its legitimacy with local Maya communities (including staff belonging to the local indigenous groups) to secure the best implementation of the deliverables. Its social infrastructure and facilities, such as its Rural Development and Climate Change Adaptation Education Centre (CEDRACC) and tree nursery, facilitates efficient delivery of trees, training, management plans, forest restoration and livelihood activities. TNC and VMA have a history of collaboration on conservation area planning and restoration efforts.

During this fiscal year, VMA collaborated closely with government regional offices including the National Protected Areas Council (CONAP) and the National Forest Institute (INAB). With CONAP, our collaboration involves strengthening the regional Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR), assisting in all stages of conservation area planning and the establishment of new protected areas, as well as coordinating integrated fire management efforts. Through active participation in the CASR, we engaged with representatives from municipalities overseeing Regional Municipal Parks, managers of Private Natural Reserves, and stakeholders from institutions such as the Authority for the Sustainable Management of the Atitlán Basin (AMSCLAE), NGOs like the Private Natural Reserves Association (ARNPG), and other conservation projects operating within the region. Collaboration with INAB has focused on developing the Integrated Fire Management Strategy. Our coffee renewal activity extends to working closely with two local coffee producer organizations: Asociación Ik Luna and Asumimagro. The Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA) also participates in activities related to coffee renewal. Furthermore, VMA directly collaborated with seven municipalities and their environmental teams from Santa Clara La Laguna, Santa Maria Visitación, San Pablo La Laguna, San Marcos La Laguna, Santiago Atitlán, San Lucas Tolimán, and Sololá. This collaboration has been fundamental to the project, including governance, conservation planning, restoration, and coffee renewal activities.

Regarding partnership challenges, utilizing the CASR to engage stakeholders will pose challenges in the upcoming fiscal year. This approach demands continual support for CONAP's regional office and the sustained interest and involvement of over 25 stakeholders. We anticipate significant interest in maintaining participation in the CASR, particularly in addressing regional threats such as forest fires and participating in training activities.

In terms of lessons learned, the government transition process presented obstacles to project implementation in the current fiscal year. However, VMA's strong local stakeholder relationships and ongoing communication with CONAP's regional office, municipalities, and local communities enabled us to navigate these uncertainties effectively.

2. Project progress

Progress in carrying out project Activities

Ensure you refer to specific activity numbers and be clear if there have been any changes to activities. It is important these match what is presented in Annex 2 (full project logframe).

Toward **Output 1**, "enhancing local stakeholder's capacities for the inclusive governance and sustainable management of the ZABC", we have significant advances regarding stakeholder engagement, developing VMA's Ecological Monitoring System, niche modelling and conservation area planning. We completed key stakeholder identification and mapping, and currently support, participate, and engage stakeholders through the Central Highlands Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR) meetings (Activity 1.1.1, [link to report](#)). This

roundtable includes most of the corridor stakeholders and conservation area managers from Sololá and Chimaltenango. With the Project's support, we expect that the CASR, or a commission within it, will serve as the cross-sector platform that can lead the planning and management of the corridor. The most recent CASR's meeting supported by the project involved representatives from two central government institutions: CONAP and AMSCLAE (Atitlán Basin Sustainable Management Authority), 11 municipalities, 5 representatives from the Private Nature Reserves, 5 representatives for the Private Nature Reserves Association (ARNPG), one indigenous authority that manages a conservation area, one university that manages two conservation areas and 4 non-government organizations. Regarding capacity building, workshops with CASR members and municipal gender equality units are planned for the next fiscal year (Activities 1.2 and 1.3). We've started presenting the legal framework of the regional conservation areas support roundtable to update stakeholder knowledge, especially for newly elected officials that are participating in the CASR meetings for the first time.

VMA's Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) report summarizes findings from a bibliographic review of biological monitoring history in the ZABC and the results of satellite image supervised classification (Activity 1.4.1, [link to report](#)). This report also describes the proposed system variables and baseline values (Activity 1.4.2). Notably, forest cover net annual change for the period 2010-2020 indicated an 80ha loss in the core zone and a 24ha loss across the entire corridor. Over the past 25 years, the incidence of forest fires in the department of Sololá has exhibited unpredictable behaviour between years. According to institutional data (1999-2023), between 20 and 57 fires occur annually, affecting 100 to 550 hectares. Heat point data (2010-2024) show between 5 and 43 points annually in the core zone of the corridor and between 50 and 318 points annually throughout the corridor. Baseline values for ecological dynamics have been measured for 10 plots (83%). The report highlights the presence of over 160 different tree species, particularly emphasizing the richness of oaks (*Quercus* spp.). Additionally, it identifies more than 186 bird species, with high relative abundance observed, including the noteworthy presence of the Azure-rumped Tanager in our tropical rainforest plot. Looking ahead to the next fiscal year, CASR will conduct training sessions on this subject (Activity 1.4.3) and initiate the development of the first annual ecological monitoring report (Activity 1.4.4).

The ZABC's management plan update process is ongoing, even though we experienced some delays due to the government transition process. We've analyzed geospatial information to update forest cover, land use and forest fire information (Activity 1.5.2). This activity has been informed by the findings of the EMS report (see above) and forest fire baseline report (see below). Activities regarding the evaluation of the previous management plan (Activity 1.5.1), and planning and validation workshops (Activities 1.5.3 and 1.5.4) will take place next FY.

We have completed the current and future ecological niche modelling for 15 species (Activity 1.6.1). For most of the bird and tree species considered, climate change scenarios for 2040 project that ecological niches will shift north. This result, and an analysis of ZABC's connectivity both highlighting the importance of the corridor's latitudinal connectivity, from the southern broadleaved rainforest in the volcanic chain's southern foothills to the northern highland conifer forests. Validation of these results with experts will take place next FY (Activity 1.6.2).

Regarding the designation of a new municipal protected area, we have confirmed the Municipality of Sololá's willingness to designate the hill-side forests of *Finca Jaibal* as a new municipal conservation area (Activity 1.7.1). We have commenced collaboration with the municipal environment office to gather pertinent data to characterize and assess the delimitation of the proposed area. Carrying out through next FY, this process will continue by conducting field visits as part of our information gathering for the required technical study (1.7.3), meetings and presentation to the municipal council for its validation (Activity 1.7.2), and workshops to develop a management plan (Activity 1.7.3 and 1.7.4). Regarding the rest of conservation planning activities, workshops to update management plans are underway for three of the four planned conservation areas (Activity 1.7.5). We have already updated geographic, social, economic and environmental information for Chuiraxamoló Regional Municipal Park and Iquitiú Conservation Area with participation of the managing municipalities and relevant stakeholders for each area. Work to update the management plans for all four conservation areas will continue throughout the next FY.

Toward **Output 2**, which aims to stabilize the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to wildfires in the ZABC, we've commenced with the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (IFMS) planning process. We have reviewed and analysed historic wildfire datasets spanning over a decade to establish the Projects baseline and inform the ZABC conservation planning activities (Activity 2.1.1, [link to report](#)). We found data gaps and inconsistent reporting in institutional datasets and complemented with satellite derived fire hotspots data. Considering that we did not identify significant trends in the available datasets, as interannual wildfire behaviour is erratic, we will consider the higher value of the dataset's interquartile range as a threshold for detecting an increase in forest fires and as a proxy for an increased rate of loss of ecosystems in the ZABC. Our results indicate that annually between 100 to 550 hectares are burned, and 20 to 57 forest fires occur in Sololá, according to institutional datasets of the last 25 years. Additionally, satellite derived fire hotspots data from the last decade showed between 5 to 43 annual hotspots within the ZABC core zone and 50 to 318 annual fire hotspots throughout the entire corridor. We've initiated collaborative efforts with the National Forestry Institute (INAB), conducting two meetings to advance the development of the IFMS, and to share and validate our baseline findings (Activity 2.1.2, [link to minutes of meetings](#)). The Regional INAB Office has demonstrated a commitment to collaborate in developing the IFMS. Currently, we are actively engaged in crafting a preliminary draft for further discussion with relevant stakeholders including other government institutions, local governments and communities (Activity 2.1.3, [link to draft report](#)). In light of delays attributed to the government transition process, we anticipate aligning the validation of the IFMS (Activity 2.1.4) with the ZABC update planning process next FY (Activity 1.5.3). Additionally, the implementation report for the IFMS, along with related activities such as trainings, fire brigade equipping, and the fire prevention activities are scheduled for next FY (Activities 2.1.5, 2.2.1, 2.3.1, and 2.4.1).

Toward **Output 3**, aimed at restoring 75 ha of key biological connectivity areas within the ZABC, we have made significant progress in preparing for the upcoming tree-planting season goal of 30 ha. We have developed a preliminary report identifying key degraded areas to restore connectivity (Activity 3.1.2, [link to report](#)), based on findings from our EMS. Throughout Q3 and Q4, we engaged in meetings and workshops with local government offices, municipal agricultural and environment councils, and producer organizations, specifically targeting those municipalities where the priority areas were identified. The objective was to emphasize the importance of restoring degraded areas, raise awareness, and identify municipal and community lands willing to participate in reforestation activities (Activity 3.1.1, [link to minutes](#)), successfully securing support from municipalities for this tree-planting season. Confirmation of the restoration sites, a full report and the signing of forest restoration commitments with landowners (Activity 3.1.3) will be completed next fiscal year. Additionally, we have preliminarily identified ten restoration demonstration sites (Activity 3.2.1, [link to report](#)), and prepared a draft of a handout containing basic information for one of these sites, VMA's proposal of biodiverse successional reforestation established in their Center for Rural Development and Climate Change Adaptation Education (CEDRACC) (Activity 3.2.2, [link to handout](#)).

Preparations for this planting season's goal are well underway, with the collection and acquisition of seeds for 38 species. We have produced a total of 35,000 plants in CEDRACC's forest nursery, including 49 % of the total tree seedlings corresponding to endemic and endangered species alone (Activity 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, [link to report](#)). This indicator reaches 97 % when we include key ecological species, surpassing the required goal of 36.5 %. Noteworthy species due to their ecological significance (in terms of pollination, seed dispersal, canopy structure, epiphyte niche, etc.) include *Quercus skinneri*, *Quercus corrugatae*, *Spondias mombin*, *Casimiroa edulis*, among others. Planting is scheduled to take place in the first quarter of FY24/25, at the onset of the rainy season, to ensure optimal plant establishment (Activity 3.4.3). The remaining 45 ha will be established in the subsequent tree-planting season in the first quarter of FY 25/26.

Toward **Output 4**, aimed at improving household economy for 390 indigenous families with a minimum 15% increase of their annual income derived from sustainable livelihoods and savings

from reduced fuelwood consumption, this fiscal year's efforts focused on improved wood-saving stoves and sustainable coffee production activities.

