Darwin Initiative Main & Extra 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 2025

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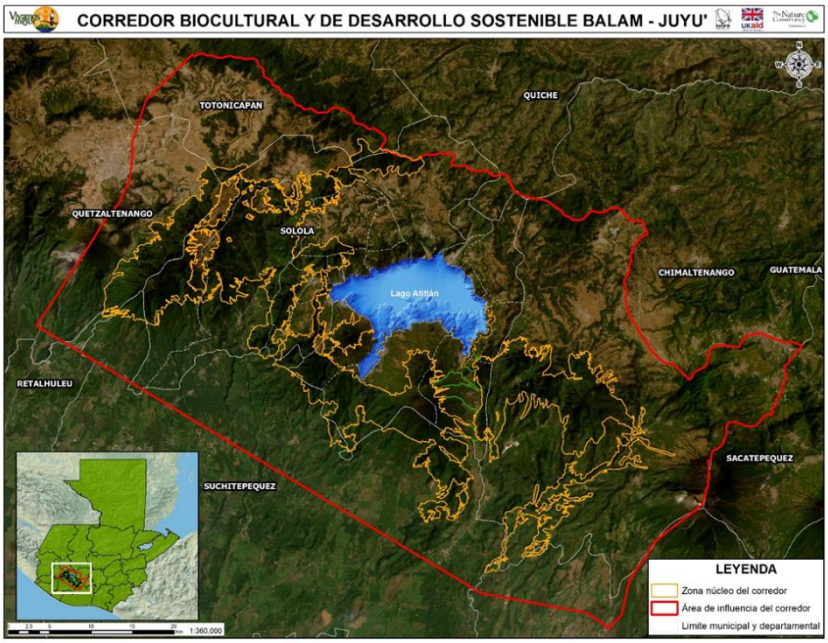
Darwin Initiative Project Information

Scheme (Main or Extra)	Main
Project reference	30-006
Project title	Improving integrated landscape management on the Zunil - Atitlán - Balam Juyu biocultural corridor
Country/ies	Guatemala
Lead Organisation	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 2024 – Mar 2025) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	Apr 2024 – Mar 2025 Annual Report 2
Project Leader name	Jorge Cardona
Project website/blog/social media	
Report author(s) and date	Luis Pedro Utrera & Samuel Secaira (VMA); José Alejandro Sosa, César Cate & Jorge Cardona (TNC) - 30 April 2025

1. Project summary

The Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyu' 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 provided by forests while maintaining a deep spiritual connection to the landscape 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 mainly in the department of Sololá, with a high proportion of Maya indigenous population (96 %), the second highest percentage of poverty (80.9%) and extreme poverty (40%) rates in the country, and a Human Development Index of 0.455. 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 a situation analysis by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and *Asociación Vivamos Mejor* (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.

1. 

The project aims to halt the loss of biodiversity in the montane/cloud, pine-oak, and broadleaf forests of the ZABC caused by forest fires, land-use changes, forest degradation, and inappropriate agricultural practices. By using an integrated landscape management approach, we are strengthening the management capacities of state institutions, local governments, and indigenous communities. Additionally, we are generating knowledge about local biodiversity, improving inter-institutional coordination and capacity for adaptive fire management, and restoring connectivity at degraded landscape sites.

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

TNC leads overall project management, technical and financial reporting, institutional relations, and provides global expertise in Integrated Fire Management and MEL. TNC partnered with VMA, a local organisation with extensive experience in the project's area of interest. VMA spearheads engagement with local governments, institutions, and communities, focusing on forest conservation, landscape restoration, and livelihoods enhancement. VMA maintained close coordination with regional government offices, including the protected area (CONAP), environment (MARN), forestry (INAB), and disaster reduction (CONRED) agencies. This project collaboration´s with CONAP strengthened the regional Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR), supported conservation area planning, and facilitated the establishment of new protected areas. The project engaged MARN to accompany CASR activities, as the country´s biological corridors focal point. Through active participation in CASR, the project worked with municipal park managers, Private Natural Reserve managers, and key stakeholders, such as the Private Natural Reserves Association (ARNPG), del Valle University of Guatemala, Lake Atitlán's sustainable management agency, and other NGOs and conservation initiatives in the region.

Fire Management activities secured support from Sololá´s Development Council Environmental Commission (CODEMA), under the leadership of CONAP, with other government institutions and NGOs. Activities included collaboration with indigenous beekeepers and local coffee producer organisations, Asociación Ik Luna and Asuvimagro. Partnerships with MAGA, Anacafé, and other NGOs provided technical input for beekeeping and coffee renewal. The project worked closely with indigenous communities and municipal staff from 18 municipalities.

2.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Toward **Output 1**, which aims to enhance local stakeholders' capacities for inclusive governance and sustainable management of the ZABC. Our efforts focused on strengthening governance and management capacities through active participation, training initiatives, and stakeholder engagement at the Central Highlands Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR) meetings. As a result, 24 key stakeholders—representing over 30 conservation areas—signed and submitted an agreement to CONAP, requesting formal recognition of CASR as the leading participatory governance platform for conservation across the Sololá and Chimaltenango departments, including the ZABC (Activity 1.1.2, see MoV 1.1.1 in section 3.2). This request is currently under review by CONAP's Executive Secretariat. During this FY, we organised five training sessions and one exchange tour for CASR members and meeting participants, reaching 132 people representing 44 stakeholders involved in CASR meetings (Activity 1.2.1, see MoV 1.2.1 in section 3.2). These stakeholders included municipalities, government institutions, NGOs, academia, private natural reserve managers, and indigenous community groups managing community forests. The activities, guided by their prioritised training needs assessment, covered topics such as the CASR legal framework, biological monitoring and citizen science, annual operating plans for protected areas, biological corridors, the ZABC legal framework, and basic fire suppression techniques. During this fiscal year, we organised two GESI-awareness training sessions: one for AVM staff and another for municipal staff. The first session, led by TNC, was a gender inclusion and safeguarding workshop attended by 31 AVM staff members, including the project's team. The second session focused on mainstreaming gender considerations into municipal environmental decision-making, rather than addressing gender inclusion with municipal gender equality units, who are already specialised in the subject. Eleven representatives from municipal councils, environmental offices, women's offices, and an indigenous municipality participated in this initiative (Activity 1.3.1, see MoV 1.3.1 in section 3.2).

