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Final Evaluation

**Project: "Strengthening governance for
the protection of biodiversity through
the formulation and implementation of
the National Strategy on Invasive Alien
Species"**

**Project Code: GCP/ARG/023/GFF
[4768]**

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Summary

The objectives of the project on “Strengthening Governance for the Protection of Biodiversity through the Formulation and Implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species”, implemented in Argentina in the period July 2015-June 2022, were to develop a reinforced governance framework across the country allowing for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of Invasive Alien Species, and to reinforce the current and future socio-economic benefits stemming from the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, including natural resources and ecosystem services, by appropriately managing the challenge of biological invasions.

The evaluation of this initiative aims at carrying out an independent appraisal of the strategic relevance of the project’s design and implementation, its effectiveness in output and outcome achievements, efficiency in the use of resources, any factors that could have affected the project’s performance, the mainstreaming of cross-cutting perspectives and the likelihood of effects to last over time once financing is no longer provided.

To achieve that purpose, a participation and collaboration-based assessment methodology was used targeted to lessons learned and qualitative aspects. The following information collection techniques were utilized: review of documents and reports generated by the project; in-depth interviews and focus groups; and on-site observation of the processes and effects promoted by the project.

The evaluation team deems that, as a result of the project’s implementation, the Argentine State is better prepared to face the challenge of managing invasive alien species (IAS) and that it has moved towards reinforcing the socio-economic benefits stemming from conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity by controlling IAS.

The project’s main outputs are in the regulatory field and targeted to reinforcing public policies for managing invasive alien species in Argentina. Among them, the approval by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species designed by the project, and its associated Communication and Public Awareness Strategy, along with the promulgation of more than ten provincial and municipal resolutions aimed at managing and controlling different exotic species in the country.

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Finally, we express our sincere gratitude to the many representatives of non-governmental organizations, universities, external consultants, park rangers and officials from provincial and national public institutions who devoted time to interviews and supported information collection for the evaluation.

Abbreviations and acronyms

APN	National Parks Administration
CCP	Pilot Coordination Committee
ECCP	Communication and Public Awareness-Raising Strategy of ENEEI
ENEEI	<i>Estrategia Nacional sobre Especies Exóticas Invasoras</i> (National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR	Mid-Term Review
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PNA	Argentine Coast Guard
POA	Annual Operations Plan
POE	Operational Plans and Eradication Protocols
PPR	Project Performance Report
PRODOC	Project Document
SAYDS	Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat
SENASA	<i>Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria</i> (National Service of Agri-Food Health and Quality)
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
SNIEEI	<i>Sistema Nacional de Información sobre Especies Exóticas Invasoras</i> (National Information System on Invasive Alien Species)
ToC	Theory of Change
UD	Demonstration Unit for eradicating American Beavers

Executive summary

1. Below is the executive summary of the final evaluation report for the project on "Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species" [GCP/ARG/023/GFF] [4758] (hereinafter the "project").
2. The evaluated project received a Global Environment Facility (GEF) grant of USD 3,870,000 and was co-financed by different government entities for an amount equivalent to USD 18,247,901, with a total budget of USD 22,117,901.
3. The purpose of the evaluation was to carry out an independent assessment of the strategic relevance of the project's design and actions implemented. This includes effectiveness in achieving outputs, outcomes and objectives, efficiency in the use of resources, factors that may have affected the project's performance, mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters and the likelihood of effects achieved to be upheld once funding is no longer provided (sustainability). The purpose is to draw lessons learned and recommendations aimed at improving the impact potential of this and any other initiatives in the future.

Main findings by evaluation criteria

Strategic relevance. Rating: highly satisfactory

4. The evaluation team confirms the project was highly relevant for rolling out Outcome 3, Objective 2 within the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area, and for Objective 2 of the FAO strategic framework in force at the time of formulation and throughout a great part of the project's execution.
5. Consistency of the project with Argentina's National Strategy for Biological Diversity was also verified, also with article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity ratified by the State, and with the Aichi goals included in its Strategic Plan.
6. Furthermore, it proved the relevance that the effective management of invasive alien species (IAS) could have for the communities that make use of the ecosystem services provided by the biodiversity threatened by the presence of IAS.

Effectiveness. Rating: satisfactory

7. Fulfillment of the outlined objectives is satisfactory. The evaluation team believes that as a result of the project's implementation, the Argentine State is better prepared to face the challenge of IAS management (global environmental objective) and that it has made progress towards strengthening the socio-economic benefits stemming from conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity by controlling IAS (development objective).
8. Institutional strengthening (Component 1) stems from the generation, collection and systematization of data on IAS and the establishment of a National Information System on IAS (SNIEEI in its Spanish acronym); the design of high-quality risk analysis systems, protocols, strategies and regulatory proposals; the development of functional and technical capacities; and the roll-out of a successful communication strategy.
9. Along with the above, and thanks to the project's execution, legal and regulatory frameworks were adopted (Component 2), highlighting the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species

(ENEEI) and the ENEEI Communication and Public Awareness Strategy (ECCP in its Spanish acronym). The above are outcomes that foster a favorable prescriptive institutional scenario for effectively managing the protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

10. All nine pilot initiatives implemented (Components 3 and 4) fulfilled their main function: to put to the test management practices, methodologies and protocols, generate knowledge, place the problem on the public agenda, build capacities and raise awareness among the different stakeholders.
11. Despite the overall positive evaluation of the pilots developed, the design or measurement of coverage targets or the quantifiable scope of their execution is deficient, as well as the monitoring of effects and the generation of evidence on environmental, social, productive and economic benefits for the participating communities of an adequate management of each one of the IAS included in the different initiatives.
12. Finally, the evaluation team confirms that specific agreements have been entered into and joint working groups have been set up between Argentina and Chile (Component 4) whilst the establishment of political agreements that allow the viability and formalization of a new phase of a bi-national beaver management programme was left outside the scope of the project.

Efficiency. Rating: moderately satisfactory

13. The evaluation team believes the financial resources provided by GEF (USD 3.8 million) were enough to carry out the activities and achieve the quality outputs committed to in the PRODOC.
14. The evaluation team confirms that the organizational structure and the assignment of responsibilities were enough and adequate to implement the project.
15. Although the project reached 99% financial delivery by May 2022, there were delays that resulted in two justified extensions due to the existence of a remaining budget (USD 1,030,003 and USD 634,407 in 2019 and 2021, respectively). In the opinion of the evaluation team, the reasons accounting for this under-execution are: the exchange rate and context conditions (change in government and health emergency).
16. Furthermore, the evaluation team collected enough evidence to assert that the administrative procedures for hiring external services and procuring equipment required by FAO, although they meet high standards, the red tape in all these procedures slowed down the technical execution of certain project activities.

Factors affecting project performance. Rating: moderately satisfactory

17. Project design: the project's design is deficient concerning the vertical and horizontal rationale of its results matrix; these were not identified in time. The evaluation team considers these shortcomings did not affect progress towards the effects and impacts sought by the project but they did condition management and accountability to stakeholders.
18. Implementation and execution: the project's implementation and execution were exposed to conditions that hindered FAO's compliance with the role and responsibilities of the project's implementing agency and executing agency. This did not prevent FAO from ensuring the

technical quality of the processes and outputs and from providing important institutional support to the project.

19. Co-executing partner: The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development faced difficulties (change in government and in definition of roles and responsibilities for execution and implementation not entirely evident) that affected its work as executing agency. However, the evaluation team considers that the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, during the course of the project, was able to perform its functions within the requirements and in accordance with the institutional arrangements required by GEF and those spelled out in the formulation document.
20. Monitoring and evaluation: a weakness that the evaluation team believes seriously affected project performance was the fact of omitting to design and implement a monitoring system that would allow systematic monitoring of the technical and financial execution, timely decision-making and easier access to information.
21. Co-financing: the institutions have reported a level of co-financing, as at May 2022, which is below the amount pledged in the project's design (only 39%). This situation did not significantly affect the scope of the outputs and the execution of activities foreseen in the PRODOC. The evaluation team confirms that co-financing could be higher once the institutional contributions are reported upon project closure.
22. Stakeholder engagement: for key agents and the evaluation team, the project's design was carried out within a participatory framework, and so was the formulation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEEL) and the ECCP. The level of engagement was different depending on the stakeholder, organization or institution but respecting, in general, the procedures recommended by GEF's policy on stakeholder engagement.
23. Communication and knowledge management: Communication and knowledge management was one of the strengths and highly valued aspects of the project. Designing and rolling out a strategy with an expert exclusively devoted to this, ensured to a great extent that the knowledge generated was disclosed and shared with stakeholders.

Cross-cutting matters. Rating: satisfactory

24. Gender: the project formulation document mentions that the gender approach will be mainstreamed in different components and outputs although the design of a specific plan for its approach was not envisaged.
25. Although the implementation of most of the activities did not go hand-in-hand with gender-responsive strategies, the project managed to decisively mainstream this perspective in two of its main outcomes: the ENEEL and the ECCP.
26. Indigenous peoples (social safeguards): the project faced difficulties at first to involve participating indigenous peoples in decision-making. These shortcomings were satisfactorily resolved during implementation, leading the communities to hold free and informed discussions, to propose the inclusion of specific actions and to agree to participating in the initiative, of which they were finally active leading players.
27. Environmental safeguards: the project, in line with its risk rating and the GEF guidelines, did not have a harmful impact on the habitats in which it intervened, its implementation did not

go against applicable international environmental treaties or agreements, and it did not promote the introduction of non-native potentially invasive species.

Sustainability. Global risk likelihood: moderately likely

28. The regulations, protocols, systems and strategies (ENEEL and ECCP) adopted by the Argentine State during and due to the project's implementation have become a framework to provide support, a formal institutional mandate and a guide for managing IAS in the country. This set of instruments, formally anchored in the institutional framework, has a high probability of being upheld over time.
29. At the time of the evaluation, the information system developed —National Information System on Invasive Alien Species (SNIEEI in its Spanish acronym)—, was in the process of migrating the database from the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* (National Southern University) to the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Its sustainability will depend on the technical support and the human and financial capacities of the ministry to keep the system updated over time.
30. Effects lasting over time and the management of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEEL) will be in the hands of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Its success will be conditioned by the allocation of resources, periodic meetings of the Technical Committee ensuring its diversity, and the social and political validation of its decisions.
31. Capacities built by State officials at all levels will facilitate continuity of the processes and the enforcement of management practices, protocols, strategies and systems promoted by the project.
32. The evaluation team identifies the following as risks that could jeopardize sustainability: change in authorities and their priorities; difficulty in accessing funding; repercussions on decision-makers of advocacy actions carried out by pressure groups that are against the control or eradication of IAS; and the scarce human resources devoted to working on IAS.