For sustainable honey production, we've preliminary identified relevant beekeeping activities in proximity to the ZABC's core zone in the municipalities of Santa Maria Visitación, Santa Clara La Laguna, San Juan La Laguna, San Pablo La Laguna and Santiago Atitlán. Activities such as developing a diagnostic baseline of apiaries (Activity 4.1.1), providing sustainable production trainings (Activity 4.1.2), procuring and delivering equipment (Activity 4.1.3), and monitoring apiaries (Activity 4.1.4) are scheduled from FY24/25 through FY25/26.

In sustainable coffee agroforestry systems, we conducted two workshops during Q3 with each of the selected coffee growers' organizations to discuss the renewal of coffee plants and best sustainable agricultural practices (Activity 4.2.1) Following their agreement to participate and prepare their coffee plots for renewal, contour farming practices for water and soil conservation were prioritized as sustainable agricultural practice. During Q4, we organized training workshops on coffee renewal with *Asociación Ik Luna*, an organization of mostly female coffee growers in Santiago Atitlán (Activity 4.2.2), and with *Asuvimagro* in Santa Clara La Laguna (Activity 4.2.3). Additionally, a site visit to a sustainable coffee production demonstration site, where contour farming has been implemented, was conducted with *Ik Luna* (Activity 4.3.4). Activities related to conservation agreements for best agricultural practices (Activity 4.2.4) and procuring and delivering of tools and coffee seedlings (Activity 4.2.5) are scheduled for the next fiscal year, while monitoring assessments (Activity 4.2.6) are planned for FY 25/26.

Regarding our improved wood-saving stoves activities, we conducted a baseline study of wood consumption in 225 households and deployed corresponding improved wood-saving stoves (Activities 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 [link to report](#)). We prioritized communities from seven municipalities located in an important latitudinal connectivity region for the ZABC. The study revealed an average consumption of 0.85 cubic meters of fuelwood per month (range 0.3 – 2.0). 27 % of households exclusively purchased fuelwood (range from 50 to 75 USD per cubic meter), while 44 % exclusively collected it (average of 6.7 hours spent per week, range of 1 – 24). The remaining households both purchased and collected fuelwood. The deployment of the remaining 75 stoves and subsequent monitoring (Activity 4.3.3) are planned for next fiscal year.

2.1 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: By 2026, local governments, institutions and indigenous communities have enhanced capacities for the inclusive governance and sustainable management of 63,000ha in the core zone the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.

We have initiated engagement with the Central Highlands Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR) that serves as the RUMCLA roundtable, to streamline multistakeholder platforms and prevent duplication. This first CASR meeting supported by the project was delayed due to the government transition process and occurred until late in the Q4 of this fiscal year, focusing on updating the newly elected municipal authorities on the objectives and importance of the roundtable to ensure their participation in future meetings. We anticipate strong interest and anticipate support for integrating the sustainable management of the ZABC into CASR initiatives. We aim to propose and secure agreement on this matter during upcoming quarterly meetings next fiscal year (Indicator 1.1, MoV 1.1.1.). At this year's initial meeting, we assisted CONAP in familiarizing stakeholders with the legal framework governing CASR operations and identifying training needs (MoV 1.1.3, [link to minute of meeting](#)). Due to delays in restarting the CASR meetings after the government transition process, capacity building activities will take place next fiscal year (Indicator 1.2 and 1.3, MoV 1.2.1 and 1.3.1).

VMA's permanent Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) is in place and operational, producing a baseline report with ecological data from 10 permanent plots across various ecosystems and microclimatic conditions, as well as monitoring changes in forest cover and incidences of forest fires (indicator 1.4). We have acquired camera traps and temperature dataloggers for deployment in some of these plots and conservation areas within ZABC. The EMS has informed the planning of other project activities, such as updating the ZABC management plan (Indicator 1.5) and developing of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (Indicator 2.1).

Additionally, we have completed ecological niche modelling for 15 species of birds and trees (Indicator 1.6), as detailed in the EMS report.

We initiated collaboration with the Sololá municipal environment office to gather relevant data for characterizing and assessing the delimitation of the new protected area. Currently, we are working with three municipalities to update the management plans for their conservation areas, with notable progress made for Chuiraxamoló Regional Municipal Park and Iquitú Conservation Area (Indicator 1.7).

Output 2: By mid-2026, the number of wildfires is reduced by 25 % and the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to wildfires is halted in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.

We have engaged with the National Forestry Institute (INAB), who have agreed to collaborate with us in advancing the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (IFMS) which will be developed by mid 2025. Currently, we are actively involved in developing a preliminary draft for discussion with relevant stakeholders including other government institutions, local governments, and communities (Indicator 2.1).

Output 3: By 2026, 75ha of forests in key biological connectivity areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor are restored and serve as demonstration sites

We have identified key areas to restore biological connectivity within the ZABC based on findings from the EMS report. Currently, we are focused on securing individual and collective commitments for this year's planting season goal of 30ha (Indicator 3.1). We are prepared to fulfill this goal with 35,000 tree plants produced in CEDRACC's forest nursery, with 97 % corresponding to endangered, endemic and key species, surpassing the required goal of 36.5 % (Indicator 3.4). Additionally, we have identified 10 restoration demonstration sites from VMA's network of previous reforestations within the ZABC. We developed preliminary basic information sheets for all sites and a draft handout for one of them (Indicator 3.2).

Output 4: By mid-2026, 390 indigenous families will improve their household economy, with a minimum 15% increase of their annual income derived from sustainable livelihoods and savings from reduced fuelwood consumption.

Since Q3 we have engaged two coffee producer organizations: *Asumimagro* in Santa Clara La Laguna and *Asociación Ik Luna* in Santiago Atitlán. We have initiated training workshops and visits to demonstration sites to enhance their knowledge of sustainable coffee production and practices. Together, we anticipate renewing coffee plantations corresponding to half of the project's goal during the next planting season in Q1 of next fiscal year and the remainder to be addressed in the subsequent planting season in FY 25/26 (Indicator 4.2).

Additionally, we have deployed 225 improved wood-saving stoves to the same number of families, out of our goal of 300, located in seven municipalities within and close to the ZABC's core zone. We have also established a baseline for their wood consumption and other co-benefits and will continue monitoring activities next fiscal year (Indicator 4.3). The remaining 75 stoves will also be deployed in the next fiscal year.

2.2 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: By 2026, the integrated landscape management of 63,000 ha of forests in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor will be improved, effectively protecting biodiversity, restoring biological connectivity, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

The project is on track to achieve this outcome. Our engagement with the Central Highlands Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR) allows us to interact with most stakeholders from the ZABC. CONAP's strategy for CASR's establishment aligns well with the ZABC's integrated landscape management approach, as a multistakeholder platform to address common threats at a regional level for all conservation areas in Sololá and Chimaltenango. We anticipate strong interest and support for integrating sustainable management of the ZABC into CASR initiatives, with an agreement expected to be secured during upcoming quarterly meetings (Indicator 0.1).

We are currently updating municipal conservation area management plans and proposing a new municipal regional park. This involves engaging with municipal environment offices from five municipalities, updating threat and opportunity assessments, and operational planning. As part of the validation of these plans and proposal with municipal authorities, we anticipate advocating for increased funding for implementation and expect at least three local governments to include conservation restoration actions in their annual operational plans and allocate increased funding for implementation (Indicator 0.2).

As reported above, we finished our forest fire incidence baseline which didn't reveal significant trends due to erratic interannual fire behaviour. We're collaborating with the National Forestry Institute (INAB) to advance the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (IFMS). We're currently developing a preliminary draft for discussion with relevant stakeholders, including government institutions, local governments, and communities. Forest fires are a prioritized theme within CASR, and we anticipate strong support from all stakeholders for implementing the IFMS due to heightened concerns following media attention during the last forest fire season (Indicator 0.3).

We've completed the connectivity assessment for the ZABC and have secured enough tree plants to achieve this year's planting season goal of 30ha in key areas for biological connectivity. Considering VMA's long experience in local stakeholder engagement and CEDRACC's seed collecting and producing capabilities, we anticipate repeating this achievement for next year's planting season, covering the remaining 45 ha without significant obstacles (Indicator 0.4).

We have completed future ecological niche modelling and developed maps for 15 species, with preliminary results for climate change scenarios for 2040 projecting a northward shift in ecological niches. These findings will be used as information to reassess or reevaluate the boundaries and objectives of the corridor as part of the process to update the ZABC management plan (Indicator 0.5).

For the improvement of household economy (Indicator 0.6), we have deployed improved wood-saving stoves to 225 families, with 91 % delivered directly to women and 21 % to youth aged between 18 to 30 years. We anticipate 50 % reduction in wood consumption, resulting in equivalent savings in income spent for woodfuel and time spent collecting woodfuel. Also, we are collaborating with two coffee growers' associations to renew unproductive old coffee plantations and implement sustainable practices. In this case, we will project the increase in the producer's annual income, anticipating it to materialize in the fourth year after planting, when the new coffee plants stabilize production.

As can be seen, some outputs have proven more prone to progress than others. For example, output 1, regarding the agreements to reform RUMCLA roundtable and the trainings on the participation of stakeholders and gender and the development of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy are taking longer than planned due in part to change in administration authorities. On the other hand, outputs such as 3 and 4 progress very much ahead of planned due to the fact that those activities did not depend on political will or support. Pending activities of output 1 will be finalized by the 4thQ of 2025

2.3 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 0.1: There is sufficient political stability to implement the project.

Comments: The government transition process produced political instability that brought the country to a standstill, marked by widespread protests and road blockades during Q3 of this fiscal year. Multistakeholder workshops were postponed until the fourth quarter. To navigate these uncertainties, we implemented an adaptive approach by continuously adjusting and replanning the project's activities based on daily developments and maintained close communication with our institutional and community network. As of Q4, the country has regained political stability and elected government officials took office successfully. We don't expect further instability nor significant impact in achieving the project's outcome and output goals because of this delay.

Assumption 0.2: Newly elected local authorities support project activities.

Comments: This assumption holds true. In most cases, the new municipal environment management teams lack conservation area management knowledge and experience. Conservation planning activities and trainings have been welcomed by newly elected mayors. Updating municipal planning instruments and planned trainings may also increase municipal management indicators. Participating on CASR meetings, securing municipal support for tree plant transport and collaboration on household economy improvement activities is also proof of support from local authorities.

Assumption 0.3: The community remains consistently engaged.

Comments: This assumption holds true. Community members are actively participating in the project's conservation planning and sustainable agricultural production activities.

Assumption 0.4: There is sufficient trust and commitment between local government, indigenous peoples and local communities to collaborate on the agreement and subsequent management activities.

Comments: This assumption holds true. We haven't identified any trust or commitment issues throughout our multistakeholder activities. Conservation workshops, restoration and sustainable agricultural production activities are coordinated through the environmental management units (UGAM), who maintain trust and communication with local communities.

Assumption 0.5: There is sufficient legitimacy of local stakeholder representatives to adequately represent their communities and to be a channel for bringing the agreements reached to fruition for each stakeholder.

Comments: This assumption holds true. An official representation designation letter is required to participate in the CASR.