During this FY, we discussed the design, variables, and preliminary results of the Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) with CASR participants (Activity 1.4.3, meeting minute). Data collection is ongoing, with preliminary results including datalogger records of temperature and relative humidity, alongside bird and mammal monitoring (Activity 1.4.4, EMS 2024 preliminary report). Bird species richness across the plot network reached 143 species (baseline: 186 species), with 285 records (baseline: 1,441 records). Notably, key endangered and endemic bird species remain present, including the Highland Guan (*Penelopina nigra*), Azure-rumped Tanager (*Tangara cabanisi*), and Resplendent Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*). Mammalian richness at two plots stands at 10 species, establishing the EMS baseline for these sites. Unexpectedly, a Jaguarundi (*Herpailurus yagouaroundi*) was detected in a highly fragmented zone within the Zunil–Atitlán–Balam Juyu' biological corridor's area of influence. Additionally, the endangered Spider Monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*) was observed at the Mirador Rey Tepepul Regional Municipal Park plot site during bird monitoring—one of the last remaining locations on Guatemala's Pacific slope. We anticipate completing and presenting the EMS monitoring report and reviewing it with CASR next fiscal year (Activity 1.4.4). Activities concerning the corridor's management plan update (Activity 1.5) were deferred to next fiscal year. This year, our focus remained on establishing and reinforcing ZABC's governance platform as a precursor to the planning process. These efforts included supporting CASR's official recognition process, organising capacity-building events, and prioritising the Fire Management Strategy's planning and implementation activities (see Output 2). The latter required urgent and targeted stakeholder engagement, alongside government procedures, in preparation for the 2024–25 fire season. We aim to lead the corridor's management plan update in the next FY. Ahead of schedule, we have completed the current and future ecological niche modelling for 25 species and validated our results with experts from two universities (Activity 1.6.2, validation activity reports). For most species studied, projections under future climate change scenarios (SSP245 and SSP585) indicate a northward shift in ecological niches. These results align with similar studies that identify niche shifts as both polewards and upslope. This underscores the need to adapt the current ZABC design to enhance north-south connectivity throughout the landscape. Insights provided by academic experts focused on confirming consistency with similar studies and refining the presentation of results to improve clarity and accessibility.

We have advanced ahead of schedule in preparing the required documentation to register a new protected area: Jaibal Atitlán Regional Municipal Park (RMP), one of the few areas with species-rich seasonally dry forests, a threatened ecosystem in the region. We secured the Municipality of Sololá's willingness to protect this forest through two meetings with municipal government officials (Activity 1.7.1, meeting minutes). We are close to finalizing the technical study document and expect to secure the municipal resolution approving it next FY (Activity 1.7.2). We have held all necessary meetings and activities to advance the technical study required to register it as a protected area (Activity 1.7.3, meeting minutes and activity reports). We also dovetailed the management plan participatory workshops to capture required information and create the park's conservation objectives. Given the iconic role of bats in Kaqchikel culture as protectors, we supported Guatemala's Bat Conservation Programme in hosting their annual Christmas Bat Count at Jaibal Atitlán. This marked the first-ever documentation of bat biodiversity at the site, revealing a richness of 13 species (see Activity 1.7.3, above). We completed three conservation planning participatory workshops for Jaibal Atitlán RMP's management plan (Activity 1.7.4, workshop reports). During this FY, we also completed 12 participatory workshops, three per conservation area, to update the management plans for Iquitiú RMP (workshop reports), Chuiraxamoló RMP (workshop reports), Xiquichoy RMP (workshop reports) and Rey Tepepul RMP (workshop reports) (Activity 1.7.5). We have finalised the update of all four management plans, securing endorsement for two of them (refer to Section 3.2, MoV 1.7.4). Pending endorsements are expected to be obtained next FY.

Toward **Output 2**, which aims to stabilise the loss rate of key ecosystems due to wildfires in the ZABC, we successfully engaged relevant stakeholders and produced the final draft of the Regional Fire Management Strategy (RFMS). Building on VMA's and TNC participation in Sololá's Development Council Environmental Commission (CODEMA), the Project conducted a municipal fire management capacity assessment survey to inform the RFMS development. Key national agencies, including the National Forestry Institute (INAB), the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED), and CONAP, provided their support. In collaboration with Sololá's governor's office, these agencies, along with representatives from local municipalities and NGOs, participated in the RFMS development workshop (Activity 2.1.2, meeting minutes, survey and workshop reports). The participatory process produced a final draft of the RFMS, which aims to "reduce the negative impacts of fire through the integration and involvement of government organisations, non-governmental organisations, academia, municipalities, and communities"(Activity 2.1.3, refer to MoV 2.2.1 in Section 3.2). The RFMS final draft has been validated by leading national fire management agencies and is currently under revision by CODEMA (Activity 2.1.4, validation meeting minutes). It will be submitted for publishing preparation in the next FY.

During this FY, nine training events were held for the 'Basic Techniques for Forest Fire Control' course, enhancing knowledge and practice for 220 participants—exceeding the mid-2025 indicator goal of 140. Attendees included 120 community members, 83 municipal forest fire brigade members from 8 municipalities (including CASR municipalities), 14 government personnel, and 3 NGO personnel (Activity 2.2.1, participant list and workshop reports). CASR roundtable members and municipal staff who participated in the GESI-awareness training workshop also attended a condensed version of this course (refer to Activities 1.2.1 and 1.3.1). Additionally, AVM's project coordinator joined TNC's International Fire Exchange in Arkansas, broadening AVM staff expertise on fire management.

We acquired certified fire management equipment for 21 firefighters (equipment list). In collaboration with TNC, we secured facilities within AVM to safeguard this equipment. This addition enhances AVM's certified gear, bringing the total capacity to equipment for 30 firefighters. This ensures that certified gear is properly maintained, securely stored, accessible and ready for transportation to certified incident response teams as required. This agreement addresses findings from the municipal fire management capacity survey, which revealed shortcomings in infrastructure, maintenance, and safeguarding capabilities at the municipal level. During this FY, we supported CONRED in training members of two newly established regional forest fires brigades within ZABC. Each brigade participated in one session of the

'Basic Techniques for Forest Fire Control' course, aimed primarily at new staff. Combined with last fiscal year's training efforts, this initiative enhanced the knowledge and practical skills of 27 regional incident brigade members (Activity 2.3.1, participant list and workshop reports). This FY, we supported four municipalities in maintaining 28 km of firebreaks, exceeding the project goal of 25 km. We prioritised cloud forests within the ZABC to reduce the risk of wildfires spreading to this vulnerable ecosystem (Activity 2.4.1, firebreaks report).

Towards **Output 3**, aimed at restoring 75 hectares of critical biological connectivity areas within the ZABC, we successfully carried out a restoration campaign this reporting period despite the unusually late onset of 2024's rainy (planting) season. We completed a report identifying key degraded areas for connectivity restoration (Activity 3.1.2). Forest restoration commitments for 2024´s planting season have been signed (Activity 3.1.3, see MoV 3.1.2 in section 3.2). Training sessions for demonstration site landowners and visits to these sites are scheduled for the next financial year (Activities 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). The registration of 75 hectares of forest areas in Guatemala's Forestry Incentives Program is in progress, concentrated within the municipalities of Zunil, Cantel, and Salcajá. This restoration activity will be carried out during the 2025 planting season in the next fiscal year, under the support and cooperation agreement with TNC's partner, the Mancomunidad Metrópoli de Los Altos (Activity 3.3.1).