Conclusions

33. The following conclusions are set forth taking into account the main findings linked to the questions and criteria for guiding this evaluation.

Conclusion 1. Strategic relevance: the project's design, implementation and effects are highly relevant. The components, outcomes and outputs were aligned with GEF's strategic priorities, FAO's objectives, and the policies and laws of the Argentine State, and the beneficiaries of the initiative. Such high relevance led to better support to the actions rolled out, and to the interest and motivation to participate in the process, and a good ownership of outcomes among stakeholders.

Conclusion 2. Efficacy: the evaluation team concludes that the actions implemented and the outcomes achieved translated into a strengthening of the Argentine State to face the challenge of IAS management. The above entails a high technical level for executing activities and achieving most of the formulated goals and indicators.

34. Generating and integrating knowledge based on the implementation of the pilot initiatives; the design and institutional anchoring of public policy instruments, especially the ENEEL and the ECCP; strengthening the SNIEEI; and building functional and technical capacities, as well

as individual, organizational and environmental ones for managing IAS, are the main reasons accounting for the achievement of the intended objectives.

Conclusion 3. Efficiency: the evaluation team believes the efficiency of project activity execution was moderately satisfactory. The reasons accounting for this assessment are: a) a high-quality technical team but with insufficient human resources to quickly roll out actions; b) a financial execution close to 100% but materialized with a three-year delay; c) the establishment of stringent but slow procurement procedures based on the project's technical execution needs; and d) poorly planned risk management associated with institutional changes.

Conclusion 4. Factors affecting project performance:

35. The project's vertical rationale (activities-outputs-outcomes-objectives) has consistency deficits at the outcome level. The formulation of most of the outcomes does not account for the contribution or direct changes that the project would bring about as a result of its activities and the achievement and use of the expected outputs. As to the horizontal rationale (indicators, sources of verification, and assumptions), certain outcome indicators and output targets were identified that lacked specific, quantifiable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) criteria.
36. The evaluation team concludes that the implementation, execution and co-execution of the project, although all ensured the quality of the processes and outputs and were in agreement with GEF's requirements, they could have done better if the definition of roles and responsibilities of the implementing agency and the executing institution would have been clearer for the parties; if the personnel devoted to administrative tasks had been duly reinforced; and if the changes in government had been better managed.
37. It is concluded that the lack of a monitoring and evaluation system (not designed or implemented) substantially affected technical and financial monitoring and the availability of sources of verification and other materials produced by the project.
38. The evaluation team stated that communications and knowledge management were a success factor: they allowed good dissemination of activities, awareness-raising among the different audiences, ensured the distribution of relevant data and background information, and good programmatic ownership by stakeholders.
39. It is concluded that the under-materialization of the co-financing pledged during project formulation did not significantly affect the achievement and quality of the project's outputs
40. The evaluation team is conclusive when affirming that the involvement of the institutional stakeholders was favorable for taking ownership of the initiative, and decisive for the approval of the norms and strategies designed within the project's framework.

Conclusion 5. Cross-cutting matters, gender: despite the fact that no gender-responsive strategy was developed that would allow monitoring the differentiated effects, the evaluation team highlights the mainstreaming of this perspective —and that of indigenous peoples— in two of the most important project outputs: the ENEEI and the ECCP ensuring, at least in the field of institutional planning, the considerations to be borne in mind in these fields when designing and executing actions targeted to IAS management.

Conclusion 6. Participation of indigenous peoples, social safeguards: the evaluation team concludes that, although belatedly, measures were satisfactorily adopted to safeguard the

participation of indigenous peoples, which ensured the communities could hold free and informed discussions, propose the inclusion of specific actions and agree to participating in the initiative, of which they were ultimately active leading players.

Conclusion 7. Environmental safeguards: the evaluation team was able to confirm that the project had adopted the necessary measures so as to not have a harmful impact on the habitats in which it intervened, and did not go against applicable international environmental treaties or agreements, and did not promote the introduction of potentially invasive alien species.

Conclusion 8. Sustainability: it is concluded that three of the main conditions to ensure sustainability are the following: institutional anchoring of public policy instruments and information systems; capacity-building at institutions and of State officials; and the establishment of a governance structure, all of which were achieved during the project's implementation.

41. The challenge for the future will be to ensure financing, mitigate the effects that stakeholders may have on decision-makers, adequately manage changes in government and move forward in materializing intermediate conditions and assumptions summarized in the project's Theory of Change (ToC).

Lessons learned

42. The following lessons learned were drawn from the evaluation:

Lesson learned 1. If the number of human resources available and FAO's institutional procurement procedures do not offer an agile and satisfactory solution for the procurement of project goods and services to mitigate any potential risks concerning effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the technical implementation, it will be necessary to make timely decisions aimed at overcoming this difficulty (include these time frames in the annual operating plans [POAs] or hire more staff).

Lesson learned 2. The economic and institutional sustainability of the ENEEI and the management of IAS at the provincial level will be subject to and will require the establishment of multi-stakeholder agreements that politically and socially support the strategies to be rolled out and the design and implementation of action plans budgeted for the short, medium and long term.

Lesson learned 3. A bi-national strategic plan is necessary for the effective control of cross-border IAS. The establishment of high-level political dialogue and bi-national inter-institutional technical coordination are key to the above.

Lesson learned 4. Implementing actions to manage IAS (control or eradication) is, ultimately, a political decision that entails considerations in public budgets and has related social risks -public opinion- and also eventually risks at the judicial level. Given this reality, communicational and academic support, evidence-based support and the endorsement of international commitments are essential to mitigate the costs of this kind of decision.

Lesson learned 5. Including a specific communications output in the design, considering an expert in the project team and rolling out a quality strategy was a successful measure that can be replicated in other initiatives implemented by FAO and executed by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Lesson learned 6. Having full-time administrative assistance from the very beginning is essential for a project of the size and characteristics of the one evaluated to carry out technical-financial follow-up pursuant to FAO standards and its executing partners' requirements.

Lesson learned 7. The presence and control of IAS can bring about differentiated effects between men and women. Being aware of and addressing potential gaps to help reduce them -mandatory

according to FAO (2013) and GEF (2017)- called for personnel with developed capacities, the preparation of a diagnostic analysis and a specific plan to be implemented throughout the project cycle.

Lesson learned 8. A part of the projects' success is at stake when dealing with inter-institutional relationships and the proper functioning of the established governance bodies and mechanisms. The latter must be spelled out explicitly, reviewed and updated if necessary; and agreements must be reached on the responsibilities of each institution, the attributions of each instance, the decision-making procedures and the communication channels to be implemented.

Recommendations

43. The evaluation team deems it timely to set forth the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. To FAO on strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems. It is highly recommended that projects design and implement robust monitoring and evaluation systems, from the beginning of their execution, aligned with the institutional monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring and evaluation should at least have: an organizational structure; instruments for financial and technical follow-up (activities, outputs and indicators) and monitoring of effects; a detailed implementation schedule; standardized annual planning instruments aligned with the results matrix; and an online system for storing information and sources of verification arranged by component, outcomes, outputs and activities.

Recommendation 2. To FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development on the composition of the project teams. Projects with budgetary volumes, dense in activities, territorially spread out and procurement-intensive such as the one evaluated, require teams that can adequately meet these demands. To achieve the above, it would be advisable to consider the incorporation from the beginning of staff providing executive assistance to coordination, in charge of administrative and financial management, and responsible for project monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendation 3. To FAO, the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and other stakeholders on strengthening the mechanisms of project governance and internal communication. As a way to improve inter-institutional coordination and management, for future initiatives it would be advisable that, at project start-up and during their execution, the governance mechanisms be reviewed -and eventually updated or renewed- together with stakeholders. The above should at least lead to defining and sharing the following with everyone: the roles and responsibilities of each institution and each member of the project organization chart; the procedures and instances of operational and strategic decision-making; the channels and forms of internal communication; and the protocols for settling disputes, disagreements, or conflicts.

Recommendation 4. To FAO on the mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters. The mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters throughout the entire project cycle is mandatory for initiatives implemented by FAO and financed by GEF. To improve the response to this demand, it would be highly advisable to systematically and periodically build capacities in the project teams and those of the country office, actively disseminate the set of institutional tools for the mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters, and design a monitoring instrument -a simple one- to check compliance with the standards established by the institutions.

Recommendation 5. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and other stakeholders on assurance of the quality and continuity of the SNIEEI. As a mechanism targeted to quality assurance, permanent updating and sustainability of the SNIEEI, it would be advisable to

formally establish a cooperation agreement with the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* including, *inter alia*: mechanisms to systematically and bi-directionally share data and analyses; also to have the University provide scientific-technical advice to the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development; and, moreover, ensure mutual integration into national and international academic and state networks.

Recommendation 6. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and provincial governments on the design of strategies and provincial and inter-jurisdictional plans for managing IAS. Given that a large part of the control or eradication of IAS takes place through provincial and inter-jurisdictional actions, it would be beneficial for provincial governments to outline and improve their strategies and IAS management plans. To enhance the possibilities of developing quality instruments, it is recommended that the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, taking advantage of the project's momentum, implements mechanisms for disseminating the ENEEI and the ECCP, managing the knowledge generated by the project in all the provinces, and supporting the jurisdictions in outlining their plans and strategies.

Recommendation 7. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and provincial governments on incentives for the private sector and communities concerning IAS management. In order to encourage the participation of the private sector and the community in managing IAS, it is recommended that the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and the provincial governments in partnership with academic institutions (if necessary) generate, systematize and share evidence on the multidimensional benefits (environmental, economic, social, productive, cultural) that an effective control of IAS entails, in collaboration with the territories, communities and producers affected by biological invasions.

Recommendation 8. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, provincial governments, academic institutions and other stakeholders on communication strategies for managing IAS. Given that the project has managed to develop a high-quality Communication Strategy that has allowed an innovative approach to a complex communication agenda such as the one on IAS, it is highly recommended that continuity be provided to the communication challenge and that the impact of the communication pieces, messages, as well as the social perception of the IAS agenda be permanently monitored.

Recommendation 9. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development in charge of presiding over the Inter-institutional Technical Committee and the Board. A part of the sustainability of the project's efforts and achievements focuses on the creation and implementation of the Board. Given the foundational nature of this space, it would be advisable to generate collaborative participation mechanisms so that stakeholders can actively participate in their initial outlining that will lay the foundations for the country's public policies in the long term. Likewise, it is essential for the Board to have the necessary budget to be able to operate and ensure the participation of all the institutions involved.