Assumption 0.6: Participants, in general, will reinforce their ideas, concepts and practices that are sustainable in the long-term by taking part on the activities of this project. Neighbours and relatives may be encouraged to adopt these practices by observing and listening to participants.

Comments: This assumption holds true. We have initiated training activities aimed at reinforcing existing knowledge and introducing new information to coffee producers and families who have received improved wood-saving stoves. Additionally, VMA has received inquiries from neighbouring communities interested in obtaining these improved wood-saving stoves.

Assumption 0.7: Seasonal or climate-related droughts or weather patterns will not be severe enough to prevent local communities from participating in this project.

Comments: This assumption holds true. However, some UGAM's have had to engage in emergency fire suppression activities, delaying some conservation planning activities. We don't expect significant delays in achieving the project's outcome and outputs.

Assumption 0.8: Measures to manage the Covid-19 pandemic will not impair the ability to execute the project activities by the communities and consortium partners.

Comments: No measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic were put into effect during this reporting period. The World Health Organization ended the public health emergency of international concern on May 2023.

Assumption 1.1: Local governments, institutions, private nature reserves and CSOs are aware of their capacity needs, are interested in strengthening their capacity, continue to manifest interest and actively participate in the generation of agreements and planning instruments for the integrated management of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor and assign representatives of marginalized social groups within their institutions or organizations as representatives in the roundtable.

Commentary: This assumption remains true. The CASR members identified their capacity needs during the 2024 initial meeting and continue to actively participate in conservation planning activities. The CASR requires conservation area managers and other participating members to officially designate their representatives. Municipal and community managed conservation areas represent marginalized social groups.

Assumption 1.2: Municipalities will be inclined to choose women to represent them at official governance platforms.

Comments: In the initial 2024 CASR meeting, only 2 out of 10 participating municipalities included women in their delegations. Official municipal representation designations are scheduled for the next fiscal year.

Assumption 1.3: There is sufficient legitimacy of local stakeholder representatives to adequately represent their communities and to be a channel for bringing the agreements reached to fruition for each stakeholder.

Comment: See Assumption 0.5.

Assumption 1.4: The RUMCLA roundtable is perceived as a legitimate body and constituents participate actively and equitably in RUMCLA processes.

Comment: This assumption holds true. We are engaging with stakeholders through the regional CASR, that includes RUMCLA and other ZABC stakeholders. In collaboration with the CONAP (National Protected Area Council), we agree this roundtable is a better fit for the ZABC, and its creation and functioning is backed by CONAP's conservation area co-management policy. More than 20 conservation area representatives and 6 NGO (including VMA and TNC) participated in the CASR 2024 initial meeting.

Assumption 1.5: There is a common understanding of the basic problems that are present in the biocultural corridor by the local authorities and they are willing to address them.

Comment: This assumption holds true. During the CASR 2024 initial meeting, members identified priority subjects to address in the following quarterly meetings, including forest fires (ZABC main threat), ecological monitoring and solid waste management, among others.

Assumption 1.6: Local communities and stakeholders perceive protected areas and management plans as legitimate and effective mechanisms, and accept their implementation and operation.

Comment: This assumption holds true. Participative multistakeholder conservation planning workshops have been well received, in part because we are updating previous management plans. In the workshops, stakeholders identify and recognize that conservation areas protect water sources, forests and, as such, provide ecosystem services for local community well-being.

Assumption 1.7: Data literacy is sufficient to use data from the ecological monitoring system to improve adaptive management of the biocultural corridor.

Comment: This assumption holds true. The ecological monitoring system knowledge-sharing and trainings for CASR stakeholders will take place next fiscal year.

Assumption 2.1: Climate parameters are maintained in average ranges (10-year average). There are no extreme drought seasons outside normal parameters.

Comment: This assumption holds true. No extreme weather events have occurred during this fiscal year.

Assumption 2.2: There is sufficient openness and interest on the part of the interested organizations to participate in a coordinated manner, both on the part of the local and central government and the communities.

Comment: This assumption holds true. The National Forest Institute has agreed to collaborate in developing the Integrated Fire Management Strategy. Further stakeholder engagement and validation is planned for next fiscal year.

Assumption 2.3: There is sufficient institutional stability for the long-term development and implementation of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy.

Comment: This assumption holds true. Both CONAP's and INAB's fire management staff positions and their collaboration with VMA have been stable. We don't expect staff turnover or changes in collaborative work with government institutions in the short-term.

Assumption 3.1: Landowners in degraded key biodiversity connectivity areas are willing to implement forest restoration activities on their land.

Comment: This assumption holds true. We are on track to achieve this planting seasons forest restoration goal next fiscal year without any setbacks regarding landowner willingness.

Assumption 3.2: Restored areas are sufficiently maintained and protected from future changes in land use.

Comment: This assumption holds true. Restoration activities and monitoring are planned for next fiscal year.

Assumption 3.3: There are no severe climatic or meteorological events that affect the integrity and extent of protected areas, or the commitment of landowners to maintain restored lands.

Comment: This assumption remains true. There have been no extreme weather events reported for this fiscal year.

Assumption 3.4: There is sufficient interest among local farmers and others to attend training and visit demonstration sites.

Comment: This assumption remains true. Promotion of restoration demonstration sites is planned for next fiscal year.

Assumption 3.5: Women will choose to reforest because it is seen as an investing on future firewood sources.

Comments: Reforestation activities are planned for next fiscal year.

Assumption 4.1: According to the planning processes and development actions carried out by Vivamos Mejor over the past 30 years, stakeholders have expressed interest in coffee production and beekeeping, which has been documented in various planning documents and evaluations. Based on this, it is expected that farmers and beekeepers will maintain interest in project activities, complete training, use new equipment, and implement improved production practices.

Comment: This assumption holds true. We have initiated sustainable coffee production trainings with participation from most of the coffee growers association members. We will assess interest and implementation of sustainable coffee and honey practices during next fiscal year.

Assumption 4.2: Women already engaged in some economic activity, such as coffee growing, are more likely to participate in workshops and decision-making roles.

Comments:

Assumption 4.3: Market conditions remain favourable for beekeeping and coffee production to be profitable and a desirable livelihood for the local population.

Comment: This assumption holds true. Coffee growers organizations are interested and willing to renew their coffee plantations to increase their production in the near future. The assessment of beekeepers and honey production is planned for next fiscal year.

Assumption 4.4: Women will desire to participate in the stove project. This results in a reduction of time, energy and economic resources dedicated to gathering or buying firewood

Comments: This assumption holds true. Out of the 225 stoves deployed, 91% were delivered to women.

Assumption 4.5: The families benefiting from the wood-saving stoves use them and reduce their firewood consumption (as has been seen in other cases in the same region to which the project is intended to be directed).

Comment: This assumption holds true. Monitoring of improved wood-saving stove use and firewood consumption is planned for next fiscal year. We expect a reduction of 50 % in firewood consumption.

2.4 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction



Impact: Poverty and social inequality rates in rural and indigenous communities in the western highlands of Guatemala are reduced through the sustainable use and conservation of local biodiversity.

In the first ten months of the project, we are preparing the conditions to significant impact on biodiversity and poverty. With the proposed activities by the end of the project we intend to have significant impact in both items.

Regarding biodiversity conservation, we are actively engaging and strengthening the CASR, which includes stakeholders from Chimaltenango and Sololá. Through this initiative, we will promote regional conservation area planning, threat assessments and conservation action implementation in the region. Furthermore, the project is focused on generating and updating ecological information for the ZABC and the conservation areas within it. Trainings and knowledge-sharing sessions involving government agencies, municipalities and local communities, including women and youth, will provide them with the necessary resources to make informed decisions regarding biodiversity conservation in the region.

Through the development and implementation of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy and associated fire brigade trainings and equipment, we aim to mitigate the impact of forest fires on biodiversity. Our restoration actions are also focused on establishing endangered, endemic and key ecological tree species in our reforestation sites, thereby increasing forest cover and biodiversity throughout the ZABC core zone and influence area.

Our household economy improvement activities are designed to contribute to both biodiversity conservation and human development and wellbeing, particularly poverty reduction. By supporting sustainable honey and coffee production, we seek to empower producer organizations with the knowledge and resources necessary to implement sustainable practices and increase their income. Additionally, the deployment of improved wood-saving stoves is expected to reduce fuelwood consumption, thus decreasing forest degradation and providing households with benefits related to family health, safety, and reduced time spent collecting wood fuel.

3. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

At the national level, the project contributes to:

1) Guatemala's Law of Protected Areas and National Protected Area System Development Strategy:

We are strengthening the regional network of protected areas, by supporting the development of participatory management plans and improving the ZABC governance structure. In the governance matter, during this period, the project has made efforts to reactivate the CASR in coordination with the CONAP. The 2024 initial meeting was held with broad participation of local governments, state institutions, conservation related organizations and protected area managers, who learned about the legal framework that supports the activation of the roundtable and participated in an exercise to identify strengthening needs. In the coming months, the meetings will be resumed to begin strengthening the capacities that support the strengthening of governance structures and contribute to generating a Platform that can lead the planning and management of the ZABC. We are updating the management plans for the Chuiraxamoló Municipal Regional Park in Santa Clara la Laguna and the Cerro Iquitiú Ecological Park in San Lucas Tolimán, where geographic, social, economic and environmental information is available. These spaces have sought to be participatory and mutual learning processes in which various sectors have been involved, including governments and local communities.

2) The National Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on Biological Diversity:

We are contributing to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use by generating and updating biodiversity knowledge, protecting local endemic and endangered species (article 21.1) through implementing this biocultural corridor, and by promoting the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and their ecosystem services (article 21.2) through restoration and sustainable use of forests. The collection and acquisition of seeds of 38

endemic, endangered and key ecological tree species seeks to increase biodiversity in restoration areas. We produced 35,000 tree plants from 38 species, of which 96% correspond to endemic, endangered and key ecological species from the ZABC region, which will be part of the first restoration effort planned for the first quarter of next fiscal year. By creating 1 new protected area, strengthening 4 already established protected areas, and incorporating other effective area-based conservation measures within the CASR (e.g. community based conservation areas not included in the National Protected Area System) , we are supporting conservation of habitats for more than 150 endemic and endangered species (including the horned guan, the blue-rumped tanager and the resplendent quetzal; endemic salamanders of the genus *Oedipina*; and endangered mammals such as the margay and the spider monkey).

4) The National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy:

For this planting season, we are prepared to restore forests in 30 hectares of key degraded areas for biological connectivity. As part of this identification and confirmation process, it was necessary to hold meetings and workshops with local governments, municipal environmental offices, producers, landowners and local communities to promote joint and participatory work involving as many stakeholders as possible.

5) The National Fire Management Strategy:

We've started working with government stakeholders to downscale the National Fire Management Strategy for the ZABC. During this fiscal year we have held meetings with the National Forest Institute (INAB) who has shown willingness and commitment to collaborate in the construction of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy. VMA is leading a process to obtain a preliminary draft of the strategy, to later develop a process of socialization and construction of a final proposal, involving all stakeholders.

4. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

- The project operates in the ZABC of Guatemala's western highlands, characterized by high poverty rates (68 % living in poverty, with 29 % in extreme poverty). As direct support for multidimensional poverty reduction in this FY we've supplied 225 families with improved wood-saving stoves designed by VMA. In most cases, these stoves replaced open fire cooking spaces and other wood-stoves with health hazards and inefficient burning cameras, leading to an anticipated 50 % reduction in fuelwood consumption. This increases household income (through savings) and reduces time spent collecting wood fuel. Kitchens play a multifunctional role in local households, as family-sharing spaces and heating sources. As such, VMA's stove program prioritizes family health and safety by design (e.g. A closed bottom doesn't allow contamination by household pets that seek warmth, the stove won't topple, etc.), and incorporates training on stove use and household health improvement. Evidence of these expected benefits will be provided by the monitoring activities in the next fiscal years. Indirectly, reduced wood consumption extends to mitigating forest degradation and enhancing ecosystem services provided by these forests.

We've also engaged two local coffee producer organizations to collaborate on coffee renewal and sustainable practices, for both increased productivity and soil and water conservation, key resources for poverty reduction. Evidence of these expected benefits will be provided by the monitoring activities in the next fiscal years.

Indirectly, our conservation efforts reduce poverty by improving biodiversity and ecosystem services provision across the ZABC region. We prioritize strengthening local governance for conservation, updating ecological and threat information to inform conservation area planning and decision making, and implementing measures to reduce threats such as forest fires. These efforts are expected to contribute to maintaining biological connectivity throughout the ZABC, thus preserving corridor biodiversity, providing ecosystem services for the well-being of local communities.

5. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ¹ .	Project partner VMA's Board is made up of 60 % women.
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women ² .	Project partner VMA's Board is made up of 60 % women.

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	X
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

- We've prioritized gender equity by partnering with Asociación Ik Luna, a predominantly women-led organization, to enhance our sustainable coffee production efforts. Additionally, we are planning capacity-building trainings for municipal gender offices in the upcoming fiscal year. These sessions aim to strengthen local authorities' capacity in integrating gender perspectives into municipal policies and programs, thereby fostering inclusive development. Furthermore, our improved clean cook stove deployment activity targets mostly women, recognizing their crucial role in forest conservation and sustainable use, while also focusing on their health and household well-being. Through strategic collaborations with Asociación Ik Luna and municipal gender offices, we are actively advancing gender equality and social inclusion.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

- Within The Nature Conservancy, we developed a process in which a schedule is used to evaluate the progress and achievements of the project, including quarterly meetings with VMA to monitor progress and effectively achieve the indicators and verify the progress of the activities programmed in the logframe of the project. The TNC implementation team has accompanied VMA in the development of the project, scheduling periodic calls and visits to VMA offices to follow up on the implementation of activities.

¹ A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

² Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

Parallel to the visits and meetings, TNC has set up an online information repository to which the VMA team has access to effectively upload means of verification, which has enabled effective monitoring of progress and evaluation of the partner's and the project's progress. A series of tools were also provided to integrate and systematize all the information generated by the project following the logic of the logframe.

No changes were made to the M&E plan during this project year, risks were adequately informed, such as Guatemala's political crisis that limited movement in the country due to the massive blockade of the country's main roads and highways. This meant a delay in the development of activities and the work schedule. Likewise, the change of central and municipal governments limited the follow-up to the reactivation of the Round Table to Support the Management of the Central Highlands Conservation Zone. Activities were resumed once the country's political conditions allowed it.

In general, the Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) is producing a baseline report with ecological data from 10 permanent plots across various ecosystems and microclimatic conditions, as well as monitoring changes in forest cover and incidences of forest fires (indicator 1.4). Camera traps and temperature dataloggers are used and placed in the field. For birds we are using ecological niche modelling for 15 species of birds and trees (Indicator 1.6).

The indicators of achievements and means of verification are described in the logframe, Annex 2..

7. Lessons learnt

Government transition process

The government transition process posed a challenge to project implementation. Following the announcement of electoral results in August 2023, we decided to initiate engagement efforts with local governments, particularly focusing on those with re-elected authorities and municipal environmental offices anticipating low environmental office employee turnover. However, escalating political tensions in October brought the country to a standstill, marked by widespread protests and road blockades. As a result, planned stakeholder engagement activities, including all conservation planning multistakeholder workshops, were postponed until the fourth quarter. To navigate these uncertainties, we continuously adjusted and replanned the project's activities based on daily developments and maintained close communication with our institutional and community network. This adaptive approach was crucial to ensuring that implementation remained on track within the planned timetable. In the fourth quarter of 2024, we facilitated the inaugural 2024 meeting of the CASR, aiming for robust stakeholder engagement to bolster project activities. We anticipate active involvement from newly elected local governments as they seek guidance and training to take on their new roles as managers of municipal regional parks within the corridor.

In summary. There should be a juncture analysis on a weekly basis at list on the current political situation to adjust calendars, routes and places where activities must take place.

Generating and updating ecological information at a landscape level

The process of generating and updating ecological information as part of our ecological monitoring, bioclimatic corridor planning, and conservation planning activities has yielded new insights into the biodiversity and threats within the ZABC area. Official national monitoring data publications are sparse (each 5-10 years), and scientific biodiversity studies in the corridor are rare. The information derived from the permanent plot network of this project has provided fresh data regarding tree species richness and bird species relative abundance throughout the

corridor. Since the development of the current management plan for the corridor (2012-2022), two new national forest cover dynamic maps have been produced, and there has been notable improvement in fire incidence records (although there is still a lack of a consistently standardized record over a long period). Transforming and presenting this geospatial data at a landscape level, for the ZABC, has provided new insights into the threats' dynamics and spatial patterns. All this new information will inform the project's knowledge and capacity-building training sessions and provide management planning activities with updated insights into specific threats (such as forest cover dynamics and forest fire incidence) that need to be addressed and incorporated into the corridor's and conservation area's updated management plans. We anticipate that generating annual ecological monitoring reports (Activity 1.4.4.) and sharing this information annually with the CASR will help maintain their interest in conservation and provide timely updates as conservation action planning activities progress, thus supporting evidence-based decision-making.

In Summary, it is important to have a monitoring system in place which provides current biodiversity information to adjust the training processes and protected areas and natural resource management.

8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

- Not applicable.

9. Risk Management

- In the last 12 months we identified a risk regarding the coffee plant renewal activities, described below. By implementing the mitigating actions, we don't expect any impact on the project's outcomes.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Operational. Coffee growers with old plantations reluctant to prepare sites for renewal considering the high workload and investment required.	Possible	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewal activities will take place in two planting seasons (FY24/25 and FY25/26) to reduce annual effort for coffee growers. • We are engaging with municipalities and other stakeholders (e.g. MAGA) to support coffee growers in preparing their renewal sites.

10. Sustainability and legacy

- Overall, there is a notable interest among newly elected mayors and their new environmental office teams in updating management plans and carrying out restoration activities. This interest relates to the new teams assuming responsibility for managing municipal regional parks and conservation areas, seeing this as an opportunity to receive technical support and guidance. Similarly, there is municipal interest surrounding the new protected area proposal. CONAP has welcomed support for the Conservation Area Support Roundtable (CASR), a platform facilitating engagement with various conservation stakeholders. Through engaging the CASR, we have identified training interests, which align with the project's planned knowledge sharing activities, such as integrated fire management, conservation area planning, and biodiversity monitoring. Furthermore, activities aimed at improving household economies maintain high interest from the participating coffee producers and families, who perceive it as valuable support for enhancing their well-being.

11. Darwin Initiative identity. What effort has the project made to publicise the Darwin Initiative, e.g. where did the project use the Darwin Initiative logo and promote funding opportunities or projects?

The communications team of TNC Guatemala issued a press release with information on the start of the project, which was circulated to the database of internal and external stakeholders of the Guatemala program (press release in the archive of this report).

We also prepared an article to contribute to the Darwin Newsletter (in this report’s archive). Currently a public event to present the project is planned for Wednesday, May 22 2024 in Sololá; this event will be attended by local and national media. A press release is being prepared and will be disseminated to those present and to the TNC Guatemala database.

- To what extent is there an understanding of the Darwin Initiative within the host country and who is likely to be familiar with the Darwin Initiative?

Currently, it is known at the local level where the project is being developed, both by representatives of municipal and government authorities, as well as people who participate in the programs.

We hope that the external dissemination that will be given to the launching event will allow us to reach a wider audience, composed of media, organizations and people interested in conservation issues.

- If you have a X (Twitter)/Instagram/Flickr/Blog/YouTube etc. account is this effective and have you linked back to the Darwin Initiative/Biodiversity Challenge Funds and its social media channels?

Currently we do not have social channels for the TNC Guatemala program, however these will be activated in the second half of the year and we plan to communicate the progress of the Darwin initiative

The Darwin Initiative logo is used in all sign-in sheets, cover slides in presentations, and other project documentation. We communicate Darwin support during oral presentations in meetings and training workshops with the project’s stakeholders. We also placed a sticker including the Darwin logo in each of the improved wood-saving stoves.

12. Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	Yes
Have any concerns been reported in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Yes <i>Alejandra Colom</i> [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	Yes, July 24-27, 2023 at TNC’s headquarters in Washington DC. The workshop convened lead thinkers in TNC engaged with Safeguards. The agenda included the revision of the current safeguards plan at TNC, a critical analysis of needs, and a follow up plan.
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?	Past: 100% of the team (in ethics, and diversity, equity, inclusion and justice) [4 TNC staff]. The safeguards training, specifically, has not begun for

	<p>the Latin America staff yet. Informal sharing of information has taken place with 100% of the team. Planned: 100% [4 TNC staff] for the upcoming Safeguards curriculum. This training will also be applied to 5 VMA once it becomes public.</p>
<p>Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses.</p>	
<p>Yes, separating a baseline survey from a questionnaire to confirm participants' interest in participating in the firewood saving stoves project. TNC advised VMA to separate the two processes in order to avoid a sense that the baseline implied taking part of the stove project. The consent form was also revised and adjusted to explicitly separate participation in the baseline from the opportunity to access a stove.</p>	
<p>Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify.</p>	
<p>TNC is anticipating investing additional resources to update the project team on DEIJ (diversity, equality, inclusion and justice) concepts, values and methodologies.</p>	
<p>Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months; include topics covered and number of participants.</p>	
<p>No community sensitization activities have occurred this fiscal year.</p>	
<p>Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your project over the past year? If yes, please outline how this was resolved.</p>	
<p>No.</p>	

13. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				Consultancies included additional deliverables such as a management plan and manager

				tools that were originally planned for year 2
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				Fieldtrips and exchange learning meetings were cancelled or postponed due to political/social situation in Guatemala
Operating Costs				Increase in the cost of bioclimatic monitoring equipment and others
Capital items (see below)				
Others (see below)				
TOTAL	144,181	144,183.61	0.00%	

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

MATCH	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)			Arbor Day Foundation, TNC's Plant a Billion Trees Initiative
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)	TBD	TBD	TBD

14. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

- No other comments.

15. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes. I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

The project "improving integrated landscape management on the Zunil-Atitlan-Balam Juyu biocultural corridor" in this first year has sought to improve the capacities of local stakeholders for inclusive governance and sustainable management of the ZABC, significant progress has been made with respect to stakeholder engagement, development of the VMA Ecological Monitoring System, niche modelling and conservation area planning. Identification and mapping

of key areas was completed, and stakeholders are now being supported and engaged through the Central Highlands Conservation Area Support Roundtable meetings.

In terms of stabilizing the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to wildfire in the ZABC, the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (IFMS) planning process has begun. Historical wildfire data sets spanning more than a decade were reviewed and analyzed to establish the baseline for the project. In pursuit of strategic alliances, the INAB regional office has demonstrated a commitment to collaboration in the development of the IFMS. VMA is currently engaged in the development of a preliminary draft for further discussion with stakeholders, including government institutions, local governments and local communities.

Efforts to restore 75 hectares of key biological connectivity areas within the ZABC, significant progress has been made in identifying 20 hectares for reforestation. A preliminary report was developed that identifies key degraded areas to restore connectivity. Meetings were held with local government offices, municipal agricultural and environmental councils and producer organizations. The objective was to emphasize the importance of restoring degraded areas, raise awareness and identify municipal and community lands willing to participate in reforestation.

Finally, to achieve the goal of improving the household economy of 390 indigenous families with a minimum 15% increase in their annual income derived from sustainable livelihoods and savings from reduced firewood consumption, efforts this fiscal year focused on the construction of 225 wood-saving stoves and a baseline study was conducted. Regarding sustainable coffee production activities, two workshops were held with coffee growers' organizations to discuss the renovation of coffee plants and improve sustainable production practices. Regarding beekeeping production, relevant beekeeping activities were preliminarily identified close to the core zone of the ZABC. The project has always sought to prioritize communities in municipalities located in an important region of latitudinal connectivity for the ZABC.

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
Image	LIVEINMEDIA_0U0A1607 (Link to image)	Production of native plants in the CDRACC forest nursery of VMA, Guatemala, © Estuardo Torres/TNC		Yes
Image	LIVEINMEDIA_0U0A1507 (Link to image)	Silvia Ajanel, from Santa Clara La Lagura, beneficiary of wood-saving stove, Guatemala, © Estuardo Torres/TNC		Yes
Video	DJI_0951 (Link to video)	Atitlán Lake and pine-oak forests of the Atitlán Lake Basin Multiple Use Reserve RUMCLA, within the ZABC,		Yes

		Guatemala, © Estuardo Torres/TNC		
Report	Wood-saving stoves ZABC (Link to report)	Report of the construction of wood-saving stoves in the ZABC, Guatemala, The Nature Conservancy		Yes
				Yes / No

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2023-2024

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
<p>Impact</p> <p>Poverty and social inequality rates in rural and indigenous communities in the western highlands of Guatemala are reduced through the sustainable use and conservation of local biodiversity.</p>	<p>We are strengthening the Regional Conservation Area Support Roundtable (CASR) to promote regional biodiversity conservation and sustainable development planning, including threat assessments and conservation actions. We are organizing trainings involving government agencies, municipalities and local communities.</p> <p>Our household economy improvement activities aim to benefit biodiversity conservation, human development and wellbeing, especially poverty reduction. We support sustainable coffee production to empower producer organizations with knowledge and resources for sustainable practices and increased income. Introducing improved wood-saving stoves aims to reduce fuelwood consumption, decreasing forest degradation, and providing households with health, safety, and time-saving benefits.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>By 2026, the integrated landscape management of 63,000 ha of forests in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor will be improved, effectively protecting biodiversity, restoring biological connectivity, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.</p>		
<p>Outcome indicator 0.1. By the first quarter of 2025, a cross-sector agreement for the sustainable management of 63,000ha of forests in the core zone of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú is signed by local governments, institutions, and indigenous communities' representatives.</p>	<p>Our involvement with the CASR enables us to engage with key stakeholders in the ZABC region. CONAP's strategy for establishing CASR aligns closely with ZABC's integrated landscape management approach, serving as a platform for multiple stakeholders to address shared threats at a regional level across conservation areas in Sololá and Chimaltenango.</p>	<p>Agreement for integrating sustainable management of the ZABC into CASR initiatives.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.2. By mid-2026, at least 3 local governments have included conservation-restoration actions in their annual operational plans and increased funding for their implementation with an integrated landscape management approach.</p>	<p>We're updating municipal conservation area management plans and proposing a new regional park. This entails working with environment offices from five municipalities, updating threat assessments, and planning operations.</p>	<p>Plan and proposal development and validation.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.3. By mid-2026, wildfire occurrence and the rate of loss of key biodiversity areas (12,550ha of high biodiversity ecosystems in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor core zone) due to wildfires has at least stabilized.</p>	<p>We completed our forest fire baseline, showing no significant trends due to erratic interannual fire behaviour. Collaborating with INAB, we're progressing on the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (IFMS) draft for discussion with relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>IFMS development, validation and implementation.</p>

Outcome indicator 0.4. By the fourth quarter of 2025, 75ha of degraded lands in key biological connectivity areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor have been restored (replanted) using native, endemic, endangered and key ecological forest species.	We've completed the connectivity assessment for the ZABC and have secured enough tree plants to achieve this year's planting season goal of 30ha in key areas for biological connectivity.	Restoration of 30ha in key areas for biological connectivity and identifying the remainder 45ha for the subsequent planting season.
Outcome indicator 0.5 By 2026, information on the vulnerability to climate change of 25 key species (trees and birds) will be known through the generation of current and future ecological niche maps.	We've finished current and future ecological niche maps for 15 key species.	Finish assessment for 10 more key species, validation and include results in ZABC's updated management plan.
Outcome indicator 0.6. By the first quarter of 2026, annual incomes of at least 390 indigenous people (at least 50% women and youth) will be increased by at least 10%, through sustainable livelihoods, plus reported savings equivalent to 30% of total annual income due to reduced fuelwood consumption, contributing to reduced rural poverty, social inequality, and ecosystem degradation.	We've provided improved wood-saving stoves to 225 families, 91% to women and 21% to youth, expecting a 50% reduction in wood consumption, saving both money and time spent. Additionally, we're partnering with two coffee growers' associations to rejuvenate old plantations, projecting increased annual income by the fourth year after planting, when production stabilizes.	Deploy 75 remaining stoves to the same number of people. Renew coffee plantations from 50 coffee growers and engage 40 beekeepers.
Output 1 By 2026, local governments, institutions and indigenous communities have enhanced capacities for the inclusive governance and sustainable management of 63,000ha in the core zone the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.		
Output indicator 1.1. By mid-2024, the roundtable for the Multiple Use Reserve of the Watershed of Lake Atitlán (RUMCLA roundtable) is strengthened and fully operational to generate agreements for the integrated and sustainable management of the Zunil, Atitlán, Balam-Juyú biocultural corridor, including the promotion of representation and effective participation of marginalized social groups such as indigenous women and youth.	We've engaged with the CASR, that serves as the RUMCLA roundtable to streamline multistakeholder platforms and prevent duplication.	Agreement for integrating sustainable management of the ZABC into CASR initiatives.
Output indicator 1.2. By mid-2024, RUMCLA roundtable members are trained on their rights and obligations (for example as part of the National Policy of Citizen Participation in Processes of Development), governance and decision making, interinstitutional negotiations and consensus reaching, collaboration between multicultural groups, and the benefits and importance of inclusive decision making to poverty alleviation.	We assisted CONAP in familiarizing stakeholders with the legal framework governing CASR operations and identifying training needs.	CASR trainings based on identified needs.
Output indicator 1.3. By the fourth quarter of 2024, municipal gender equality units are strengthened and have increased capacity to support local gender equality initiatives, by increasing their capacity in building gender considerations into municipality planning processes and increasing women's participation in socio-environment processes.	Planned for next FY.	Trainings for municipal gender offices.

Output indicator 1.4. By the fourth quarter of 2024, a permanent ecological monitoring system will be fully functional and generating and sharing data to key stakeholders for the adaptive management of 63,000ha of forest of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor core zone.	VMA's Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) is active and generated a baseline report of forest cover changes, fire incidences, and ecological data from 10 permanent plots across the ZABC's ecosystems.	Deploy camera traps and temperature dataloggers in ZABC. Trainings and knowledge-sharing with CASR. Develop annual monitoring report.
Output indicator 1.5. By mid-2025, the management plan for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor will be developed jointly with local governments and indigenous communities.	We've analysed geospatial information to update forest cover and forest fire information in ZABC management plan, informed by the findings of the EMS report (see above) and forest fire baseline report.	Evaluation of the previous management plan, and planning and validation workshops.
Output indicator 1.6. By the fourth quarter of 2025, there is scientifically based information that will allow the planning of bioclimatic corridors for the effective conservation of 25 endemic, threatened or iconic bird and/or tree species through the modeling of their current and future ecological niche, considering the impacts of climate change.	We've finished modelling for 15 tree and bird species and the results are part of the EMS report.	Model the remaining 10 species and develop a bioclimatic corridor assessment report. Validation workshop with experts.
Output indicator 1.7. By the end of the project, at least 4,000 hectares of key biodiversity areas of the biocultural corridor (cloud forest, pine-oak and/or seasonally dry forest ecosystems) are protected through new or updated legal schemes (declaration of 1 new protected area and updating of 4 management plans for existing protected areas).	We've collaborated with Sololá's environment office to gather data for the new protected area. Currently, we're updating management plans for conservation areas in three municipalities, showing notable progress for Chuiraxamoló Regional Municipal Park and Iquitú Conservation Area.	Finish 3 management plan updates and 1 technical study for a new protected area.
Output 2. By mid-2026, the number of wildfires and the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to wildfires has at least stabilized in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.		
Output indicator 2.1. By the end of 2024, an Integrated Fire Management Strategy for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor is developed and jointly implemented with local governments and indigenous communities.	We've partnered with INAB to advance the Integrated Fire Management Strategy (IFMS). Currently, we're developing a draft for discussion with relevant stakeholders.	Finish and validate the IFMS. Begin its implementation.
Output indicator 2.2. By mid-2025, 140 people from indigenous communities will be trained in forest and urban-forest interface fire prevention and response (including better agricultural and apicultural practices to reduce wildfires).	Planned for next FY.	Training workshops with communities, and CASR members.
Output indicator 2.3. By mid-2025, 3 new forest fire brigades, including 30 brigade members, will be formally trained, and fully equipped to effectively prevent and combat forest fires.	Planned for next FY.	Training workshops with new forest fire brigades.
Output indicator 2.4. By beginning of 2026, 25 km of blacklines and firebreaks will be constructed and/or maintained to prevent forest fires in fire sensitive or fire independent ecosystems (cloud Forest, tropical broadleaf forests).	Planned for FY 25/26.	Planned for FY 25/26.