Preparations for this year's season are underway to achieve our LOP restoration goal. For the 2025 planting season, we have collected and acquired seeds for 38 species, including 12 new ones not used last year, and produced 50,000 plants in CEDRACC's forest nursery. Of these, 59% are endemic and endangered tree seedlings, surpassing the required target of 36.5% for the second consecutive year (Activity 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, 2025 nursery report). During the 2024 planting season, 34,645 trees from 38 species were planted to restore 31.3 hectares and improve connectivity. This effort was supported by 105 participants from indigenous communities and municipalities, contributing to restoration across multiple sites (Activity 3.4.3, 2024´s planting season plant recipient register, species delivery record, municipal summary and database). A restoration report will be prepared at the end of 2025, as required (Activity 3.4.4).

Toward **Output 4**, which aims to improve the household economy of 390 indigenous families by achieving a minimum 15% increase in their annual income through sustainable livelihoods and savings from reduced fuelwood consumption, this FY's efforts focused on training and equipping honey producers, coffee producers, and completing the deployment of improved wood-saving stoves.

For sustainable honey production, the baseline study was completed, all training sessions concluded, and beekeepers were provided with essential equipment. Beekeepers, selected from indigenous communities near the ZABC core zones, had little or no formal beekeeping training. A total of 58 beekeepers and family members (28% women) participated in workshops covering sustainable beekeeping, hive health management, collaborative practices, and manufacturing standards (Activity 4.1.2, participant list & workshop reports). To support sustainable honey production, Langstroth hives (including floors, walls, frames, and covers) were distributed to 51 beekeepers (20% indigenous women) and to the CEDRACC apiculture demonstration module, in preparation for next FY's visits to CEDRACC as a demonstrative site (Activity 4.1.3). Monitoring activities are planned for next FY (Activity 4.1.4).

For sustainable coffee agroforestry systems, coffee plot renovation advanced alongside training workshops and stakeholder strengthening through equipment provision for sustainable coffee production practices. Coffee renovation trainings with improved agricultural practices continued with Ik Luna (Activity 4.2.2, workshop reports) and Asuvimagro associations (Activity 4.2.3, workshop reports), preparing members to meet the 2025 renewal goal of 6.4 hectares to achieve the LOP goal. Agreements were signed with 60 coffee growers (38% indigenous women) to maintain renovated coffee plots on 8.6 hectares, implementing improved agricultural practices (Activity 4.2.4, refer to MoV 4.2.2 in Section 3.2). This fiscal year, we supported 60 coffee growers from Ik Luna and Asuvimagro by acquiring and donating 25,000 young and healthy Caturra coffee plants to renovate 8.6 hectares of old coffee plots (Activity 4.2.5 coffee plant recipient register). Additionally, we supported Ik Luna, which lacks facilities for a coffee nursery, by coordinating with the Municipality of Santiago Atitlán to strengthen their municipal

agroforestry nursery. Equipment and supplies were donated to the Municipality of Santiago Atitlán, which will safeguard Ik Luna's coffee plants before field transfer and produce diverse native tree shade plants for Ik Luna's coffee agroforestry systems (signed agreement). Asuvimagro was similarly supported with equipment and supplies for bioinput production to maintain renewed coffee plots will also provide Ik Luna with bioinputs for their plots. Monitoring assessments are planned for the next FY (Activity 4.2.6).

Regarding improved wood-saving stoves, we concluded the baseline study on firewood consumption and distributed 379 improved wood-saving stoves to indigenous community households, with 90% of beneficiaries being indigenous women. Baseline results showed an average consumption of 1.3 firewood loads (*tareas*) per month (range: 1–1.5 loads). Even though the monitoring of the performance on these stoves is to be finished next FY, from other studies we know that the consumption with saving stoves is around 50% less than with traditional wood stoves. Of the households surveyed, 28% exclusively purchased firewood (range: 39–58 Pounds per load), 46% exclusively collected it (average: 6.7 hours per week, range: 1–24 hours), and the remainder both purchased and collected firewood (Activity 4.3.1, refer to MoV 4.3.1 in Section 3.2). Deployment reached 379 households across 11 municipalities near the ZABC core zone and key connectivity areas (Activity 4.3.2). Firewood savings monitoring is underway and a monitoring report is planned for next FY (Activity 4.3.3).

2.2 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 Juyu' biocultural corridor.*

Governance & Capacity Building (Indicator 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3)

At baseline, the governance framework for the ZABC was underdeveloped, lacking a functioning platform for stakeholder collaboration. Efforts to establish the CASR between 2021 and 2022 were unsuccessful, with limited support to complete the required documentation, and no meetings were held during 2023. Additionally, CASR members faced gaps in capacity for governance, sustainable management, collaborative decision-making, and gender-inclusive planning processes, in part because municipal CASR members (46%) were newly appointed employees without experience in conservation or connectivity planning and management. During this FY, the CASR was revitalised and became operational, meeting Indicator 1.1. Evidence supporting CASR's operational status includes the signed agreement requesting its formal recognition (MoV 1.1.1: CASR signed agreement), a report documenting member representation and participation (MoV 1.1.2: Members list), and meeting minutes demonstrating CASR's active engagement (MoV 1.1.3: Meeting minutes). Governance capacities were further strengthened through training activities with CASR members (Indicator 1.2), designed based on a capacity needs assessment. Surveys from these sessions demonstrated an overall improvement in participants' knowledge and perceptions across the training events (MoV 1.2.1: CASR trainings report). Municipal staff participated in gender inclusion workshops (Indicator 1.3) that used real municipal study cases to evaluate participant knowledge and propose inclusive strategies, demonstrating their ability to integrate inclusion considerations into environmental planning (MoV 1.3.1: workshop report). For example, participants proposed forming a water committee with women's participation and providing training on technical water-related topics and usage to empower women. In the CASR, 36 women participated in meetings (MoV 1.3.1: Women Participation Report).

Ecological Monitoring & Niche Modelling (Indicators 1.4 & 1.6)

At baseline, previous studies in the ZABC provided valuable snapshots of biodiversity but lacked systematic, long-term monitoring for effective conservation, while no prior information existed to understand the future impacts of climate change on biodiversity, limiting adaptive management. This fiscal year focused on collecting EMS data (Indicator 1.4) while successfully achieving Indicator 1.6 with the completion of ecological niche modelling for 25 species. Collected EMS data includes understory temperature and humidity records, bird species richness, and mammalian richness (MoV 1.4.1 EMS diagnostic and baseline report); for

monitoring progress, refer to Activity 1.4.4 in Section 3.1). Data collection will continue, with a biannual report to be developed and shared with CASR stakeholders next fiscal year. Additionally, niche modelling for 25 species was successfully validated with academic experts, offering insights into potential climate change impacts, such as niche shifts northward and upslope (MoV 1.6.1 Ecological niche modelling report for 25 species). These results are being actively considered for the ZABC management plan update process, to enhance north-south connectivity.