Recommendation 10. To FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development on the scalability and sustainability of interventions. As a measure aimed at maximizing the possibilities of sustainability and scalability of the projects, it is recommended that FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development consider the development of advocacy strategies targeted to institutional anchoring and the establishment of agreements between public and private stakeholders within the framework of a sustainability plan included in the projects' design and implemented from the early stages of their implementation.

Executive Summary Table 1. Rating of GEF evaluation criteria

GEF Criterion / Sub-Criterion	Rating	Summarized comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	MS	Project design and implementation is consistent with the priorities and interest of the different stakeholders.
A.1.1. Consistency with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	MS	Project was highly relevant for Objective 2, Outcome 2 of the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area and for Objective 2 of the FAO strategic framework.
A1.2. Relevance for national, regional and global priorities and beneficiaries' needs	MS	Project design and execution is consistent with the Argentine State's priorities and the needs of beneficiary groups.
A1.3. Complementariness with existing interventions	MS	The project coordinated actions with IAS management initiatives already underway.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall evaluation of project outcomes	S	Outcomes contributed to strengthening the Argentine State for managing IAS.
B1.1. Fulfillment of project outcomes	S	Outcomes planned for the project were achieved.
B1.2. Progress towards achieving project outcomes and objectives	S	Achieved outputs and outcomes contributed decisively to strengthening public institutions in Argentina (Project objective).
Outcome 1.1	MS	Information was generated, collected and systematized; high-quality systems, protocols, strategies and regulation proposals were developed; and a successful project communication strategy was rolled out, generating lessons learned to design an ENEEI strategy.
Outcome 2.1	MS	Over 12 legal and regulatory frameworks were adopted and financing mechanisms for ENEEI were identified.
Outcome 3.1	MS	The pilot for early detection at ports and surrounding areas was scaled up: the project experience at four ports was replicated independently in all the countries sea and river ports (14).
Outcome 3.2	S	Pilots tested management practices, methodologies and protocols, generated knowledge, placed the issue on the public agenda, built capacities and raised awareness among the different stakeholders.
Outcome 4.1	S	Enough knowledge was generated and the necessary lessons were retrieved to design an evidence-based "Provincial plan for reclaiming environments affected by beavers".
Outcome 4.2	S	Bi-national fora were set up to reflect on and exchange experiences, leading to specific agreements and joint work and follow-up.
Outcome 5.1	MS	Although indicators were met, the project's monitoring and accountability system did not meet the required quality standards.
Global rating of progress towards fulfilling the objectives.	S	The project met the objectives foreseen in the PRODOC.
B1.3 Likelihood of producing the intended effects	L	Public policy instruments were anchored in Argentine institutions and capacities were built, setting the foundations for achieving medium and long-term effects.

GEF Criterion / Sub-Criterion	Rating	Summarized comments
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency	MS	The project experienced a three-year delay in its completion and its administrative procedures were not the best.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Global likelihood of sustainability-related risks	ML	There are certain risks that could materialize.
D1.1. Financial risks	L	Although there is political will, financial resources, when assessed, are not ensured for project continuity.
D1.2. Social and political risks	ML	There are pressure groups that are against the control of IAS that could influence decision makers
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	Although the project designed a governance group, it has not yet started meeting, it has no regulations or funding.
D1.4. Environmental risks	MU	No environmental risks have been noted that could threaten the project's sustainability.
D2. Enhancement and replication	L	There is an enabling political and institutional scenario for the project's replication and scalability.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING FULFILLMENT OF OBJECTIVES		
E1. Project design and preparation	MS	There are vertical and horizontal consistency shortcomings in the results matrix.
E2. Project implementation quality	MS	Conditioning factors that reduced implementation quality were identified.
E2.1 FAO Project implementation quality (budget holder, lead technical officer, project task force, etc.)	MS	FAO ensured the technical quality of the processes and outputs but faced difficulties to appropriately play its role as implementing agency.
E2.1 Project oversight (project steering committee, project task force, etc.)	MS	The governance structure did not work as stated in the PRODOC. However, and especially during the last stage of the project, coordination mechanisms and governance bodies were established pursuant to the project's implementation and execution needs.
E3. Project execution quality	S	The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development faced complex situations that affected its role and the responsibilities inherent in the executing agency. Nonetheless, it performed its duties according to the requirements and to the institutional arrangements required by GEF.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MS	Co-financing as at May 2022 stood at 39% of the committed amount but this did not substantially affect output quality and achievement. However, the evaluation mission was informed that at project completion (two months after the evaluation took place) co-financing had reached 78%.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Project design and ENEEI formulation were both participatory processes.
E6 Communication, knowledge management and knowledge outputs	HS	Communication and knowledge management were successfully addressed and implemented.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	U	The project did not design and start up a monitoring system allowing it to systematically follow up on its technical and financial execution, make timely decisions and facilitate access to means of verification.

GEF Criterion / Sub-Criterion	Rating	Summarized comments
E7.1 M&E design	U	The project did not design a monitoring system.
E7.2 Implementation of the M&E plan (including financial and human resources)	U	No monitoring system was implemented. Actions in this field were the semi-annual and annual reports, and evaluations.
E8. Global evaluation of factors affecting outcomes	MS	There were deficiencies in M&E and co-financing, and difficulties concerning the project's design and implementation.
F. CROSS-CUTTING MATTERS		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	No specific plan was designed for addressing the gender perspective. Nonetheless, the project envisaged the gender perspective in two of its main outcomes: the ENEEI and ECCP.
F2. Human rights/indigenous peoples' issues	S	The project faced difficulties at first to include indigenous peoples in decision-making. These shortcomings were satisfactorily solved during the project's implementation.
F2. Environmental and social safeguards	S	Measures were taken to protect the environment and make sure persons involved in the project were not affected.
Overall Project Rating	S	

1. Introduction

1. This document includes the final evaluation report of the project on "Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species" [GCP/ARG/023/GFF] [4758] (hereinafter the "project") (Table 1. General information on the project).
2. The evaluated project was financed by GEF for an amount of USD 3,870,000 and co-financed by different government entities for an amount equivalent to USD 18,247,901 with a total budget of USD 22,117,901.
3. The project was implemented and executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and co-executed by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina.
4. The project formally began in July 2015 and was completed in June 2022.

Table 1. Overall project information

Project title: Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species [GCP/ARG/023/GFF] [4758]
Project duration: seven years (including two extensions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal project start-up date: July 2015 • Foreseen date for project completion: June 2022
GEF-5 Focal Area: Biodiversity - Objective 2
Financing Partner: GEF Executing Partner: Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development Implementing Agency: FAO
Total Project Budget: USD 22,117,901 National Contribution: USD 18,247,901 Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development (former Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat): USD 2,375,000; National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET): USD 803,682; National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA): USD 83,000; National Agrifood Health and Quality Service (SENASA): USD 176,900; Secretariat of Public Communication: USD 8,417,774; National Parks Administration (APN): USD 335,58; Argentine Coast Guard (PNA), Environmental Protection Directorate: USD 294,118; provincial governments: USD 5,511,839; FAO: USD 250,000. GEF grant: USD 3,870,000

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

5. Sections 1 and 2 below briefly describe the project's context, its framework and reconstructed ToC as well as its evaluation. These sections will be followed by a description of the methodology used to carry out the evaluation. The outcomes of the evaluation process are presented in Section 4, and the conclusions and lessons learned in Sections 5 and 6, respectively. The report ends with Section 7 that includes recommendations for the different project stakeholders.
6. This document has seven appendices, namely, 1) the list of key agents consulted; 2) the GEF Evaluation Criteria Rating; 3) the GEF rating scheme; 4) the results matrix; 5) the evaluation matrix; 6) data collection instruments; and 7) the co-financing table.

1.1 Project context¹

7. The presence of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) introduced by forestry and agriculture, aquaculture, transport related to trade and tourism, import and breeding of pets, and import of ornamental species, is one of the most significant threats for biodiversity conservation, as well as for natural resources and related ecosystem services.
8. The Inter-American Network on IAS documented the presence of 652 species of alien plants, vertebrates, invertebrates, algae and fungus that have colonized natural environments across Argentina's 18 eco-regions.
9. The presence of some of these species has a socio-economic impact on the vulnerable sectors of society. Many of the pests and weeds affecting agriculture in Argentina are alien species, and the same happens with invasive plants which reduce the forage value of natural grasslands, and with the deposit-feeder fauna species that eat grain and other feed products.
10. Several studies report on the impact of IAS on native biodiversity and on how ecosystems operate in Argentina, and have assessed their impact as herbivores or predator competitors, pathogens or transformers of full ecological systems.
11. Among these species are the Golden mussel (*Limnoperna fortunei*) responsible for costly maintenance tasks in the turbines of the main hydropower plants in Argentina and South America; the Didymo algae (*Didymosphenia geminata*), introduced in the rivers and lakes of the Argentine and Chilean Patagonia region threatens sports fishing, which is a key activity for the regional economies; the red-bellied tree squirrels (*Callosciurus erythraeus*) cause economic losses since they eat fruit, strip tree bark, break irrigation hoses and damage telephone, electricity and television cable coating and power transformers; the tamarisk or salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*) has an impact on low-irrigation agriculture in dryland areas, since it consumes lots of water and salinizes the top layers of the soil; the giant African land snails (*Achatina fulica*) bring about very significant losses in agriculture, mainly affecting small farmers and subsistence farmers and threatening the population's health; the glossy privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*) colonizes native forests in the central and northern part of the country, intensively affecting indigenous communities that depend on wildlife resources.
12. One of the IAS of special concern since it affects a unique ecosystem in the country, is the beaver (*Castor canadensis*) on the *Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego* (Tierra del Fuego Island).
13. The total beaver population is approximately 100,000 and destroys trees by ringing, and floods *Nothofagus* forests, and also changes the forest nutrient dynamics. Beavers have reduced forest volumes, and have had a serious impact on ecosystem services in peat bogs.
14. Besides the above, there are the effects of climate change. Climate change acts in synergy with biological invasions. On the one hand, changes in rainfall and temperature allow the IAS to spread out and colonize new ecosystems, even those species that have never before expressed their invasive capacity. This situation can be particularly significant in countries like Argentina that has huge arid or semi-arid ecosystems, and in which an increase in CO₂ could increase efficiency in the use of water by invasive plants, thus augmenting their capacity to settle and expand.

¹ Background information retrieved from the Evaluation Team's Terms of Reference and the PRODOC.