Output 3. By 2026, 75ha of forests in key biological connectivity areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor are restored.		
Output indicator 3.1. By the beginning of 2025, 75ha of key degraded biological connectivity areas are identified, and conservation agreements are signed with owners of the areas to be restored.	We have identified key areas to restore biological connectivity within the ZABC based on findings from the EMS report. Specific sites will be addressed as commitments are secured.	Finish identification of specific sites and develop report. Secure individual and collective commitments for restoration areas.
Output indicator 3.2. By mid-2025, 10 demonstration sites have been established within the biocultural corridor, expanding knowledge amongst approximately 3,000 smallholder farmers of local communities by utilising the farmer-to-farmer approach	We have identified 10 restoration demonstration sites from VMA's network of previous reforestations within the ZABC. We developed preliminary basic information sheets for all sites and a draft handout for one of them.	Develop basic information and social media products to disseminate best practice cases.
Output indicator 3.3. By 2 nd quarter of 2025 the 75 ha of forested areas will be inscribed in the Forest Incentive Program of Guatemala, which will oversee monitoring tree survival rates (which should be between 60 and 75%) and cover the maintenance costs		
Output indicator 3.4. By the fourth quarter of 2025, 75ha of degraded lands located in key areas for biological connectivity in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor are restored using native species (planting over 82,000 trees, of which at least 30,000 or 36.5% are endangered and endemic tree species).	We are prepared to fulfil this planting season's (Q1 FY24/25) goal with 35,000 tree plants produced in CEDRACC's forest nursery, with 49 % corresponding to endemic and endangered tree species.	Restore 30ha of key biological connectivity areas. Collect and acquire seeds to produce tree plants for next planting season.
Output 4. By mid-2026, 390 indigenous families will improve their household economy, with a minimum 10% increase of their annual income derived from sustainable livelihoods and savings from reduced fuelwood consumption.		
Output indicator 4.1. By the beginning of 2026, 40 beekeepers (at least 25% women) will be fully equipped and trained in sustainable production and joint marketing practices and will increase their annual honey production by at least 30%, generating a minimum 5% annual income increase for their households.	Planned for next FY.	Develop diagnostic baseline and provide trainings and equipment for 40 beekeepers.
Output indicator 4.2. By the first quarter of 2026, 50 coffee growers (at least 50% women) will improve their productive units through the implementation of better agricultural practices (organic coffee production) and the renovation of 15 hectares of mixed shade coffee agroforestry systems (using more productive and resilient coffee plants and enriching the coffee shade with native forest species) generating a minimum 10% annual income increase (when the new coffee plants stabilise production in the 4th year after planting).	We've partnered with two coffee producer organizations: Asuvimagro in Santa Clara La Laguna and Asociación Ik Luna in Santiago Atitlán. We have provided training workshops and site visits to improve their understanding of sustainable coffee production.	Continue trainings, provide resources to renew 7ha of coffee plantations and implement sustainable practices this planting season (Q1 FY24/25).

<p>Output indicator 4.3. By the first quarter of 2026, the firewood consumption of 300 families is reduced by 50% through the construction of wood-saving stoves, generating an annual economic saving of \$500 per family (savings equivalent to 30% of total annual income) and reducing ecosystem degradation.</p>	<p>We've distributed 225 improved wood-saving stoves to families across seven municipalities within and near ZABC's core zone, out of our 300-goal. We've also established a baseline for fuelwood consumption and other co-benefits.</p>	<p>Deploy the remaining 75 stoves, completing the baseline.</p>
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Annex 2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: Poverty and social inequality rates in rural and indigenous communities in the western highlands of Guatemala are reduced through the sustainable use and conservation of local biodiversity.			
Outcome: By 2026, the integrated landscape management of 63,000 ha of forests in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor will be improved, effectively protecting biodiversity, restoring biological connectivity, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.	0.1. By the first quarter of 2025, a cross-sector agreement for the sustainable management of 63,000ha of forests in the core zone of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú is signed by local governments, institutions, and indigenous communities' representatives.	0.1.1 Report of the agreements generated for the sustainable management of the biocultural corridor including list of participating members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is sufficient political stability to implement the project. - Newly elected local authorities support the project activities. - Community remains consistently engaged. - There is sufficient trust and engagement between local government, indigenous peoples, and local communities to collaborate on the agreement and subsequent management activities. - There is sufficient legitimacy of local stakeholder representatives to adequately represent their communities and to be a channel for bringing the agreements reached to fruition for each stakeholder. - Participants, in general, will reinforce their ideas, concepts and practices that are sustainable in the long-term by taking part on the activities of this project. Neighbours and relatives may be encouraged to adopt these practices by observing and listening to participants.
	0.2. By mid-2026, at least 3 local governments have included conservation-restoration actions in their annual operational plans and increased funding for their implementation with an integrated landscape management approach.	0.2.1 Annual operating plans of the selected local governments describing the conservation-restoration activities to be developed and detailing the increase in funding for their implementation.	
	0.3. By mid-2026, wildfire occurrence and the rate of loss of key biodiversity areas (12,550ha of high biodiversity ecosystems in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor core zone) due to wildfires has at least stabilised.	0.3.1 Report with comparative analysis of changes in the occurrence of forest fires and the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to this factor, covering a period of 10 years before the start of the project until mid-2026 (report developed through the ecological monitoring system of Vivamos Mejor Association).	
	0.4. By the fourth quarter of 2025, 75ha of degraded lands in key biological connectivity areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor have been restored (replanted) using native, endemic, endangered, and key ecological forest species.	0.4.1 Report of the increase in the presence of native, endemic, endangered, and key ecological forest species in key areas for biological connectivity of the Zunil-Atitlán- Balam-Juyú biocultural corridor (based on data developed by Vivamos Mejor permanent ecological monitoring system); including maps of restored areas and modelling of bioclimatic corridors	

	0.5 By 2026, information on the vulnerability to climate change of 25 key species (trees and birds) will be known through the generation of current and future ecological niche maps.	0.5.1. Inclusion of the strategy to conserve these 25 key species is included in the management plans of the protected areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam-Juyú biocultural corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal or climate-related droughts or weather patterns will not be severe enough to prevent local communities from engaging in this project. - Measures to manage the Covid-19 pandemic will not impair the ability to execute the project activities by the communities and consortium partners.
	0.6. By the first quarter of 2026, annual incomes of at least 390 indigenous people (at least 50% women and youth) will be increased by at least 10%, through sustainable livelihoods, plus reported savings equivalent to 30% of total annual income due to reduced fuelwood consumption, contributing to reduced rural poverty, social inequality, and ecosystem degradation.	<p>0.6.1 Report with survey results (before and after project implementation) describing changes in income derived from sustainable livelihoods of at least 390 direct project beneficiaries (disaggregated by gender and age).</p> <p>0.6.2 Survey before and after stoves are built comparing wood consumption reduction, economic savings, and other co-benefits derived from stove building</p> <p>0.6.3 Report with survey results (before and after project implementation) describing changes in of social, economic, environmental, and health benefits generated from the use of improved wood-saving stoves.</p>	
<p>Output 1</p> <p>By 2026, local governments, institutions and indigenous communities have enhanced capacities for the inclusive governance and sustainable management of 63,000ha in the core zone the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.</p>	1.1. By mid-2024, the roundtable for the Multiple Use Reserve of the Watershed of Lake Atitlán (RUMCLA roundtable) is strengthened and fully operational to generate agreements for the integrated and sustainable management of the Zunil, Atitlán, Balam-Juyú biocultural corridor, including the promotion of representation and effective participation of marginalized social groups such as indigenous women and youth.	<p>1.1.1 Agreement to reform the RUMCLA roundtable for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor signed by local governments, institutions, and indigenous communities' representatives.</p> <p>1.1.2 List of all official members of the RUMCLA roundtable detailing the participation of marginalized social groups (indigenous women and youth).</p> <p>1.1.3 Minutes of RUMCLA roundtable meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local governments, institutions, private nature reserves and CSOs are aware of their capacity needs, are interested in strengthening their capacity, continue to manifest interest and actively participate in the generation of agreements and planning instruments for the integrated management of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor and assign representatives of marginalized social groups within their institutions or

	<p>1.2. By mid-2024, RUMCLA roundtable members are trained on their rights and obligations (for example as part of the National Policy of Citizen Participation in Processes of Development), governance and decision making, interinstitutional negotiations and consensus reaching, collaboration between multicultural groups, and the benefits and importance of inclusive decision making to poverty alleviation.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Survey results detailing changes in knowledge and perception of stakeholders on the importance of integrated landscape management, governance and inclusive decision making for biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation according to the needs of each stakeholder.</p>	<p>organizations as representatives in the roundtable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities will be inclined to choose women to represent them at official governance platforms.- There is sufficient legitimacy of local stakeholder representatives to adequately represent their communities and to be a channel for bringing the agreements reached to fruition for each stakeholder.
	<p>1.3. By the fourth quarter of 2024, municipal gender equality units are strengthened and have increased capacity to support local gender equality initiatives, by increasing their capacity in building gender considerations into municipality planning processes and increasing women's participation in socio-environment processes.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Attendance list of training courses for the municipal gender equality units. Surveys before and after training demonstrating the change in knowledge and perception of participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RUMCLA roundtable is perceived to be a legitimate body and constituents actively and equitably participate in RUMCLA processes - There is a common understanding of the basic problems that are present within the biocultural corridor by local authorities and they are willing to address them.
	<p>1.4. By the fourth quarter of 2024, a permanent ecological monitoring system will be fully functional and generating and sharing data to key stakeholders for the adaptive management of 63,000ha of forest of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor core zone.</p>	<p>1.4.1 Permanent ecological monitoring system installed in the offices of Vivamos Mejor Association (with technical and technological capabilities for long term ecological monitoring of the area).</p> <p>1.4.2 Report with two-year ecological monitoring data (2024 and 2025), including changes in forest cover, incidence of forest fires (number of events and number of affected hectares), and ecological dynamics data, sensitive to the impacts of climate change, using indicator species of birds and trees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local communities and stakeholders perceive protected areas and management plans as legitimate and effective mechanism, and accept their implementation and functioning. - Data literacy is sufficient to utilise data from the ecological monitoring system to improve adaptive management of the biocultural corridor.
	<p>1.5. By mid-2025, the management plan for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor will be developed</p>	<p>1.5.1 Updated management plan for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor (endorsed by local</p>	