Conservation Planning and Protection (Indicators 1.5 and 1.7)

At baseline, both the ZABC and regional municipal parks (RMP) lacked updated management plans, with previous planning efforts dating back to the previous decade. Furthermore, the endangered seasonally dry forest ecosystem was underrepresented in the regional municipal protected area network and lacked specific local conservation action planning. This fiscal year, efforts focused on strengthening the ZABC governance platform to facilitate the future update of ZABC's management plan (Indicators 1.5) while advancing conservation area planning for key biodiversity areas (Indicator 1.7). Activities included supporting CASR's official recognition, conducting capacity-building events, and prioritising the planning and implementation of the RFMS to address urgent needs ahead of the 2024–25 fire season. These activities, necessitated by governance and fire management priorities, caused the update of ZABC's management plan to be deferred to next fiscal year (MoV 1.5.1). Documentation for the declaration of Jaibal Atitlán RMP and the development of its management plan is nearing completion (MoV 1.7.1 & 1.7.2: pending; refer to Section 3.1). Management plans for Iquitiú and Chuiraxamoló RMPs, totalling 425 hectares, have been updated and endorsed, while the management plans for Xiquichoy and Rey Tepepul RMPs, totalling 4,240 hectares, have been updated and are awaiting endorsement (MoV 1.7.3 Updated management plans). GIS analyses confirm that the combined sizes of the five conservation areas exceed 4,000 hectares, reaching 4,800 hectares. While Jaibal Atitlán and Xiquichoy RMPs (totalling 864 hectares), remain under municipal review, the final shapefile will be provided in the next report, as planned (MoV 1.7.4).

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.*

Development of the Regional Fire Management Strategy (Indicator 2.1):

At baseline, Guatemala had recently approved the National Fire Management Strategy, with only Petén (out of 22 departments nationwide) having an RFMS. The ZABC lacked a formal and integrated fire management strategy. This fiscal year, the RFMS was finalised through extensive stakeholder engagement, including national agencies (INAB, CONRED, CONAP), municipalities, and NGOs. The RFMS draft aligns with the national strategy and outlines seven programmes covering key aspects of integrated fire management, such as prevention, suppression, and restoration. It was validated by leading national agencies and is now under review by CODEMA (MoV 2.1.1 RFMS final draft). The strategy is scheduled for publication in the next financial year, alongside the development of an implementation report (MoV 2.1.2.)

Implementation of the Strategy (Indicators 2.2, 2.3 & 2.4):

At baseline, fire management capacity in the ZABC was fragmented. A capacity diagnostic survey (refer to Activity 2.1.2 in Section 3.1) revealed that of 255 members of community and municipal fire brigades, 12% remained untrained, and existing firebreaks were insufficient in both length and maintenance to effectively control wildfire spread. Significant progress has been made this fiscal year. Working in coordination with CONRED (responsible for training supervision and certificate issuance), 220 participants—including community members, municipal brigade members, government, and NGO staff—attended training sessions, exceeding the target of 140 participants. Of these, 128 participants met CONRED's course requirements and are set to receive certificates for completing the Basic Techniques for Fire Suppression training (42 certificates issued, with 86 pending CONRED's processing). Additionally, 35 participants from an indigenous community completed formal training but declined CONRED's involvement; 57 attendees did not meet the certification requirements. Training outcomes demonstrated improved knowledge and practical skills in fire prevention and

response (MoV 2.2.1, refer to Activity 2.2.1 in Section 3.1). The Project trained 21 newly hired regional fire brigade members, recruited by CONRED, equipping them with formal firefighting skills to strengthen regional capacity (MoV 2.3.1 Regional certificates). Eleven certificates are pending issuance by CONRED. Safeguarding certified firefighting equipment in AVM's facilities ensured its proper maintenance and readiness for incident response, addressing identified gaps in safeguarding at the municipal level (MoV 2.3.2, refer to Activity 2.3.1 in Section 3.1). This fiscal year, 28 km of firebreaks were maintained, surpassing the project target of 25 km. These efforts prioritised the protection of cloud forests and other fire-sensitive ecosystems during the ongoing fire season (MoV 2.4.1 Attended firebreaks map & shapefile).

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.*

Identification of Degraded Areas & Demonstration Sites (Indicators 3.1 & 3.2):

Restoration agreements were signed between landowners, VMA and TNC to formalise commitments for 31.3 hectares restored during 2024's planting season (MoV 3.1.2 Restoration agreements). Preparations for the establishment of 10 demonstration sites are underway, including training plans for landowners and site visits, scheduled for next FY (MoV 3.2.1–3.2.3).

Connectivity Restoration (Indicators 3.3 & 3.4):

During the 2024 planting season, 34,645 trees from 38 species were planted to restore 31.3 hectares, including 17,172 plants of endemic and endangered species, contributing to improved biological connectivity. For the 2025 planting season, we expect to plant 50,000 plants from 38 species to restore 44 hectares, including 29,340 plants of endemic and endangered species, produced in CEDRACC's nursery. Preparations are also underway to register 75 hectares in Guatemala's Forest Incentive Program next fiscal year (MoV 3.3.1 & 3.3.2, refer to Activity 3.3 in section 3.1 for progress evidence). We anticipate surpassing the target of 75 hectares and at least 30,000 plants of endemic and endangered species. All restoration reports documenting planting outcomes will be prepared next FY (MoV 3.4.1 & 3.4.2, refer to Activity 3.4 in section 3.1 for progress evidence).

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.*

Sustainable honey production (Indicator 4.1)

To support sustainable honey production, Langstroth hives (including floors, walls, frames, and covers) were distributed to 51 beekeepers and to the CEDRACC apiculture demonstration module, in preparation for next fiscal year's visits to CEDRACC as a demonstrative site (MoV 4.1.1, refer to Activity 4.1 in Section 3.2). MAGA course certificates remain pending. A total of 58 beekeepers and family members (28% women) participated in workshops covering sustainable beekeeping, hive health management, collaborative practices, and manufacturing standards. Monitoring activities are planned for next FY to assess income changes (MoV 4.1.3, refer to Activity 4.1 in Section 3.2).

Sustainable coffee production (Indicator 4.2)

At baseline, coffee growers from Ik Luna and Asuvimagro lacked resources and motivation to renew uproductive coffee plots, limiting household income potential.

Coffee renovation trainings conducted with Ik Luna and Asuvimagro associations prepared members to meet the 2025 target of renewing 6.4 hectares of coffee plots. Conservation agreements were signed by 60 coffee growers, ensuring their commitment to implement improved agricultural practices in the 2024 renovated plots (MoV 4.2.2: conservation agreements). These renovation efforts resulted in 8.6 hectares of renewed coffee plots. Means of verification will be completed once the next FY planting season concludes, finalising all coffee renewal extension, training, and monitoring activities, along with a comparative analysis of economic benefits, as planned for next FY (MoV 4.2.1–4.2.4, refer to Activity 4.2 in Section 3.2).

Improved wood-saving stoves (Indicator 4.3)

At baseline, indigenous families consumed an average of 1.3 firewood loads per month. Of these households, 28% exclusively purchased firewood (at 400–600 GTQ per load), 46% exclusively collected firewood (spending an average 6.7 hours/week), and the remainder both purchased and collected firewood.

Baseline data on firewood consumption patterns were collected and analysed, providing insights for monitoring (MoV 4.3.1 Baseline report). Improved wood-saving stoves were provided to 379 indigenous community members, benefiting a total of 2,011 people within their households (refer to Activity 4.3 in Section 3.1). A monitoring report is planned for next FY (MoV 4.3.2).