15. The environmental stress resulting from climate change can also reduce the resilience of natural ecosystems, increasing their vulnerability to invasions; and, similarly, alterations in the frequency and intensity of disturbances (floods, fires, strong storms) provide the opportunity for new IAS to settle. Dispersal pathways and vectors can change in view of the direct effects of climate change and of the indirect effects related to changes in land use patterns among the inhabitants.
16. Considering the aforementioned context, at the time the project was formulated, the Argentine Republic had already made progress in establishing guidelines for the control of IAS, but it lacked a National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL), which limited the ability to manage the complexity of IAS.
17. Additionally, although there were some legal and regulatory instruments and a nation-wide database, there was no coordination and harmonization of these instruments among sectors and between the national and provincial management levels. In addition, knowledge on the IAS problem and the capacities to apply prevention and control instruments regarding the introduction, early detection and immediate actions, communication and awareness-raising, prioritization and control and eradication actions concerning IAS already introduced and established in the country, were insufficient and weakly coordinated.
18. Among the barriers accounting for these shortcomings, the following were highlighted in the PRODOC: a) The lack of analysis and information on the socio-economic costs and impacts on native biodiversity; b) A wealth of information on IAS but spread out and not easily accessible; c) The lack of a National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL); d) Lack of knowledge on the IAS problem and ability to apply instruments; e) Weaknesses in communication and awareness-raising on the IAS problem; f) A disintegrated, non-systematized and incomplete regulatory framework at the national and provincial levels; g) No National Law on Minimum Standards for IAS management; h) Lack of prioritization and actions to control and eradicate IAS already introduced and established in the country; i) Limited capacity building and lack of a realistic bi-national programme for mass eradication and restoration.

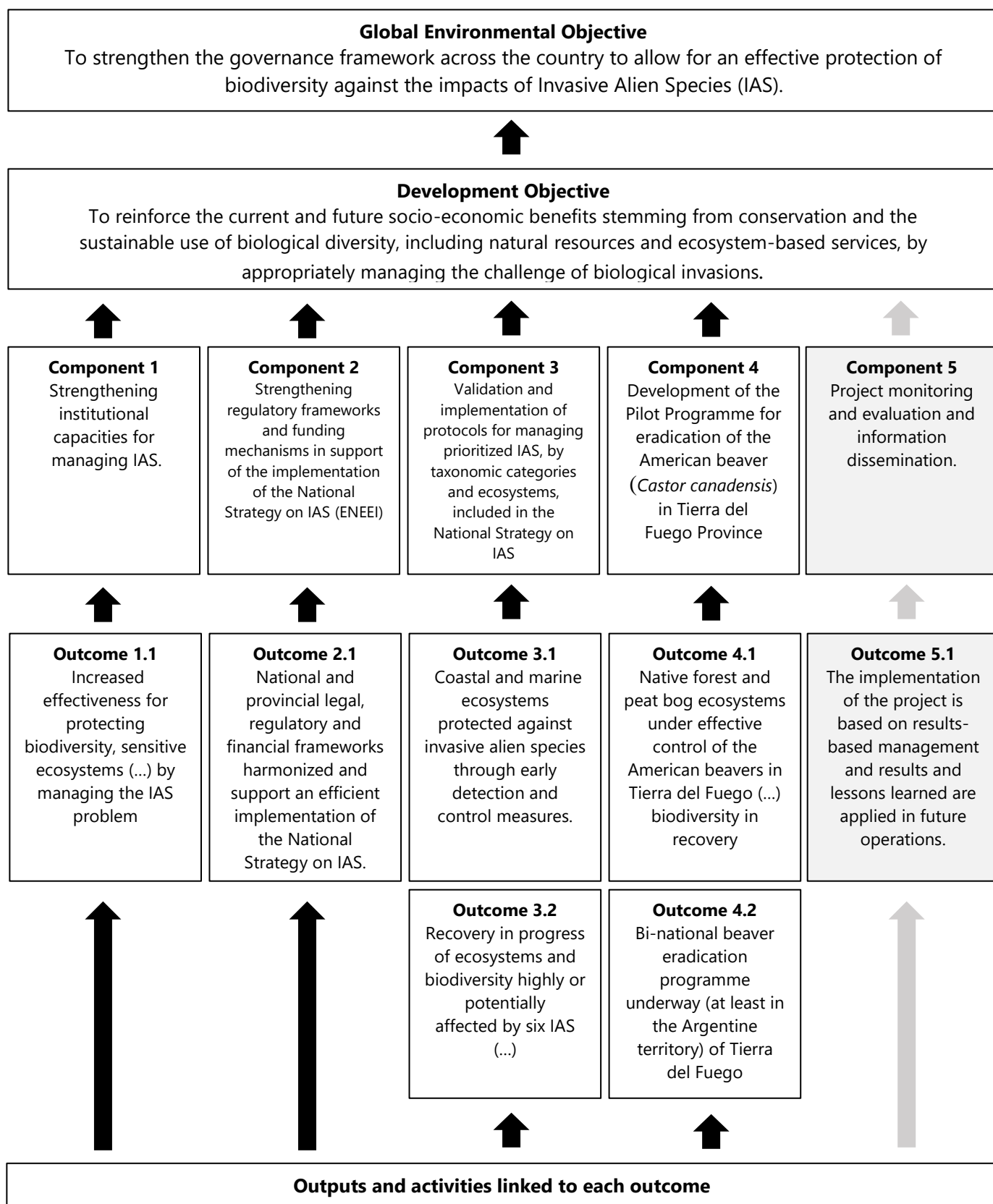
1.2 Project framework

19. The project was formulated with the purpose of moving forward in overcoming the identified barriers. Therefore, an intervention strategy was designed in the quest to achieve a global environmental objective, that is " to strengthen the governance framework across the country to allow for an effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of Invasive Alien Species (IAS); and a development objective, that is "to reinforce the current and future socio-economic benefits stemming from the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, including natural resources and ecosystem-based services, which calls for appropriately managing biological invasions" (PRODOC).
20. The aforementioned objectives, following the project's intervention rationale, should be achieved through the fulfillment of seven outcomes organized into five related components, of which four are programmatic (Components 1, 2, 3 and 4) and one refers to knowledge management, and project monitoring and evaluation (Component 5) (Figure 1. Project Intervention Rationale).
21. Regarding the intervention territory in which the actions were carried out, the project considered four levels: bi-national, national, provincial and local. Furthermore, the

implementation of eight pilot initiatives located in different provinces was envisaged, as follows:

- i. Pilot on Red-bellied tree squirrels and other potential IAS;
- ii. Early detection pilot at ports and surrounding areas;
- iii. Pilot on Didymo algae in the provinces of Rio Negro, Neuquén, and Chubut;
- iv. Pilot on Tamarisks (salt cedars) in the Cuyo region;
- v. Pilot on Bullfrogs at the national level;
- vi. Pilot on Giant African snails in the Parana rainforest;
- vii. Pilot on Glossy Privets in the north of Argentina, with the Ocloya indigenous community;
- viii. Pilot programme for the eradication of the American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) in the Province of Tierra del Fuego (Component 4).

Figure 1. Project Intervention Rationale (designed in the PRODOC)

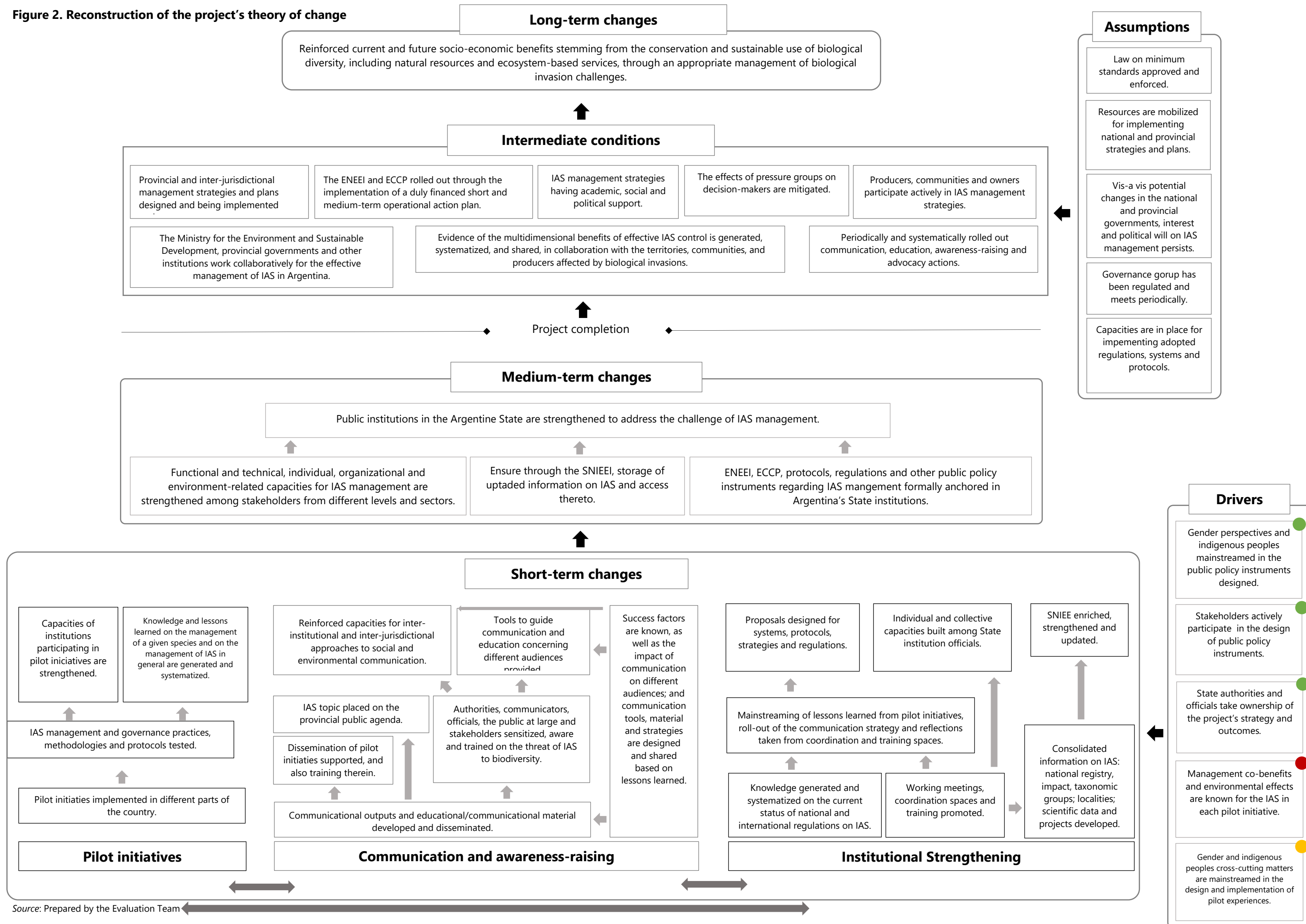


Source: Prepared by the Evaluation team based on the PRODOC.