	jointly with local governments and indigenous communities.	governments, institutions, and leaders of indigenous communities).	
	1.6. By the fourth quarter of 2025, there is scientifically based information that will allow the planning of bioclimatic corridors for the effective conservation of 25 endemic, threatened or iconic bird and/or tree species through the modeling of their current and future ecological niche, considering the impacts of climate change.	1.6.1 Report on the current and future ecological niche (modelling) of 25 species of birds and/or trees including planning of bioclimatic corridors for their conservation, using global databases of biodiversity (Ebird, Inaturalist, Global Biodiversity Information facility) and local information from permanent biodiversity monitoring system established by the project.	
	1.7. By the end of the project, at least 4,000 hectares of key biodiversity areas of the biocultural corridor (cloud forest, pine-oak and/or seasonally dry forest ecosystems) are protected through new or updated legal schemes (declaration of 1 new protected area and updating of 4 management plans for existing protected areas.	1.7.1 Agreement on the declaration of 1 new protected area (1 new Regional Municipal Park endorsed by local government and proposal delivered to the National Protected Areas System's regional office. 1.7.2 Management plan developed for the new protected area (endorsed by local governments, institutions, and leaders of indigenous communities). 1.7.3 Updated management plans for 4 existing protected areas (endorsed by local governments, institutions, and leaders of indigenous communities). 1.7.4 GIS shapefile with polygons of at least 4,000ha protected through new or updated legal schemes.	
Output 2 By mid-2026, the number of wildfires and the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to wildfires has at least stabilised in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.	2.1 By the end of 2024, an Integrated Fire Management Strategy for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor is developed and jointly implemented with local governments and indigenous communities.	2.1.1 Published final document of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor endorsed by members of the participatory governance platform. 2.1.2 Report on outcomes of the joint implementation of the Integrated Fire Management strategy by local	- Climatic parameters remain in average ranges (10-year average). There are no extreme drought seasons outside normal parameters. - There is sufficient openness and interest from stakeholder organisations to participate in a co-ordinated way,

		governments and indigenous communities.	both from local and central government and from communities.
	2.2. By mid-2025, 140 people from indigenous communities will be trained in forest and urban-forest interface fire prevention and response (including better agricultural and apicultural practices to reduce wildfires).	2.2.1 Attendance certificates of training courses on forest and urban-forest interface fire prevention and response. Surveys before and after training demonstrating the change in knowledge and perception of participants.	- There is sufficient institutional stability for development and long-term implementation of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy.
	2.3. By mid-2025, 3 new forest fire brigades, including 30 brigade members, will be formally trained, and fully equipped to effectively prevent and combat forest fires.	2.3.1 Graduation certificates of formal training courses on wildfires prevention and control (certified by the National Forestry Institute and supported by TNC Global Fire Management Team and the US Forest Service) for 30 forest fires brigade members. 2.3.2 Signed lists of delivered forest fire prevention and control certified equipment	
	2.4. By beginning of 2026, 25 km of blacklines and firebreaks will be constructed and/or maintained to prevent forest fires in fire sensitive or fire independent ecosystems (cloud Forest, tropical broadleaf forests).	2.4.1 Map and GIS shapefiles of implemented blacklines and firebreaks	
Output 3 By 2026, 75ha of forests in key biological connectivity areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor are restored.	3.1. By the beginning of 2025, 75ha of key degraded biological connectivity areas are identified, and conservation agreements are signed with owners of the areas to be restored.	3.1.1. Document with results of analysis of degraded areas to be restored with a biological connectivity approach (based on data collected by Vivamos Mejor Ecological Monitoring system). 3.1.2. Individual and collective agreements signed between the owners of the areas to be restored (75ha), Vivamos Mejor Association, and The Nature Conservancy.	- Landowners of key degraded biodiversity connectivity areas are willing to implement forest restoration activities on their lands. - Restored areas are sufficiently maintained and protected from future land use change. - There are no severe climatic or weather events impacting on the integrity and extent of protected areas, or landowners' commitment to maintain restored land.
	3.2. By mid-2025, 10 demonstration sites have been established within the biocultural corridor, expanding knowledge amongst approximately 3,000 smallholder farmers of local	3.2.1 Attendance list of training courses for demonstration site landowners on farmer-to-farmer approach. Surveys before and after training demonstrating the change in knowledge and	

	communities by utilising the farmer-to-farmer approach.	<p>perception of participants.3.2.2 Print outs of educational handouts and brochures</p> <p>3.2.3 Record of visits to demonstration sites by local communities and other stakeholders within the biocultural corridor.</p>	<p>- There is sufficient interest among local farmers and others to attend training and visit demonstration sites.</p> <p>- Women will choose to reforest because it is seen an investing on future firewood sources.</p>
	3.3 By 2nd quarter of 2025 the 75 ha of forested areas will be inscribed in the Forest Incentive Program of Guatemala, which will oversee monitoring tree survival rates (which should be between 60 and 75%) and cover the maintenance costs	<p>3.3.1 Yearly reports from Forests Incentive Program on the progress of the reforestation of the 75 ha.</p> <p>3.3.2 Biological connectivity areas restoration report including maps and photographs (before and after) of restored areas (using a standardized photographic monitoring protocol developed by TNC), with records of the survival rate</p>	
	3.4. By the fourth quarter of 2025, 75ha of degraded lands located in key areas for biological connectivity in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor are restored using native species (planting over 82,000 trees, of which at least 30,000 or 36.5% are endangered and endemic tree species).	<p>3.4.1. Biological connectivity areas restoration report including maps and photographs (before and after) of restored areas (using a standardized photographic monitoring protocol developed by TNC), with records of the survival rate.</p> <p>3.4.2 Inventory of native forest plants (82,000 plants) used for restoring 75ha of degraded biological connectivity areas; including at least 30,000 plants of endemic, endangered and key ecological tree species (listed on the IUCN-Red List, CONAP- LEA list and other relevant scientific literature related to endangered species).</p>	
Output 4 By mid-2026, 390 indigenous families will improve their household economy, with a minimum 10% increase of their annual income derived from sustainable	4.1. By the begining of 2026, 40 beekeepers (at least 25% women) will be fully equipped and trained in sustainable production and joint marketing practices and will increase	4.1.1 Training course attendance certificates issued by Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Food (MAGA) and signed lists for the delivery of apiculture materials and equipment.	- According to planning processes and development actions carried out by Vivamos Mejor in the last 30 years, stakeholders have expressed their interest in producing coffee and

livelihoods and savings from reduced fuelwood consumption..	<p>their annual honey production by at least 30%, generating a minimum 5% annual income increase for their households.</p>	<p>4.1.2 Surveys before and after training demonstrating the change in knowledge on better practices for beekeeping and joint marketing.</p> <p>4.1.3 Survey results by project staff before and after the project implementation detailing changes in income generation due to improved beekeeping practices and joint marketing.</p>	<p>beekeeping, which has been documented in several planning documents and assessments. Based on this, it is expected that farmers and beekeepers maintain interest in project activities, complete training, use new equipment, and implement better production practices.</p> <p>- Women already engaged in some economic activity, such as coffee growing, are more likely to participate in workshops and decision-making roles.</p> <p>- Market conditions remain favourable for beekeeping and coffee production to be profitable and a desirable livelihood for local people.</p> <p>- Women will desire to participate in the stove project. This results in a reduction of time, energy and economic resources dedicated to gathering or buying firewood</p> <p>- The families benefiting from the wood-saving stoves use them and reduce their firewood consumption (as seen in other cases in the same region as the project is planning to target).</p>
	<p>4.2. By the first quarter of 2026, 50 coffee growers (at least 50% women) will improve their productive units through the implementation of better agricultural practices (organic coffee production) and the renovation of 15 hectares of mixed shade coffee agroforestry systems (using more productive and resilient coffee plants and enriching the coffee shade with native forest species) generating a minimum 10% annual income increase (when the new coffee plants stabilise production in the 4th year after planting).</p>	<p>4.2.1 Surveys before and after training demonstrating a change in knowledge on better agricultural practices for organic coffee production (data disaggregated by gender).</p> <p>4.2.2 Conservation agreements signed with 50 coffee growers implementing better agricultural practices on their plots.</p> <p>4.2.3 Map and GIS shape of 15ha of renewed coffee agroforestry systems.</p> <p>4.2.4 Comparative report of projected economic benefits derived from the implementation of better agricultural practices and the renewal of 15ha of coffee agroforestry systems (including before and after photographs of renewed plots).</p>	
	<p>4.3. By the first quarter of 2026, the firewood consumption of 300 families is reduced by 50% through the construction of wood-saving stoves, generating an annual economic saving of \$500 per family (savings equivalent to 30% of total annual income) and reducing ecosystem degradation.</p>	<p>4.3.1 Survey before and after stoves are built comparing wood consumption reduction, economic savings, and other co-benefits derived from stove building</p> <p>4.3.2 Report of social, economic, environmental and health benefits generated from the use of improved wood-saving stoves, based on survey results developed before and after the project implementation.</p>	

Activities

Output 1: By 2026, local governments, institutions and indigenous communities have enhanced capacities for the inclusive governance and sustainable management of 63,000ha in the core zone the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.

- 1.1.1 Identification, mapping, and engagement of key stakeholders in the biocultural corridor for their inclusion in the reform and strengthening of the RUMCLA roundtable for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.
- 1.1.2 Signing of the cross-sector agreement that strengthens and reforms the RUMCLA roundtable and includes the official list of the members with their main governance roles.
- 1.2.1 Training of RUMCLA roundtable members and other local stakeholders through 4 workshops on role definition, knowledge and perception, governance of the territory, and the legal framework of the biological corridor and evaluation of participant comprehension through surveys before and after the workshops.
- 1.3.1 Training of at least 40 civil servants of municipal gender equality units in building gender considerations into municipality planning processes and increasing women's participation in socio-environment processes.
- 1.4.1 Secondary information gathering through bibliographic review of biological monitoring antecedents in the biocultural corridor and supervised classification of satellite images to map more precisely the ecosystems of the biocultural corridor.
- 1.4.2 Determine variables for monitoring through satellite images and field visits (including bird species, tree cover, etc). Set baseline values for the ecological monitoring system.
- 1.4.3 Training of RUMCLA roundtable members and other local stakeholders and experts through 2 workshops on the selection of variables to be monitored and the design and operationalisation of the ecological monitoring system.
- 1.4.4 Monitor ecological variables twice a year during the project and summarizing results in an annual ecological monitoring report.
- 1.5.1 Two workshops with the RUMCLA roundtable members for the evaluation of the expired biocultural corridor management plan.
- 1.5.2 Carry out an analysis of geospatial information such as forest cover, human population distribution, forest fires, etc, and literature to update the ecological, social, economic, and cultural information of the biocultural corridor in the management plan.
- 1.5.3 Two workshops with RUMCLA roundtable members and additional experts from local government, community leaders, and other CSOs, to update the biocultural corridor management plan: objectives, mission, vision, conservation targets, threats, opportunities, conservation elements and strategies.
- 1.5.4 After the workshops, additional 1-on-1 consultations with key experts to collect feedback on drafts of the management plan. Finalise management plan endorsed by local governments, institutions, and leaders of indigenous communities
- 1.6.1 Data gathering through bibliographic review of global and local biodiversity and climate databases and systems to build modeling of their current and future ecological niche, considering the impacts of climate change.
- 1.6.2 Workshop with bird and botany experts to validate the report describing the bioclimatic corridors in the biocultural corridor for endemic, threatened or emblematic bird and/or tree species.
- 1.7.1 Meetings with local communities and municipalities to inform them of plans to designate a new protected area and get their commitment, agreement, and collaboration
- 1.7.2 Formalization of the agreement for the voluntary declaration of a new protected area in the core zone of the biocultural corridor, categorised as 'regional municipal park' and filing of its registration in the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP)
- 1.7.3 Field delimitation of the new protected area, collection of biophysical and socioeconomic information and preparation of a technical study to be submitted to CONAP for its approval.
- 1.7.4 Elaboration of the management plan for the new regional municipal park (including geographic, social, economic, and environmental information) through 4 workshops with the municipalities and the representatives of local communities and local CSOs.