2.3 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.*

Governance and Local Government Actions (Indicators 0.1 & 0.2)

At baseline, the ZABC lacked a formal and operational governance framework for integrated landscape management. Newly assigned municipal environmental teams also lacked capacity for conservation-restoration action planning, limiting local government contributions. This fiscal year, the operationalisation of the Conservation Areas Support Roundtable (CASR) has revitalised stakeholder engagement, enabling multi-sector collaboration among indigenous representatives, local governments, and regional representatives from national institutions. A report is planned for next fiscal year, awaiting CONAP's response to CASR's request for official recognition and the ZABC management plan update (MoV 0.1.1; refer to Section 3.2 for progress and CASR member details). We supported five municipalities to update their conservation area management plans. While funding allocations are anticipated to have increased, confirmation is pending until evidence is gathered next FY (MoV 0.2.1).

Wildfire Stabilisation and Restoration of Degraded Connectivity (Indicators 0.3 & 0.4)

At baseline, between 100 and 550 ha were burned annually over the last 25 years, with 20 to 57 forest fires reported in Sololá. Satellite-derived fire hotspot data from the last decade shows between 5 and 43 annual hotspots within the ZABC core zone and 50 to 318 annual hotspots across the corridor. Key vulnerable areas, such as cloud forests in Volcán San Pedro and Volcán Atitlán, remained highly susceptible to wildfires. This fiscal year marked the finalisation of the Regional Fire Management Strategy (RFMS), a key milestone aligning with national frameworks and addressing fire prevention, suppression, and restoration in the ZABC. Fire management capacity has been strengthened through the training of 220 participants, acquisition of fire management equipment, and maintenance of 28 km of firebreaks near high-priority ecosystems—exceeding project targets. The success of these effort hinges on the ongoing fire season, which will be covered in next year's report (MoVs 0.3.1, refer to Section 3.2 for details). Restoration efforts this year covered 31 ha of key degraded connectivity areas, including 17,172 plants of endemic and endangered species. For the 2025 planting season, we aim to restore an additional 44 ha with 29,340 plants of endemic and endangered species. Preparations are underway to register an additional 75 ha in Guatemala's Forest Incentive Program and to finalise demonstration site activities next fiscal year. A restoration report documenting planting outcomes will also be prepared (MoVs 0.4.1 & 0.4.2, refer to Section 3.1 for progress evidence).

Climate Change Vulnerability of Key Species (Indicator 0.5)

At baseline, data on the climate change vulnerability of 25 key species (trees and birds) was unavailable, hindering adaptive management planning. Ecological niche modelling for these species has now been completed and validated, providing data on vulnerabilities and projected shifts due to climate change (refer to MoV 1.6.1 in Section 3.2). These findings are being considered in conservation area plans (MoV 0.5; refer to MoV 1.7.3 in Section 3.2) and will be integrated into the ZABC management plan update to enhance connectivity strategies.

Livelihood Improvement and Reduced Fuelwood Use (Indicator 0.6)

At baseline, indigenous households relied on unsustainable income sources and excessive fuelwood consumption, contributing to environmental degradation and poverty. Sustainable livelihood initiatives have benefited 490 indigenous people (76% women) and their households, covering sustainable honey production, coffee plot renewal, and reductions in fuelwood consumption (refer to Section 3.2 for progress details). Monitoring activities to assess income improvements are scheduled for next fiscal year, alongside the delivery of planned reports (MoV 0.6.1–0.6.3).

2.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 0.1: There is sufficient political stability to implement the project.
Comments: This assumption holds true. The country has maintained political stability.

Assumption 0.2: Newly elected local authorities support project activities.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Municipalities participating in and supporting project activities (refer to Section 3.1 for details).

Assumption 0.3: The community remains consistently engaged.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Community members are actively participating in the project´s activities (refer to Section 3.1 for details).

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. No trust or commitment issues have been identified during multistakeholder activities.

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. CASR membership requires an official designation letter for representation legitimacy.

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. Training activities and knowledge change assessments have been conducted.

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. Despite the delayed rainy season last year, adjustments to plant procurement and deployment, coupled with community and municipal coordination, ensured participation in coffee renewal and forest restoration activities.

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 Covid-19-related measures affected project activities during this report.

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.
Comments: This assumption remains true. CASR members identified their capacity needs during the 2024 initial meeting and continued to actively participate in CASR activities. Conservation area managers and other members were required to officially designate their representatives, some of whom belonged to marginalized social groups. Of the CASR

representatives who attended meetings, 13.9% were indigenous women, and 23.6% were indigenous youth (refer to MoV 1.1.2 in Section 3.2).

Assumption 1.2: Municipalities will be inclined to choose women to represent them at official governance platforms.
Comments: This assumption held partially true. Indigenous women represented 12% of municipal representatives attending CASR meetings, coming from three municipalities.

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.
Comments: 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.
Comments: This assumption held partially true. While official recognition of the CASR remains pending and awaits CONAP's response, CASR is perceived as legitimate, with active stakeholder participation. However, representation has not yet achieved full equity (refer to Assumptions 1.1 and 1.2).

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.
Comments: This assumption holds true. CASR members identified key issues including forest fires—ZABC's main threat— and ecological monitoring to be addressed in meetings.

Assumption 1.6: Local communities and stakeholders perceive protected areas and management plans as legitimate and effective mechanisms, and accept their implementation and operation.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Participative multistakeholder conservation planning workshops were positively received, primarily due to the updating of existing management plans. During these workshops, stakeholders recognised that conservation areas safeguard water sources and forests, ensuring essential ecosystem services for community well-being (refer to Activity 1.7 in Section 3.1).

Assumption 1.7: Data literacy is sufficient to use data from the ecological monitoring system to improve adaptive management of the biocultural corridor.
Comments: This assumption holds true. While some CASR stakeholders lacked data literacy, accompaniment by academic and NGO partners facilitated knowledge-sharing and training.

Assumption 2.1: Climate parameters are maintained in average ranges (10-year average). There are no extreme drought seasons outside normal parameters.
Comments: This assumption holds true. No extreme weather events 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.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Key government, municipal, and communal stakeholders participated in and supported the development of the RFMS. Final validation is planned for the next FY (refer to Activity 2.1 in Section 3.1 for details).

Assumption 2.3: There is sufficient institutional stability for the long-term development and implementation of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy.
Comments: This assumption remains partially true. While wildfires are prioritised by key government stakeholders, the recent departure of CONAP's Regional Director has introduced instability. As the leading agency for CODEMA, where the RFMS final draft is currently being validated, the absence of a newly assigned director creates uncertainty. This situation has been added to the risk management part bellow.

Assumption 3.1: Landowners in degraded key biodiversity connectivity areas are willing to implement forest restoration activities on their land.
Comments: This assumption remains partially true. Indigenous communities in Sololá restored 31 hectares of connectivity areas but perceive challenges with the incentives program.
Assumption 3.2: Restored areas are sufficiently maintained and protected from future changes in land use.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Restoration commitments have been signed, and monitoring activities are scheduled for the next fiscal year (refer to Output 3 in Section 3.2).