1.3 Project's Theory of Change

22. The Project's Mid-Term Review (MTR) proposed a reconstruction of the ToC. This was based on the intervention rationale -presented on the previous page- plus the problems and barriers identified during project formulation.
23. The final evaluation reviewed the plausibility of the reconstructed ToC, in consultation with key stakeholders. Considering these inputs, it seemed to be the right time to set forth a new proposal (Figure 2. Reconstruction of the ToC).
24. The proposed ToC is a reflection exercise. Its thought/action approach helps to identify and view milestones, preconditions, and interactions that should and did happen so as to move forward along the path of desired change in the short, medium, and long term. This will lead to identifying and acting on future realities, not only evident, but also likely and desirable. The project's reconstructed ToC is structured as follows:
 - i. Strategies for change: these are related to the identification of intervention pillars based on which the project strategy is implemented. In the case of the evaluated initiative, three strategies were characterized to start up, guide and interact along the path of change. The strategies are the following:
 - Strategy for Change 1: Implementation of pilot initiatives.
 - Strategy for Change 2: Strengthening of Argentina's State institutions.
 - Strategy for Change 3: Communication and awareness-raising.
 - ii. Short-term changes: related to changes that have resulted from project implementation and have happened throughout its execution.
 - iii. Medium-term changes: are the direct effects, achieved once project implementation has been completed.
 - iv. Intermediate conditions: changes in the medium-long term or necessary preconditions to achieve the desired change in the long term or the intended impact.
 - v. Changes in the long term: these are the impacts to which the project will contribute should the above effects and assumptions materialize.
 - vi. Drivers: are important conditions that, if present, contribute to the quality and achievement of changes in the short and medium run.
 - vii. Assumptions: these are external factors and conditions that could have an impact on the materialization of the intermediate conditions and, therefore, of the intended impact.

Figure 2. Reconstruction of the project's theory of change



- Materialized
- Partially materialized
- Not materialized

2 Evaluation Framework

2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

25. Pursuant to GEF and FAO requirements, the final evaluation was envisaged in the project document (PRODOC). According to its terms of reference, such evaluation has a two-fold purpose: to comply with the requirements of accountability to the donor, partners and counterparts and, at the same time, to draw lessons learned from the project's implementation.

2.2 Objective of the evaluation

26. The objective of the evaluation was to carry out an independent assessment of: the strategic relevance of the design and the actions implemented by the project; its effectiveness in achieving outputs and results and progress made in achieving the intended impacts; efficiency in the use of resources; factors that may have affected project performance; the mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters and the likelihood that the achieved effects will be sustained once financing comes to an end (sustainability). All the above, with a view to drawing lessons learned and recommendations aimed at improving the impact potential of this project and, eventually, of future initiatives.

2.3 Scope of the evaluation

27. The evaluation's time line covered the entire project execution period, that is, from its start-up in July 2015 until the time of its evaluation (June 2022).

28. The geographical scope matched the intervention territory and the interaction between the different levels. Therefore, the institutions and actions at bi-national, national, provincial and local level were considered.

29. The project team and the evaluation mission agreed on three territories for field visits: the City of Buenos Aires, El Palmar National Park and the Province of Tierra del Fuego.

30. The places were chosen based on their relative significance concerning project execution (in the case of the pilot programme in Tierra del Fuego), the number and availability of key agents, the level of implementation of pilot initiatives and the time frame, financial and logistic feasibility to carry out the visits.

2.4 Evaluation users

31. The main users of this evaluation will be the FAO-GEF coordination unit in Rome; the institutions that are members of the project's steering committee; the project team; the Lead Technical Officer; the project's working group; the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development; beneficiary groups; national stakeholders as stated below:

- i. Project steering committee. FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, as members of the Project Steering Committee, will use the evaluation outcomes and conclusions to improve the scope and sustainability of outcomes once the intervention has been completed.

- ii. Budget Holder, Lead Technical Officer, project working group, national coordinator and project team. They will be able to use the findings and lessons learned to strengthen and help scale up post-project pilot interventions. In addition, these may be used to improve the design and implementation of future interventions in the country or region, including ongoing activities in areas similar to those covered by the project.
- iii. Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. They will use the evaluation's outcomes, conclusions and recommendations to improve the scope and sustainability of their actions and process outcomes that will continue after the project has been completed.
- iv. FAO-GEF Coordination Unit. It will use the outcomes to be accountable to GEF and report on the achievement of project objectives and indicators.
- v. Beneficiaries and other national stakeholders. They may use the evaluation to analyze the possibility of carrying out similar actions to provide continuity to the project's outcomes.

2.5 Limitations

- 32. The project covered a broad spectrum of institutions, had interventions in various territories and a large number of people participated in the initiative. The evaluation had the time and logistical limitation of only being able to consult a representative sample of territories and individuals. At the institutional level, it was able to take into account most of those involved in the project.
- 33. Along with the above, and since the execution of many of the pilot initiatives was completed three or more years ago, it was difficult to contact key beneficiary agents and coordinate interviews with them. However, this limitation was overcome by selecting a representative group that participated in the initiatives, by reviewing secondary information and by having some of the beneficiaries attend and make presentations at the closing workshop.
- 34. An additional limitation was the timely availability of relevant project documentation. This situation was due to the fact that some outputs included in the letters of agreement were in the process of being completed at the time of the evaluation; that the last semi-annual technical and financial report (July-December 2021), in view of the pending revisions, was only shared when nearing the end of the fieldwork; the inexistence of a monitoring and evaluation system with a project documentation repository that would allow easily finding and accessing sources of verification for each of the outputs.
- 35. It is important to point out that the above-mentioned limitations were overcome thanks to the good will, efforts and permanent communication of the project team and did not substantially affect the quality of the evaluation.

3 Evaluation methodology

36. To achieve the objectives and meet information needs, a participatory and collaborative methodological approach was used for the evaluation, focused on lessons learned and qualitative aspects.
37. With a view to mitigating biases, the information was triangulated, confirming the information collected (from primary and secondary sources) and exchanging information between the evaluation consultants and the project team to verify conclusions.
38. In addition to the above, the regulations and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the project evaluation guide of FAO's Office of Evaluation (OED) were abided by and a consultative, transparent and independent approach with internal and external project stakeholders was adopted.

3.1 Evaluation questions²

39. The information that will be looked into will be determined based on the evaluation criteria and questions spelled out in the terms of reference. Each of these elements will be analyzed taking into consideration the project's design, performance, processes promoted and outcomes.
40. Below is a list with six evaluation questions linked to six evaluation criteria (strategic relevance, effectiveness and progress made in achieving the intended impacts, efficiency, factors affecting project performance, cross-cutting matters, and sustainability).

² The terms of reference for the evaluation included 26 questions and nine criteria. These information needs have been covered in this report and fully included in the evaluation matrix. To improve internal consistency and make the report easier to understand, all 26 questions have been taken into consideration as sub-questions and were rearranged into six evaluation criteria, assigning to each criterion a general question that summarizes or encompasses the sub-questions.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria and questions

Criterion	Evaluation questions
Strategic relevance	Question 1. Were the project's design and outcomes aligned -and continue to be so- with the FAO strategic framework, the GEF-5 strategies and Argentina's national priorities? Has the project been relevant to meet the needs of the beneficiary groups?
Effectiveness and progress made in achieving the intended impacts	Question 2. What outcomes, intended and unintended, has the project achieved? To what extent did these outcomes contribute to progress towards achieving the objectives and intended impacts of the project? What achievements, outcomes and effects have been achieved within each component?
Efficiency	Question 3. Have the implementation modalities, the institutional structure, the available financial, technical, programmatic and operational resources and procedures contributed to or hindered achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?
Factors affecting project performance	Question 4. What are the main factors that currently influence or have influenced project performance (design, implementation, execution, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholders' engagement, co-financing, and communication and knowledge management)?
Cross-cutting matters	<p>Question 5a – Gender. To what extent have gender considerations been taken into account in project design and implementation?</p> <p>Question 5b – Participation of indigenous peoples (social safeguards). To what extent have the rights of indigenous peoples been respected and promoted in the project's design, decision-making and implementation?</p> <p>Question 5c – Environmental safeguards. To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into account in the project's design and implementation?</p>
Sustainability	Question 6. How sustainable are the outcomes achieved at the environmental, social, institutional and financial levels? How can the sustainability of the implementation of the ENEEI beyond the life of the project be ensured? What are the risks that may affect sustainability of the project's achievements and effects?

Source: Terms of reference for the evaluation.

3.2 Information collection techniques

41. The techniques presented below were applied differently depending on the key agent and the type of information managed by such agent. The instruments were built and designed based on the evaluation's questions and sub-questions (Appendix 6. Information collection instruments). The following table describes the data collection techniques.

Table 3. Information collection techniques

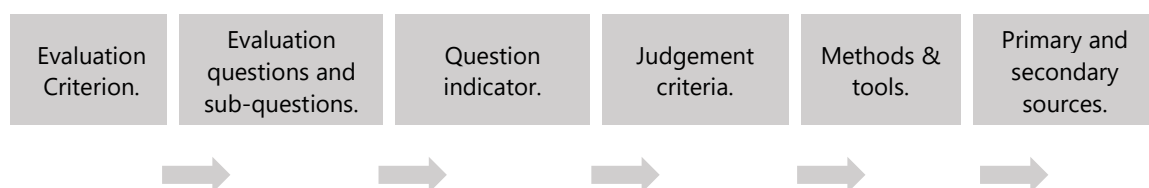
Technique	Description
Review of existing reports and documents	The semi-annual and annual progress reports and technical reports generated under the four components, training material, studies carried out, national legislation, resolutions, key press articles, publications and available outputs, among others, were reviewed.
In-depth interviews	In-person or on-line interviews were held with key agents to obtain in-depth information on people's impressions or experiences. They were targeted to those responsible for the project's execution, beneficiaries, State officials, partner institutions and external consultants.
Focus groups	The focus groups were used mainly with people participating in or directly affected by the project's pilot initiatives.
On-site observation	Detailed observation to obtain accurate information on-site about how the project worked, activities carried out, processes, debates, social interactions and observable outcomes as can be seen directly during the development of an initiative. This technique was used at the FAO office in Argentina, El Palmar National Park, the bi-national workshop held in Tierra del Fuego and in field visits to pilot sites.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

3.3 Evaluation matrix

42. An evaluation matrix was prepared (Appendix 5. Evaluation matrix) as a methodological guide for information collection and analysis based on the evaluation process. For this purpose, six questions and 26 sub-questions linked to the six evaluation criteria were considered. The matrix was structured as follows:

Figure 3. Evaluation matrix structure



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

3.4 OED/GEF evaluation frameworks

43. The FAO Evaluation Office and GEF developed reference frameworks that technically and methodologically guide the evaluation of gender mainstreaming (FAO, 2017), participation of indigenous peoples and environmental and social safeguards in the projects, programmes and strategies implemented, executed, financed and supported.