1.7.5 Update of management plans (including geographic, social, economic, and environmental information) for 4 existing protected areas (endorsed by local governments, institutions, and leaders of indigenous communities) through 4 workshops (1 per protected area) with the municipalities, local communities, and local CSOs.

Output 2: By mid-2026, the number of wildfires and the rate of loss of key ecosystems due to wildfires has at least stabilised in the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor.

2.1.1 Map existing geographic information systems and databases (such as forest cover images and data repositories systems) for monitoring forest fires, including heat spots and landscape scars due to fires. Evaluate and analyse the history of forest fires as well as their characteristics and patterns as recorded in these databases and systems.

2.1.2 Hold two meetings with the Department of Forest Fires of the National Institute of Forests (INAB), local landowners, local communities, and municipalities to identify the drivers, instigators, and sites and fronts of forest fires in the biological corridor as a basis for developing solutions, resources and actions in the Integrated Fire Management Strategy.

2.1.3 Develop an Integrated Fire Management strategy in the biocultural corridor, based on the above-mentioned analyses and consultations and aligned with the needs and concerns of the members of the RUMCLA roundtable and other stakeholders (INAB, municipalities, forest firefighters, etc.) to secure its implementation.

2.1.4 Validate and socialize the Integrated Fire Management strategy with key actors (members of the RUMCLA roundtable, INAB, municipal governments, forest firefighters) through a workshop, resulting in the publication of the final IFM strategy document (both online and distributed to partners in printing).

2.1.5 After the next dry (forest fire) season (mid-2025), set up an implementation report detailing the success of the IFM strategy by analysing satellite images, maps, above identified databases and systems, as well as field visits and surveys of local communities.

2.2.1 Five training workshops for 50 community members and RUMCLA roundtable members in the 'basic techniques for forest fire control' course and on best agricultural and apicultural practices for the reduction of forest fires in the biocultural corridor, including the certification of forest fire fighters in the biocultural corridor and evaluation of participant comprehension through surveys before and after the workshops.

2.3.1 Equip 3 new forest fire brigades (cotton suit, leather boots and gloves, goggles, helmet, backpacks, weather kit, monofilter, fire bat, drip burner, Mcleod Pulaski tools, flashlights, radios, fire rakes, scrapers, fire swatters, brush hooks, drones, etc.) and set up guidelines and trainings for the maintenance and proper use of the equipment.

2.4.1 Construction, georeferencing, and maintenance of 25 km of firebreak rounds and gaps, black lines for the control of forest fires in coordination with local governments.

Output 3: By 2026, 75ha of forests in key biological connectivity areas of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor are restored and serve as demonstration sites

3.1.1 Organise two workshops for landowners with degraded areas susceptible to forest restoration within the framework of the National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy of Guatemala, to explain the importance of restoring degraded areas, raise awareness on the processes that lead to land degradation and actions to avoid further degradation.

3.1.2 Preparation of a report on the identification of at least 75ha of degraded areas through field inspections and aerial images with potential for reforestation with forest species that are native, key, endemic and/or in danger of extinction.

3.1.3 Signing of individual and collective agreements on forest restoration commitments with landowners.

3.2.1 Creation of 10 restoration demonstration sites out of the best examples of restored areas within the 75ha reforested area through signing and demarcation, and the training of the owners for leading field visits and sharing lessons learned, supported by the Center for Education for Rural Development and Climate Change Adaptation (CEDRACC).

3.2.2 Organise, prepare basic information (handouts, brochures), and report on min. 6 visits to the demonstration sites with 120 direct beneficiaries of the project, to expose them to the practices and techniques on how and why to restore degraded areas, so they can then expand knowledge amongst approx. 3,000 local smallholder farmers, by utilising the farmer-to-farmer approach.

- 3.3.1 Inscription of restored lands in the Guatemala Forest Incentive Program run by INAB to secure funds from the government for the landowners for the maintenance of the trees for the next 6 years.
- 3.4.1 Collection of seeds of native, key, endemic and endangered forest species in local certified seed producer forests to secure seed quality.
- 3.4.2 Production of forest plants with emphasis on native, key, endemic, and endangered species in the CEDRACC nursery of VMA.
- 3.4.3 Planting of over 82,000 trees (of which at least 30,000 are endangered and endemic tree species) with local community members, schools, and VMA staff by Q2 of year 2024 in the degraded areas identified.
- 3.4.4 Development of biological connectivity restoration report based on satellite images and mapping which will include an inventory of native forest plants used and the progress of the restoration actions carried out in this project.
- Output 4: By mid-2026, 390 indigenous families will improve their household economy, with a minimum 10% increase of their annual income derived from sustainable livelihoods and savings from reduced fuelwood consumption.**
- 4.1.1 Detailed assessment of current beekeeping practices in the biocultural corridor (based on the previous engagement with local producers and situation analysis conducted by VMA). Resulting in a diagnostic baseline on apiaries performance and the identification and selection of at least 40 beekeepers out of the larger group in the biocultural corridor area (prioritising those that have small, unsustainable practices, are located closest to the core zone and show leadership in their communities).
- 4.1.2 Four training workshops of at least 40 beekeepers (at least 25% women) in sustainable production topics such as hive health, diseases and treatments, floral resources in the forests, honey, propolis, royal jelly and wax production, and marketing practices such as packing, advertisement, branding, etc., and evaluation of participant comprehension through surveys before and after the workshops.
- 4.1.3 Purchase and delivery of equipment and tools (wooden beehives, smokers, thermometers, hive tools, mating hives, storage tanks, extractors, filters, etc.) to at least 40 beekeepers to support their sustainable beekeeping production processes.
- 4.1.4 Monitoring apiaries performance through field inspections and surveys, evaluating productivity and income generated compared to diagnostic baseline.
- 4.2.1 Two workshops with leaders of the coffee growers' cooperatives to present and discuss workplan details regarding renewal of the coffee plots and best sustainable agricultural practices.
- 4.2.2 Three workshops for female coffee growers to discuss and analyse, supported by data from surveys and field inspections, the effectiveness of their production practices and management of coffee seedling nurseries, building their capacity to sustainably increased production, and evaluation of participant comprehension through surveys before and after the workshops.
- 4.2.3 Four training workshops on sustainable production processes in organic coffee farming including topics of natural fertilizers, biological control of pests and diseases and organic certification.
- 4.2.4 Signing of at least two conservation agreements for best agricultural practices with at least 50 coffee growers (min 50% women) in the biocultural corridor.
- 4.2.5 Purchase and delivery of tools, supplies, materials, and each producer's coffee seedlings for the improvement of coffee seedling nurseries for the renewal of plantations.
- 4.2.6 By June 2025 start monitoring assessments of the harvesting of coffee plantations in the renovated coffee plots and the preparation of corresponding reports, including a comparison of economic benefits compared with the scenario without project.
- 4.3.1 Identification and prioritization of 300 beneficiary families out of 3,000 families in the biocultural corridor (selecting those that currently have traditional unsustainable cooking practices, live closest to the core zone and show leadership in their communities) for the construction of 300 improved wood-saving stoves. Hold baseline survey on consumption of wood per household.
- 4.3.2 Purchase and deliver of materials and guide in the construction of wood-saving stoves for at least 300 families
- 4.3.3 Through household surveys, monitor firewood consumption by the improved wood-saving stoves and associated social, economic, environmental, and health benefits and compare it the baseline survey to assess the impact on the forests, household economics and health. Develop report measuring savings in purchase of firewood, time spent in firewood collection, and the decrease of respiratory diseases among families benefitted with the project.
- 4.3.4 Conduct site visits to demonstration sites and locations where key sustainable activities have been developed (such as wood saving stoves and beekeeping facilities in operation) to spread the knowledge and trigger the interest of additional stakeholders in the biocultural corridor to incorporate these practices.

Cross-cutting activities

Project management

- Hold meetings every month (during the first year), and every 3 months (on years 2 and 3), among TNC and VMA project leaders, to share advances of the project, challenges, priorities and next steps.
- Hold quarterly meetings with project Advisory Committee
- Develop trainings for staff involved in the project regarding TNCs Code of conduct, Standard Operating Procedures, among other Standards that project staff need to comply with, including safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults.

Communications:

- Utilise social media platforms to disseminate information and reinforce messaging by creating social media groups
- Develop radio broadcasts jointly with local stations to spread awareness for behavioural changes in the biocultural corridor, including the importance of preventing forest fires, reducing deforestation, and sustainable productive practices.
- Develop printed materials on the importance of integrated landscape management for biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods, and climate change projects
- Development of an online repository of information related to the project in which all the written documents such as methodologies, guidelines, reports, technical documents, papers, etc. will be stored and accessible to the project's beneficiaries
- Evaluate total audience reached and survey targeted communities to assess comprehension of information shared

Reporting

- Develop quarterly technical and financial reports, to be reviewed during Project Management meetings and shared with other stakeholders.

Annex 3: Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DI-B01	Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed.	Number		0				5
DI--B10	Number of individuals / households reporting an adoption of livelihood improvement practices as a result of project activities.	People/Households		225			225	300
DI-D01	Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices	Area, hectares or km ²		0			0	75

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)

Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

Reference	Name	Link
Activity 1.1.1.	Stakeholder identification and mapping report	link to report
Means of verification 1.4.1, Activity 1.4.1 and 1.4.2.	Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) diagnostic and baseline report	link to report
Activity 2.1.1.	Forest fire incidence baseline report	link to report
Activity 2.1.2	Minutes of meetings with the National Forestry Institute (INAB) to collaborate on the Integrated Fire Management Strategy.	link to minutes of meetings
Activity 2.1.3.	Integrated Fire Management Strategy draft for discussion	link to draft report
Activity 3.1.1.	Minutes of meetings regarding restoration actions	link to minutes
Activity 3.1.2.	Progress report on identifying key areas to restore connectivity	link to report
Activity 3.2.1.	Preliminary identification of restoration demonstration sites	link to report
Activity 3.2.2	Draft of demonstration site handout	link to handout
Activity 3.4.1 and 3.4.2	Endemic, endangered and key ecological species tree plant production report.	link to report
Activity 4.3.1 and 4.3.2	Construction of improved wood-saving stoves and baseline survey results	link to report

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	X
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	X
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	X
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see Section 16)?	X
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	X
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	X
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	