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.
Comments: This assumption holds true. No severe weather events occurred this fiscal year. Logistical challenges in tree planting and coffee renewal arose due to the late onset of the 2024 rainy season but were resolved effectively (refer to Output 3 in Section 3.1).

Assumption 3.4: There is sufficient interest among local farmers and others to attend training and visit demonstration sites.
Comments: Demonstration site activities are planned for the next FY.

Assumption 3.5: Women will choose to reforest because it is seen an investing on future firewood sources.
Comments: This assumption holds true. In the 2024 planting season, 42 indigenous women, accounting for 40% of participants, planted 9,525 trees to restore 8.5 hectares of degraded land, representing 27% of the total restored hectares for the season.

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.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Coffee growers have signed agreements (refer to MoV 4.2.2 in Section 3.1), and both coffee growers and beekeepers have actively participated in project activities and trainings (refer to Activities 4.1 & 4.2 in Section 3.1). Monitoring activities are scheduled for the next FY.

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: This assumption holds true. 23 indigenous women coffee growers participating in project activities, including Ik Luna Board Members, are actively engaged in workshops and decision-making roles.

Assumption 4.3: Market conditions remain favourable for beekeeping and coffee production to be profitable and a desirable livelihood for the local population.
Comments: This assumption holds true. Coffee producer groups have shown interest and willingness to renew their plantations, aiming to increase production in the medium term. Beekeeping continues to be a profitable and appealing livelihood for the local population.

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. Among the 379 stoves deployed, 90% were provided directly to women. Monitoring is planned for the next fiscal year.

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).
Comments: This assumption holds true. Monitoring report is scheduled for the next fiscal year.

2.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and multidimensional poverty reduction

Impact statement: *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 second year of the project, significant progress has been made in biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction, as detailed in Section 3.2. Monitoring activities for honey production, coffee renovation, and improved wood-saving stoves are planned through the next fiscal year, after which evidence of poverty reduction will be further validated.

For biodiversity conservation, the project continues to engage and strengthen the CASR, fostering collaboration to advance conservation planning, threat assessments, and action implementation in the ZABC. Ecological niche modelling and updated information on key species support adaptive management. Fire management strategies, brigade training, and firebreak maintenance are mitigating wildfire impacts on critical ecosystems. Restoration efforts have enhanced biological connectivity, with 31 hectares restored and preparations underway for the 2025 planting season to add a further 44 hectares.

Poverty reduction is being addressed through sustainable livelihoods, empowering indigenous producers to improve practices and incomes. Coffee growers renovated agroforestry systems, beekeepers were equipped with hives and trained in sustainable practices, and improved stoves were deployed to reduce firewood consumption. Beyond economic benefits, the project contributes to multidimensional poverty reduction by improving health outcomes (e.g., reduced indoor air pollution), saving time otherwise spent collecting firewood, and fostering inclusive governance. Workshops and CASR participation empowered stakeholders and strengthened community capacities.

3. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

During this fiscal year, the project significantly contributed to Guatemala's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP). Key actions included advancing the official recognition and participatory governance model for the CASR and training CASR participants (refer to Indicators 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3 in Section 3.2). These actions contribute to strengthening new territorial management spaces (NBSAP Strategic Activity 1.3), training institutional managers in biodiversity knowledge (NBSAP Strategic Activity 5.2), developing regional participatory mechanisms for biodiversity conservation (NBSAP Strategic Activity 7.2), developing efficient local governance mechanisms, implementing biological corridors, and creating spaces for training and permanent dialogue and mechanisms for participation in territorial management (NCCAP Adaptation Result 4.1).

4. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

Sustainable honey and coffee production initiatives, alongside improved wood-saving stoves, have directly benefited 490 indigenous people, primarily women. Improved stoves are expected to enhance household health, reduce time spent collecting firewood, and lower expenses. Honey and coffee production efforts include capacity building and resource provision to support increasing household income (refer to Output 4 in Section 3.2).

5. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

GESI Scale	Description	Project 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.	X

	The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
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	

Since the project's design, activities have primarily focused in Sololá, the department with the second highest proportion of Mayan population (96%). During this reporting period, two GESI-awareness training sessions were organized. These activities have been crucial in fostering gender inclusion and enhancing the active participation of women and indigenous youth in various project initiatives. By empowering these communities, we not only promote equity but also ensure that their voices and contributions are recognized and valued.

The first session, facilitated by TNC, focused on gender inclusion and safeguarding, and was attended by 31 AVM staff members, including 12 women and 19 men (age groups: 18–30 years = 8 participants, 31–50 years = 22 participants, over 51 years = 1 participant). The second session aimed at integrating gender considerations into municipal decision-making processes, with attendance comprising 2 women and 9 men from municipal councils, environmental offices, women's offices, and an indigenous municipality (age groups: 18–30 years = 3 participants, 31–50 years = 8 participants) (see Activity 1.3.1 and MoV 1.3.1 in Section 3.2).

Indigenous women's involvement in CASR meetings ranged between 14–19%, while indigenous youth participation varied between 13–21%. During the 2024 planting season, 42 indigenous women participated, representing 40% of the total participants. They planted 9,525 trees to restore 8.5 hectares of degraded land, accounting for 27% of the season's total restored hectares. Female relatives involved in honey production activities (such as harvesting and sales) were specifically invited to attend workshops focused on the stages of the production process in which they actively participate, reaching 28% of indigenous women participants in trainings.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

TNC´s process to evaluate project progress and achievements includes a schedule for quarterly meetings with VMA to monitor progress, achieve indicators effectively, and verify the activities outlined in the project's logframe. The TNC implementation team has supported VMA throughout the project, organising regular calls and visits to VMA offices to follow up on activity implementation.

No amendments were made to the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan this year. Details of the achievement indicators and means of verification can be found in the logframe (Annex 2).

7. Lessons learnt

Enhancing knowledge and perception assessments for local contexts

Assessing knowledge and perception changes presented significant challenges due to varied levels of familiarity with written and digital methodologies among project stakeholders. Some participants, particularly in coffee and honey workshops, struggled with written and digital questionnaires for before-and-after surveys, as time constraints were critical.

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

We reviewed last year's recommendations and support the revised approach. In response, we addressed all comments as follows: 1) Baseline conditions for each Output were included, along with the corresponding sources of evidence, detailed in section 3.2: Progress towards the Project Outputs; 2) The EMS report was updated to include summaries in both English and Spanish (updated EMS report). 3) Specific details regarding the progress of Output 4 were provided, including clarification of the number of Indigenous people benefiting, as outlined in section 3.2: Progress towards the Project Outputs; and, 4) An exit strategy was developed for the Project, detailed in section 11.

9. Risk Management

The last year´s risk of coffee growers reluctancy to prepare sites for renewal still exists because the renewal of coffee plantations will finish until next year. Another arising risk is the tariff imposed to coffee exports to the US. According to the Organized Corporate Sector of Guatemala the coffee economic activity nation-wide is having an impact of a loss of 1.5m US$ a day.