44. These tools include general methodologies and guidelines for an effective evaluation of each of these dimensions, together with a set of evaluation questions, indicators, judgment criteria, and recommended data collection methods.

45. Following the guidelines established in these tools, the evaluation team selected elements to be included in the evaluation matrix for each framework.

3.4.1 Evaluating the gender perspective mainstreaming

46. The FAO Policy on Gender Equality states that all processes led and supported by OED must address gender equality aspects in evaluated programmes and projects. To this end, OED developed a guide that establishes the guidelines for mainstreaming this dimension. The guide provides a list of evaluation questions and indicators linked to each of FAO's five gender equality objectives included in its policy.
47. Using the guide formulated by OED as a reference, the evaluation matrix will include evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators aimed at obtaining information on the degree of compliance with gender equality standards and objectives and will thus generate findings that contribute to assessing the inclusion of this dimension in the project.

3.4.2 Evaluating indigenous peoples' participation

48. The FAO has a policy on indigenous and tribal peoples developed in 2011 (FAO, 2011) and a manual to enforce the free, prior and informed consent of local communities and indigenous peoples in the development of its initiatives (FAO, 2016). In these guides, the objectives and steps to be followed in managing the project cycle are specified to effectively include indigenous peoples and free, prior and informed consent. The evaluation team will use these instruments to assess the inclusion of this dimension in the reviewed project.

4 Evaluation outcomes

4.1 Strategic relevance

Question 1. Were the project's design and outcomes aligned -and continue to be so- with the FAO strategic framework, the GEF-5 strategies and Argentina's national priorities? Has the project been relevant to meet the needs of the beneficiary groups?

Finding 1. The project was highly relevant to Outcome 3, Objective 2 of the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area and to Objective 2 of the FAO strategic framework in force at the time of formulation and for much of the project's implementation period.

49. During design, start-up and throughout almost the whole of the project's execution, the FAO strategic framework revised in 2017 was in force (FAO, 2017b). The project was aligned with some of the outcomes of strategic objective 2: "Increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner."
50. Since the objective's emphasis is placed on sustainable production, the evaluation considers the relevance of the project is indirect and moderate regarding outcomes 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 (Table 4).

Table 4. Project alignment with FAO Strategic Framework Objective 2

Strategic Objective 2. Increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner	
Outcomes	Project Alignment
2.1. The countries adopted practices to increase productivity sustainably, while addressing climate change and environmental deterioration in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.	The project's design did not consider outcomes related to sustainable production.
2.2. Countries developed or improved policies and governance mechanisms to address sustainable production, climate change and environmental degradation in agriculture, fisheries and forestry	The generation and strengthening of governance mechanisms and policies included in the project's design (Outcomes 1.1 and 2.1) were targeted to managing IAS and therefore to reducing the environmental degradation they cause.
2.3. Countries improved implementation of policies and international instruments for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry	In line with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the project emphasized, <i>inter alia</i> , the strengthening of existing regulations on IAS (Outcome 2.1). Enforcement thereof would result in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
2.4. Countries made decisions based on evidence for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry while addressing climate change and environmental degradation	The project's design envisaged the generation of information on IAS (Outcome 1.1). This background information was and will be used to design strategies aimed at mitigating environmental degradation caused by biological invasions.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

51. Regarding the biodiversity focal area related to GEF-5 focal area strategies, it was noted that the design and the actions implemented are highly relevant to all three outcomes under Objective 2, "Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors".

52. Furthermore, increase in managed landscapes, development of regulatory frameworks targeted to the conservation of biodiversity and improved management to prevent, control and manage IAS (Objective 2 outcomes) have been present, with varying degrees, in different components throughout the project cycle (Table 5).

Table 5. Project alignment with the outcomes of Objective 2, Biodiversity focal area, GEF-5 Strategy.

Biodiversity focal area	
Objective 2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors	
Outcomes	Project alignment
Outcome 1. Increase in sustainably managed landscapes that integrate biodiversity conservation.	The pilot initiatives (Outcomes 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2) were designed and implemented as sites in which IAS management protocols would be tested in different affected territories.
Outcome 2. Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy and regulatory frameworks.	Outcome 1.1, and especially 2.1, were designed and implemented with a view to establishing regulatory frameworks and public policies for managing IAS considered a threat to the conservation of biodiversity.
Outcome 3. Improved management frameworks to prevent, control and manage invasive alien species	The project objectives, components and outcomes were conceived so that, as a whole, they would contribute to improving IAS management and governance in Argentina.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

Finding 2. The project's design and execution are consistent with five of the six objectives of sub-pillar 1.4, National Strategy for Biological Diversity, reflecting article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity ratified by the Argentine State, and the Aichi goals included in its Strategic Plan.

53. The key agents and the documentation consulted confirm that the project's design and implementation have been relevant to strengthening and developing insufficient or non-existent national public policies, regulations and strategies at the time of its formulation, and that it was also aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity signed by the Argentine State.
54. The National Strategy for Biological Diversity was conceived as "a permanent State policy that the Argentine Republic establishes for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use and the fair and equitable distribution of its benefits" (*Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible*, 2017a). Although it was prepared at the beginning of the project, the evaluation team deems it advisable to highlight the consistency and strategic validity -and influence- thereof throughout the project's implementation cycle.
55. The first pillar of this instrument, Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use, includes a sub-pillar 4 on Prevention, control and oversight of related alien species, whose specific objectives reflect the intervention rationale designed and implemented by the project.
56. Full strategic relevance: it must be noted that six of the seven intended objectives of the National Strategy for Biological Diversity are included in the formulation, as well as the processes promoted and outcomes intended and achieved by the evaluated project (Table 6).

Table 6. Project alignment with the National Biodiversity Strategy

Pillar 1. Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	
Sub-pillar 1.4. Prevention, control and oversight of related alien species	
Specific Objectives	Project Alignment
SO.1 Develop a strengthened governance framework across the country allowing for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.	This objective of the National Biodiversity Strategy is the same as the project's Global Environmental Objective.
SO.2 Strengthen institutional capacities for IAS management, at the national and provincial levels.	Capacity-building cuts across all the project's designed and executed outcomes.
SO.3 Strengthen the regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms that support the application of the ENEEL.	Outcome 2.1, national and provincial legal, regulatory and financing frameworks harmonized (...) which fully reflects this objective.
SO.4 Validate and implement protocols for managing prioritized IAS in taxa and ecosystems included in the ENEEL.	In its formulation the project included the design and testing of protocols for managing IAS (Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2).
SO.5 Develop a pilot programme for the eradication of the American beaver, in the province of Tierra del Fuego, based on IAS governance.	Outcomes 4.1 and 4.2 were pilot programmes designed and fully implemented in Tierra del Fuego for managing the American beaver.
SO.6 Develop programmes to eradicate alien species, particularly those that can have irreversible impacts on the species deemed to be extremely endemic.	The project envisaged the implementation of pilot initiatives (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2) targeted to IAS management.
SO.7 Before starting up the plans to repopulate wild species, it is necessary to ensure, based on reliable scientific information, the effective historical presence of the species in the same habitat that is being repopulated.	The project did not consider in its implementation, those actions targeted to introducing wild species.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

57. With regard to the international commitments undertaken by the State and to account for the Convention on Biological Diversity (UN, 1992) and the Aichi targets (CBD, undated) included in the Strategic Plan for Biological Diversity 2011-2020 (CBD, 2010), the project, in all its components, is most pertinent: it meets the provisions of Article 8, paragraph h) "...control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species", as established in the agreement; and it, moreover, entails a significant contribution to the fulfillment of Aichi target 9: "By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment".

Finding 3. The implementation of activities contributed to enhancing the strategic relevance of the outputs, outcomes and objectives designed during the project's formulation stage.

58. As will be further explored in Section 4.2 on effectiveness and progress made in achieving the intended impacts, the project's execution provided spaces for awareness-raising, sensitization, and training of different State agents and other stakeholders, placed the problem of IAS on the provincial agendas, promoted regulations and strategies, made knowledge available and provided visibility to the topic by disseminating different communication outputs. Actions that, *inter alia*, enabled the implementation of activities and

the obtainment of outcomes to be increasingly understood as relevant for the country in general, and particularly for the intervention territories.

Finding 4. The project is highly consistent with the needs of those communities that use ecosystem services provided by the biodiversity threatened by IAS.

59. Based on the premise that IAS are a threat to the conservation of biodiversity, that they jeopardize the ecosystem services that it provides and can generate negative cultural, economic, productive and social impacts (Matthews & Brand, 2005; Cerda et al. al., 2017), creating enabling institutional conditions for effective IAS management would be consistent with the needs of the communities that inhabit territories affected by biological invasions.

4.2 Effectiveness and progress made in achieving the intended impacts.

Question 2. What outcomes, intended and unintended, has the project achieved? To what extent did these outcomes contribute to progress towards achieving the objectives and intended impacts of the project? What achievements, outcomes and effects have been achieved within each component?

Finding 5. The Argentine State is well prepared to face the challenge of IAS management. The execution of project activities, the obtainment of outputs and the achievement of outcomes contributed decisively to an institutional and regulatory strengthening that provides the State with instruments and capacities to manage the effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

60. The global environmental objective of the project was "to strengthen the governance framework across the country to allow for an effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of Invasive Alien Species (IAS)".
61. The evaluation confirms that the execution of actions, the development of outputs and fulfillment of a large part of its indicators (Appendix 4. Results Matrix) translated into a significant contribution towards achieving this objective. This was expressed in institutional and regulatory strengthening that provides the State with instruments and capacities to manage the effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

Finding 6. The project's contribution to enhancing the socio-economic benefits stemming from the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity resulting from the effective management of IAS will be subject to the materialization of intermediate conditions and the realization of certain assumptions.

62. The development objective "to reinforce the current and future socio-economic benefits stemming from conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity, including natural resources and ecosystem-based services, by appropriately managing the challenge of biological invasions" is, according to the evaluation, the long-term impact sought by the project.
63. In this regard, there are no expectations that the effects described in its formulation be achieved by mere execution and during the project's implementation. The initiative has been able to create enabling conditions allowing progress to be made towards achieving this objective.

64. A substantive contribution to the path of change towards the intended impact will depend, to a large extent, on the materialization of the assumptions and intermediate conditions identified by the evaluation team and set forth in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change presented in Section 1.3.

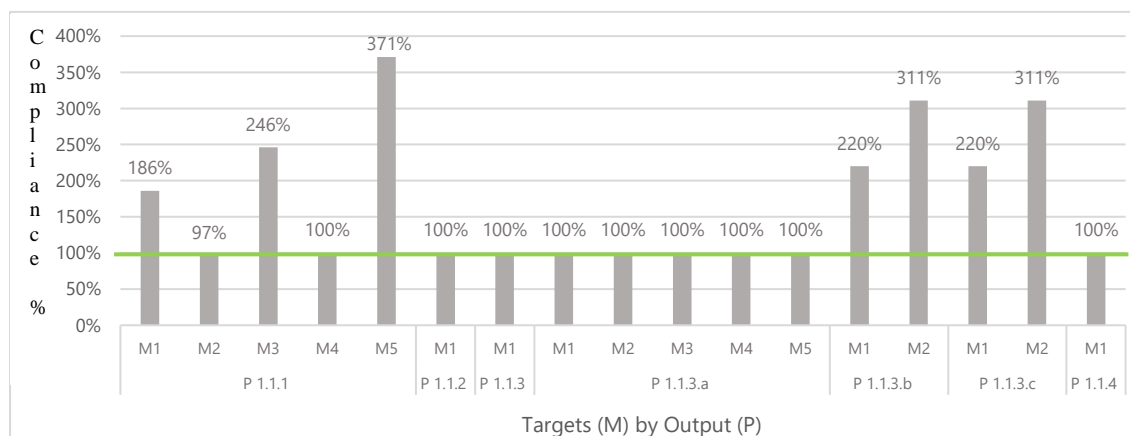
4.2.1 Components and outcomes³

4.2.1.1 Component 1. Strengthening institutional capacities at the national and provincial levels for IAS management.

Finding 7. As a direct result of project execution, public institutions in Argentina have been strengthened: information has been generated, collected and systematized; high-quality systems, protocols, strategies and regulatory proposals were developed; and a successful project communication strategy was rolled out generating lessons learned for the design of an ENEEI strategy.

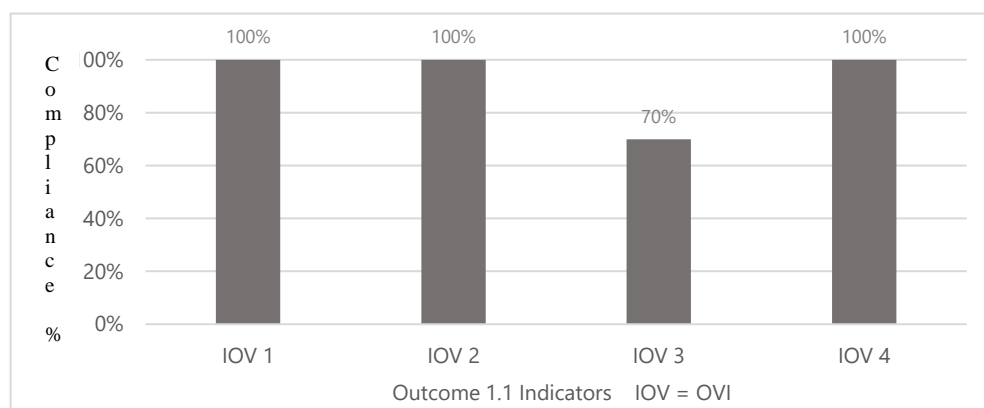
65. Component 1 achieved and in some cases far exceeded the output targets and outcome indicators —except for one as justified in Appendix 4— established during the project formulation stage (Figures 4 and 5; see Appendix 4 for detailed information).

Figure 4. Percentage of compliance with Component 1 output targets.



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

³ As will be reviewed in Section 4.4.1, the formulation of some of the outcomes presents design issues; The logical framework construction methodology deems results to be the direct changes that a project will bring about as a result of the execution of activities and the obtainment of outputs. In this case, the assessment of effectiveness - and of progress made towards achieving the intended effects- will be carried out, besides an analysis concerning achievement of outputs and indicators, based on the changes actually achieved and their contribution to the project's objectives, considering an interpretation of the results framework and its ToC. Additionally, the degree of compliance with the indicators presented in the graphs are those updated in the reports and in the project interviews. Many of them do not have an associated verification source. Details of this and other observations can be found in Appendix 4 and in Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.4.

Figure 5. Percentage of compliance with Component 1 outcome indicators

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

66. The high and effective level of technical execution was expressed in a substantial strengthening of the Argentine public institutional framework. The processes initiated and the outputs achieved that contributed to achieving this effect are, in summary, the following: the collection and systematization of compiled information on IAS; the SNIEEI; the development of technical and functional capacities; the design of high-quality systems, protocols, strategies and regulatory proposals; and the implementation of a successful project communication strategy that generated lessons learned for the design of a specific ENEEI strategy. Each of these achievements is detailed below.

National Information System of Invasive Alien Species

67. The project's execution led to consolidating, systematizing and updating information on IAS; 776 taxa, 9,024 sites of occurrence, 591 scientists were integrated into the system, and 121 projects were registered.

68. The work carried out enabled enriching and updating the database that, since 2006, has been managed by the Conservation and Management Studies Group (GEKKO), Department of Biology, Biochemistry and Pharmacy of the *Universidad Nacional del Sur*, Argentina.

69. With these improvements, the so-called SNIEEI was consolidated, understood as a virtual storage and consultation space on IAS present in Argentina, with research projects developed, publications made and collaborators and data providers identified.

70. The evaluation team verified that the web page is up to date, that it is of high quality and that it is easy to understand for users not familiar with IAS.

71. One of the actions that the project left pending was the transfer -underway- of the SNIEEI from the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* to the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, which is being carried out with specialized support from the company Space Sur.

72. The evaluation team believes that for this process to be successful and sustainable, it would be advisable to analyze and, if necessary, strengthen the institutional, technical, financial and IT capacities of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, together with considering formal coordination and long-term cooperation mechanisms with the

Universidad Nacional del Sur university, other academic entities and researchers interested in the matter.

Designing protocols, strategies and standards

73. Within the execution of Component 1, a set of systems, protocols, regulations and strategies were designed and approved (see Section 4.2., Component 2) that decisively contributed to strengthening IAS management capacity in Argentina.
74. The main achievements identified by the evaluation team and the key agents are the preparation and ratification by the State of the ENEEI and the ENEEI Communication and Public Awareness Strategy (ECCP, in its Spanish acronym).
75. These instruments are a milestone in the conservation of biodiversity threatened by IAS since, as stated by these strategies, "they will guide the design, implementation and adjustment of public policies aimed at addressing the problem of biological invasions and their impact on biodiversity" (ENNEI). Furthermore, they are a contribution to strengthening capacities for an inter-institutional and inter-jurisdictional approach to the challenge of communication on invasive alien species (ECCP).
76. It should be noted that both documents were prepared collaboratively with State institutions, civil society organizations and private organizations. They were nourished by information from previous experiences and particularly from the evidence and lessons learned from the implementation of the pilot initiatives (see Section 4.2., Component 3) and the execution of the project overall.

Protocols, systems and regulations -besides the strategies- were generated to strengthen and provide institutional support to IAS management in the country. The following is worth highlighting: preparation of the official list of IAS; design of systems and protocols for early detection and immediate action in 33 protected areas; preparation, adjustment and validation of risk analysis systems for importing plants, terrestrial vertebrates and fish; and the hierarchical list of the main introduction vectors and dispersal routes of IAS in the country, among others.

Communications

77. The project's communication strategy has been highly appreciated by the different key agents consulted. The evaluation team ratifies this perception deeming this aspect as core to the roll-out of the different scheduled actions; communications served the purpose of and played a fundamental role in awareness-raising, dissemination, presence in the media, coordination and education, underpinning the project's development overall and decisively contributing to rolling out pilot initiatives, in particular.
78. The implementation of the communication strategy, among other contributions, provided the project with communication outputs (brochures, banners, posters, infographics, educational material, audiovisuals, etc.). Awareness-raising spaces for journalists and environmental communicators were also set up and a perception study was carried out to learn about the impact of communication on the population at large, understanding the relationship between knowledge and interest as a driving force for how IAS are perceived, identifying the main ideas, giving rise to recommendations for outlining messages, among other findings that became fundamental inputs for drafting the ECCP.

Capacity-building

79. The FAO-OED Capacity Development Evaluation Framework (FAO, 2019a) establishes three capacity-building dimensions: individuals, organizations and enabling environments. The last two have already been reviewed above and will also be examined within the following components (creation of enabling regulatory environments, development of information systems, outlining of strategies, design of protocols, establishment of governance frameworks, among others). This part of the report will focus on the individual dimension mentioned above.
80. The individual capacities strengthened by the project were both functional and technical as per the classification presented by FAO (FAO, 2010),
81. The former, deemed to be the necessary capacities to bring about and uphold changes over time, were developed in specific training spaces (for instance, training for the use of SNEII) and above all in the collaborative work for building the different project outputs, covering the four key areas proposed by FAO, thus strengthening the capacity to formulate policies, carry out reforms and set forth legislative proposals; generate, access and exchange information and knowledge; set up partnerships and collaboration networks; and manage plans and strategies.
82. For the second set of individual capacities -the technical ones- the project promoted training processes on several topics, with multi-stakeholders and in different territories, aware of the fact that State officials and people working for private institutions, and civil society require tools to adequately face the challenge of IAS management.
83. Among the training processes it is worth highlighting communications on IAS, border control, techniques for early detection and immediate action, and invasion prevention tools. In addition, but within other components, people were trained in biosecurity and reinvasion monitoring, as well as in privet and beaver control protocols, and awareness-raising and dissemination of regulations on IAS for the Judiciary and Public Ministries, among other topics.
84. A total number of approximately 3,000 people were trained by participating in over 150 sessions. According to key agents consulted by the evaluation team, training people was essential to implement certain actions, improve ownership of the project, and generate favorable conditions to enable continuity of the processes promoted once the initiative comes to an end.

Finding 8. The project's execution led to strengthening and retrieving lessons learned from IAS management initiatives that were already underway at the time of the project's start-up.

85. The project supported tests that were carried out, retrieved lessons learned, and strengthened IAS management initiatives that were already underway in different provinces.
86. Within this context, coordination was established with national parks, provincial governments and non-governmental institutions (*Aves Argentinas* and *Ambiente Sur*) to develop specific initiatives that will allow learning about and strengthening wild boar management strategies in the Provinces of Entre Ríos, Buenos Aires and Rio Negro; of the American Mink in the Patagonia and Perito Moreno National Parks and of the rainbow trout in the Plateau of Lake

Strobel. These last two are considered a threat to the survival of endangered and critically endangered species such as the hooded grebe, the moorhen and the torrent duck.