Over the past month, we identified a risk arising from the unexpected termination of employment of CONAP's Regional Director, as detailed below. Support from CONAP's acting regional representative remains crucial to achieving the success of Outputs 1 and 2. By implementing the outlined mitigation measures, we anticipate no adverse impact on the project's outcomes.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Operational The newly assigned CONAP Regional Director may not prioritise the establishment of the CASR, validation of the RFMS, or other critical project activities.	Possible	High	VMA maintains ongoing communication with the interim director and the technical team to ensure alignment on project activities, and will proactively engage the newly assigned delegate upon their appointment. We will continue collaboration with other key stakeholders (INAB, MARN, Municipalities, ARNPG) to maintain broader support for project activities, mitigating risks associated with leadership transitions.

10. Scalability and durability

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, 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.

An exit strategy was developed for this project and is presented as an annex.

Additionally, a visit of the new UK Ambassador to Guatemala is confirmed for May 26th 2025 in which we will present our achievements and discuss possibilities of continuing the cooperation.

11. Darwin Initiative identity

In May 2024, the project launch event was held in collaboration with the United Kingdom Embassy in Guatemala at AVM's Educational Centre for Rural Development and Climate Change Adaptation (CEDRACC). A press release was prepared and delivered; this was published in the United Kingdom Government website: Communities in Quetzaltenango, Sololá and Chimaltenango will increase their living standards - GOV.UK

In September 2024, the Darwin Initiative Newsletter published an article on the project's capacity building axis. This was published on the website: https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/news/2024/09/25/community-driven-solutions-in-guatemala/

This article was also disseminated through the TNC Guatemala Newsletter Naturaleza en palabras - Avances en conservación desde TNC Guatemala - Boletín de Septiembre 2024

The Darwin Initiative logo is prominently displayed on sign-in sheets, presentation cover slides, and various project documents.

12. Safeguarding

13. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Others (see below)				
TOTAL	£228,768.00			

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)			
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)			

14. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

TNC led a workshop with AVM to develop the Project´s exit strategy (see title 11. Scalability and durability).

15. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

One of the project's most strategic achievements was securing the Municipality of Sololá's formal commitment to protect Jaibal Atitlán as a protected area of approximately 200 ha. Through dedicated engagement, the project successfully built trust with local authorities and stakeholders, resulting in the municipality's decision to support the long-term conservation of this critical site. In parallel, the project completed most of the technical documentation necessary for the official registration of Jaibal Atitlán as a protected area. This included comprehensive ecological assessments, legal frameworks, and participatory conservation planning processes. Moreover, the project organized and facilitated a series of participatory workshops with local communities, authorities, and cultural leaders to co-develop the conservation objectives and the draft management plan for the area.

The strategic impact of this achievement is substantial. First, the protection of Jaibal Atitlán directly addresses the urgent need to conserve a highly threatened seasonally dry forest ecosystem — one of the most endangered and underrepresented habitats in Guatemala. By securing this forest under formal protection, the project strengthens ecological resilience and safeguards critical biodiversity at a landscape scale.

Second, Jaibal Atitlán's protected area significantly enhances habitat connectivity in the Lake Atitlán watershed. This connectivity is essential for the movement of wildlife, genetic flow between populations, and maintaining healthy ecosystem processes, especially under increasing pressures from climate change and land-use conversion. The strategic location of Jaibal Atitlán serves as an ecological corridor linking fragmented forest patches, amplifying the impact of conservation efforts across the broader region.

Third, the integration of cultural values into the conservation planning process — such as the symbolic importance of bats in Kaqchikel culture — demonstrates a pioneering approach to biocultural conservation. Recognizing and honoring these cultural connections not only enriches the management plan but also builds stronger, more lasting support from local communities, who see their heritage reflected in conservation actions.

Finally, this achievement directly contributes to expanding the formal protected areas network in Guatemala. Adding Jaibal Atitlán to the national ti the protected area system not only fulfills national and international conservation targets but also strengthens the institutional framework for biodiversity protection in the Sololá region. It showcases an effective model of municipal-led conservation, participatory planning, and cultural integration that can inspire replication in other regions.

Therefore, securing the protection of Jaibal Atitlán positions the project as a catalyst for long-term ecological and cultural resilience in one of Guatemala's most iconic landscapes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes

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)
Report		Cerro Iquitiú Municipal Regional Park Master Plan, San Lucas Tolimán		Yes

Report		Cerro Xiquichoy Municpal Regional Park, Santa María Visitación.		Yes
Report		Cerro Chuiraxamoló Municipal Regional Park Master Plan, Santa Clara La Laguna		Yes
Report		Mirador del Rey Tepepul Municipal Regional Park, Master Plan.pdf (link to rep		Yes
Video		Short video about Quetzal¿s habitat in the cloud forest ZABC		Yes

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2024-2025

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
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.	The project has made progress in biodiversity conservation through active engagement with CASR, enabling collaboration on conservation planning, threat assessments, and action implementation in the ZABC. Ecological niche modelling and updated species data support adaptive management, while fire management strategies, brigade training, and firebreak maintenance mitigate wildfire risks. Restoration efforts have enhanced biological connectivity, with 31 hectares restored and plans for 44 more. In poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods empower indigenous producers. Coffee growers renovated agroforestry systems, beekeepers gained hives and training, and stoves reduced firewood consumption. Health, time savings, and inclusive governance foster broader social equity.	[redacted]
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.		
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.	24 stakeholders signed agreement requesting official recognition of CASR. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Engage with CONAP and await their response, while continuing to collaborate with CASR stakeholders.
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.	We are nearing completion of all municipal conservation area management plans and the proposal of a new regional park. While funding allocations are expected to have increased, confirmation remains pending until supporting evidence is collected.	Complete the Jaibal management plan, secure endorsements, and collect supporting evidence
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.	The Regional Fire Management Strategy (RFMS) was finalised. Achievements include 220 trained participants, fire equipment acquisition, and 28 km of firebreaks, with further outcomes pending fire season results. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Publish the RFMS, support fire incidence response, gather fire incidence data, and develop the EMS biannual monitoring report

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
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.	Restored 31 ha of degraded connectivity areas with 17,172 endemic and endangered plants. Preparations for registering 75 ha in the Forestry Incentive Program are underway. Evidence provided in Section 3.1.	Restore 44 ha with 29,340 endemic and endangered plants, register 75 ha in the Forestry Incentive Program, and prepare a restoration report.
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.	Ecological niche modelling was completed and validated. Findings were summarised, included in conservation area plans, and considered during management plan updates to enhance connectivity strategies. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Incorporate niche modelling data into the ZABC management plan update
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.	Sustainable livelihood initiatives benefited 490 indigenous people (76% women) through honey production, coffee renewal, and reduced firewood consumption. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Renew 6.4 hectares of coffee agroforestry systems. Monitor all activity results and deliver report.
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.	The CASR was revitalised. Evidence supporting CASR's operational status includes the signed agreement requesting its official recognition, provided in Section 3.2.	Engage with CONAP and await their response, while continuing to collaborate with CASR stakeholders on the ZABC management plan update process.
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.	Governance and sustainable management capacities were strengthened through training activities with CASR members, achieving the indicator goal. Surveys showed an overall improvement in participants' knowledge and perceptions. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	No further action required.

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
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.	Municipal staff attended gender inclusion workshops using real study cases to evaluate knowledge and propose strategies for integration into environmental planning. 36 women participated in CASR meetings. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	No further action required.
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 adaptative management of 63,000ha of forest of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor core zone.	VMA's Ecological Monitoring System (EMS) is active, with data collection is underway. Evidence provided in Section 3.1.	Complete fire incidence and plot data collection, update forest cover, and prepare and share a biannual 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. Refer to Section 3.1.	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.	Completion of ecological niche modelling for 25 endemic, threatened, or iconic species. Results are being considered in the ZABC management plan update to improve north-south connectivity. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	No further action required.
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.	Documentation for the declaration of Jaibal Atitlán RMP (135 ha) and its management plan is nearing completion. Management plans for Iquitiú and Chuiraxamoló RMPs (425 ha) have been updated and endorsed, while the plans for Xiquichoy and Rey Tepepul RMPs (4,240 ha) have been updated and are awaiting endorsement. The combined conservation areas total 4,800 ha, exceeding the 4,000 ha target. Jaibal Atitlán and Xiquichoy delimitations (864 ha) remain under municipal revision. Evidence provided in Sections 3.1 & 3.2.	Complete Jaibal Atitlán study and plan. Secure endorsement for Xiquichoy and Rey Tepepul plans.
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.	A RFMS final draft was finalised through extensive stakeholder engagement. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Secure CODEMA validation, publish RFMS, support implementation and develop implementation report.

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
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).	220 participants from indigenous communities, municipal brigade members, government, and NGO staff improved knowledge and practical skills in fire prevention and response. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	No further actions required.
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.	The Project trained 21 newly hired regional fire brigade members (from 3 new brigades recruited by CONRED). Certified firefighting equipment will be safeguarded in AVM's facilities ensuring its proper maintenance and readiness for incident response, addressing identified gaps in safeguarding at the community and municipal level. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Continue training at least 9 brigade members. Support incident response.
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).	28 km of firebreaks were maintained, surpassing the project target of 25 km, near fire sensitive ecosystems (cloud- and broadleaved forests in San Pedro and Atitlán volcanoes). Evidence provided in Sections 3.1 & 3.2.	No further action required.
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.	Commitments are secured for 31 ha restored in 2024. Evidence provided in Section 3.2.	Secure restoration commitments for 44 ha.
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 engaged demonstration site owners and are developing videos for best practices and benefits dissemination.	Train demonstration site landowners, coordinate site visits, and complete basic information and social media products to disseminate best practices and benefits.
Output indicator 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	The registration of 75 hectares in Guatemala's Forestry Incentives Program is underway, targeting key degraded areas identified in Zunil, Cantel, and Salcajá.	Register 75 ha in the incentives program, restore 75 ha using native species

Project summary	Progress and Achievements April 2024 - March 2025	Actions required/planned for next period
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).	During the 2024 planting season, 34,645 trees from 38 species were planted to restore 31.3 hectares and improve connectivity, including 17,172 plants of endemic and endangered species (49 %). Evidence provided in Section 3.1.	Restore 44 ha of key biological connectivity areas with plants of endemic and endangered species. Develop restoration report.
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 begininng 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.	Langstroth hives were provided to 51 beekeepers, while 58 beekeepers and their family members (28% women) attended workshops on sustainable practices and hive management, with surveys indicating improved knowledge. Evidence provided in Sections 3.1 & 3.2.	Monitor and develop income change report
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).	Coffee renovation trainings continued, with 60 growers (38% indigenous women) renewing 8 hectares of coffee agroforestry systems using improved practices. Stakeholder capacity was enhanced by equipping a municipal agroforestry nursery and Asuvimagro's bioinput lab. Evidence provided in Sections 3.1 & 3.2.	Continue trainings, provide resources to renew 7ha of coffee agroforestry systems and implement sustainable practices.
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.	379 improved wood-saving stoves were distributed to families in eleven municipalities within and near ZABC's core zone, exceeding the target of 300. A baseline for fuelwood consumption and associated co-benefits has also been established. Evidence provided in Sections 3.1 & 3.2.	Monitoring and develop final report comparing wood consumption reduction and benefits generated.

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.	- 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	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	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	- 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.	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). 0.6.2 Survey before and after stoves are built comparing wood consumption reduction, economic savings, and other co-benefits derived from stove building 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.	
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. 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.	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. 1.1.2 List of all official members of the RUMCLA roundtable detailing the participation of marginalized social groups (indigenous women and youth). 1.1.3 Minutes of RUMCLA roundtable meetings	- 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

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	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.	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.	organizations as representatives in the roundtable. - 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. - 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. - 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.
	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.	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. 1.3.2 Number of women participating in active management of the biocultural corridor, through RUMCLA roundtable compositions and surveys.	
	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 adaptative management of 63,000ha of forest of the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor core zone.	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). 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.	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	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.	1.5.1 Updated management plan for the Zunil-Atitlán-Balam Juyú biocultural corridor (endorsed by local 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.	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
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 governments and indigenous communities.	- 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, both from local and central government and from communities. - There is sufficient institutional stability for development and long-term implementation of the Integrated Fire Management Strategy.
	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.	
	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	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
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. - There is sufficient interest among local farmers and others to attend training and visit demonstration sites. - Women will choose to reforest because it is seen an investing on future firewood sources.
	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.	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 perception of participants.3.2.2 Print outs of educational handouts and brochures 3.2.3 Record of visits to demonstration sites by local communities and other stakeholders within the biocultural corridor.	
	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	3.3.1 Yearly reports from Forests Incentive Program on the progress of the reforestation of the 75 ha. 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	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	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).	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. 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).	
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. By the begininng 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.	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. 4.1.2 Surveys before and after training demonstrating the change in knowledge on better practices for beekeeping and joint marketing. 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.	- 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 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.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	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).	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). 4.2.2 Conservation agreements signed with 50 coffee growers implementing better agricultural practices on their plots. 4.2.3 Map and GIS shape of 15ha of renewed coffee agroforestry systems. 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).	- Women already engaged in some economic activity, such as coffee growing, are more likely to participate in workshops and decision-making roles. - Market conditions remain favourable for beekeeping and coffee production to be profitable and a desirable livelihood for local people. - 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 - 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).
	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.	4.3.1 Survey before and after stoves are built comparing wood consumption reduction, economic savings, and other co-benefits derived from stove building 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.	

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 restauration 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.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
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.			

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, scheme, 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 consider the best way to submit. One zipped file, or a download option, is recommended. We can work with most online options and will be in touch if we have a problem accessing material. If unsure, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	NO
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
Have you provided an updated risk register? If you have an existing risk register you should provide an updated version alongside your report. If your project was funded prior to this being a requirement, you are encouraged to develop a risk register.	X
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see Section 16)?	Not sent
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.	