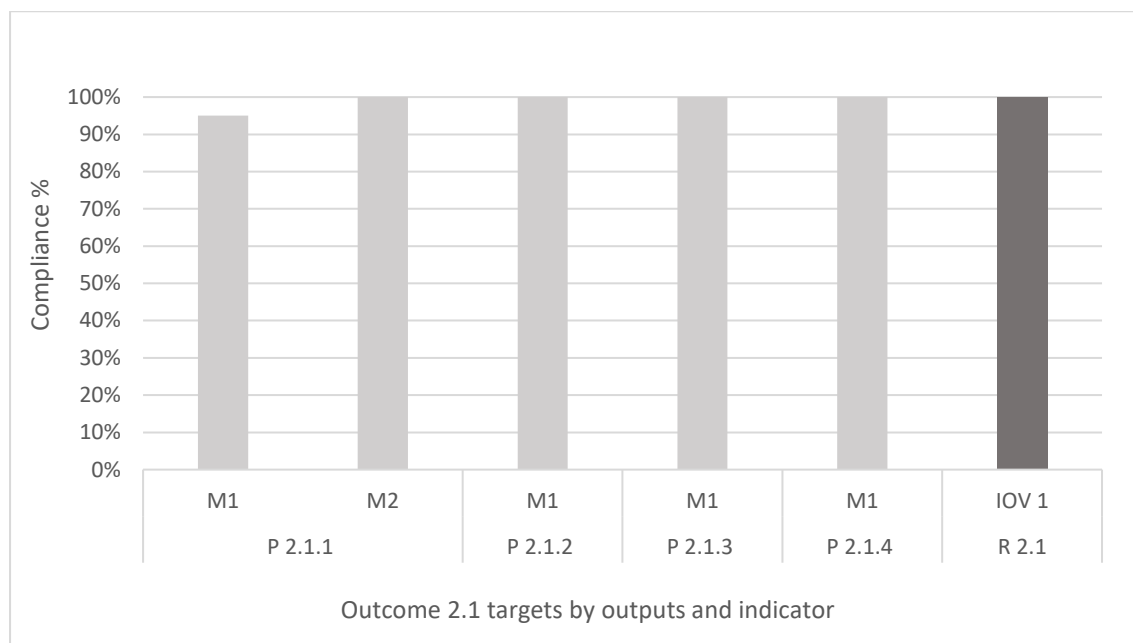
87. Actions carried out led to generating knowledge, implementing management mechanisms and generating synergies among different institutions. The main achievements are summarized below:
 - i. Rainbow trout. Lessons were learned about salmonid eradication procedures and subsequent restoration on the Laguna Islet and other smaller adjacent islands.
 - ii. American mink. Initiatives led to learning about the effectiveness of different traps, experimenting with the search technique using trained dogs; preparing a survey and a management strategy; and coordinating and entering into agreements with the National Parks Administration, the Municipality of Chaltén, the Province of Santa Cruz and the Provincial Agrarian Council (Santa Cruz) to develop joint actions to control the American mink.
 - iii. Wild boar. Research was carried out showing that the wild boar value chain is not viable under current conditions; management proposals were outlined and territories for their enforcement were determined; and the National Wild Boar Management Plan was prepared.
88. Having consulted with key agents concerning the inclusion of these actions in Component 1 instead of in Component 3 (pilot initiatives) because at first sight it would seem more logical, they argued that specific tests were carried out and support was provided to initiatives already underway.

4.2.1.2 Component 2. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms in support of the implementation of the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEI)

Finding 9. As a result of project execution, legal and regulatory frameworks were designed and adopted and financing mechanisms for ENEEI were identified; these are outputs that foster an enabling prescriptive institutional scenario for managing the effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

89. The Component 2 output indicators and the outcome indicator were satisfactorily covered (Figure 6; see Appendix 4 for detailed information). Only one output target (T1, output 2.1.1) is not 100% compliant, but is very close to being compliant (97%). This is not important for evaluation purposes as it does not affect the development of the committed outputs.

Figure 6. Percentage of compliance with Component 2 output targets and outcome indicators



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

90. The development of this component achieved and far exceeded its intended purpose: to strengthen the regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms that support the application of the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL).
91. To move towards this objective, different actions were carried out. The following are worth highlighting: a study on legal issues that led to a complete systematization of existing regulations and case law at the federal, provincial and international levels and to the preparation of a list of regulations, including administrative procedures and activities carried out by agencies responsible for border control. These are important achievements considering the dispersion and limited availability of information in the different institutions and at the different scales of the study.
92. Furthermore, and as already mentioned, capacities and awareness-raising on IAS were developed within the Judiciary, and a proposal for a Law on minimum standards was drafted but has not yet been passed.
93. Side-by-side and in coordination with this legal analysis, research was carried out on the costs of implementing the ENEEL and a detailed description was made of the mechanisms available to ensure its financing and continuity over time.
94. This research, together with the work and the achievements accomplished by implementing all components brought about virtuous consequences for the IAS institutional and regulatory scenarios, significantly supporting and managing an effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.
95. The public policy instruments designed within the framework of the project that managed to be anchored in Argentina's State institutions are the following:

Evaluation Outcomes

- i. Resolution 211/2022. Approval of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEEL) and the related Communications and Awareness-Raising Strategy (ECCP) (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2022).
 - ii. Resolution E 151/2017. The National Strategy on Biodiversity and Plan of Action 2016-2020 adopted, including the project's strategy as a part of its action pillars (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2017b).
 - iii. Resolution 4/19. Protocol for analyzing the risks of terrestrial vertebrates and fish (imports) (Environmental Policy for Natural Resources Secretariat, 2019a).
 - iv. Resolution 5/19. Protocol for analyzing the risk of alien plants (potential invasive species) (Environmental Policy for Natural Resources Secretariat, 2019b).
 - v. Resolution 283/20. Declaration of the American bullfrog as a harmful species for biodiversity (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2020a).
 - vi. Resolution 417/2020. Declaration of the Giant African Snail as a harmful species for biodiversity. (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2020b).
 - vii. Resolution 13/2021. Setting up the Inter-Institutional and Inter-Jurisdictional Technical Committee (Environmental Policy for Natural Resources Secretariat, 2021).
 - viii. Resolution 109/2021. Classification of species; control introduction and inter-jurisdictional movement; list of species (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2021).
 - ix. MERCOSUR Resolution 38/2019. Guidelines for preparing a plan to prevent, monitor, control and mitigate Invasive Alien Species (MERCOSUR, 2019).
 - x. Resolution 474/2020. Declaration of the European Rabbit as a harmful species for biodiversity and production activities (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2020c).
 - xi. Daireaux Municipal Ordinance 2262/18. Declares of interest those inter-institutional and inter-jurisdictional public policies targeted to facing the challenge of biological invasions (Daireaux Town Council, 2018).
 - xii. Province of Buenos Aires Decree No. 279 of 27 March 2018. Declares the red-bellied tree squirrel and other species as harmful and subject to hunting and the use of pesticides (Province of Buenos Aires Government, 2018).
96. Interviewees agreed that progress made in the regulatory field and the approval of the ENEEL and ECCP are unprecedented in Argentina, and the significant volume of ratified instruments shows how highly efficient the project was and that, in addition, these are highly relevant to IAS management in the country.
97. Once a robust regulatory framework such as the one presented has been consolidated, the challenge is to implement it at the federal and provincial levels. To that end, it will be essential to start with the meetings of the Inter-institutional and Inter-jurisdictional Technical Committee; have plans and strategies aligned with the ENEEL; and seek mechanisms to ensure the institutional capacity -financial, human, and technical resources- to satisfactorily face this challenge.

4.2.1.3 Component 3. Validation and implementation of protocols for controlling IAS prioritized by taxonomy categories and ecosystems, included in the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL)

Finding 10. The pilot initiatives fulfilled their main purpose: testing management practices, methodologies and protocols, generating knowledge, placing the issue on the public agenda, building capacities and raising awareness among the different stakeholders.

Finding 11. The implemented pilots have flaws in the design and measurement of coverage targets or in the quantifiable scope of their implementation, in the monitoring of effects and in the generation of evidence on the environmental, social, productive and economic benefits that an adequate management of each of the IAS included in the initiatives would have for the participating communities.

98. The evaluation team believes the pilot initiatives should fulfill a two-fold function: a. contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of landscapes in the territories in which they are carried out; and b. generate knowledge, extract good practices, retrieve lessons learned from the processes and assess the effects stemming from the practices, methodologies and protocols, all with the purpose of achieving evidence-based systematization, promotion of and advocacy for public policies, instruments and tools that will allow their autonomous replication and scalability in the countries in which they are implemented.
99. Of the two proposed functions, the latter has provided outstanding outcomes: the pilot initiatives were essential to test protocols and IAS management techniques, produce and manage scientific knowledge, learning about processes, and above all, generate inputs for the preparation of the ENEEL, its associated ECCP and the other regulatory instruments designed.
100. Furthermore, execution of the pilot initiatives was essential to promote enabling institutional and social environments: within the framework of their implementation, technical and functional capacities were developed for State officials at all levels and from different sectors (health, education, agriculture, environment, etc.). Through communicational roll-out, the IAS issue was placed on the public agenda and different audiences were duly sensitized. Additionally, tools and equipment for IAS control and monitoring were provided to institutions that lacked them.
101. Each of the pilot initiatives accomplished remarkable achievements and effects (see Table 7 on the next page), among others, the following are worth highlighting: preparation of provincial strategies for IAS management in Mendoza and Jujuy (pilots for privet, *Didymus* algae and tamarisk); scalability of the pilot on early detection in ports and surrounding areas, autonomously replicating the experience of the project at four ports in all sea and river ports across the country (14) through the research initiative "Environmental security and dynamic monitoring: towards the protection of Argentine ports against biological invasions"; the contribution made for the inclusion of the bullfrog and red-bellied tree squirrel in the official list of IAS and their declaration as harmful species; and the generation and integration of lessons learned for mainstreaming the indigenous peoples' perspective in the ENEEL (privet pilot).

Table 7. Main achievements of the pilot initiatives

Pilot initiatives	Main achievements
Red-bellied tree squirrel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted inclusion in the official IAS list • Officials and local leaders have management and communication tools • Creation of the Early Detection Network • Design of control protocol (SENASA) • Establishment of voluntary codes of conduct (trade and owners) • Guidelines for outlining a plan of action
Giant African Snail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building at SENASA, the Coast Guard (PNA), Border Patrol and Airport Security Police (PSA) • Design and implementation of collection and management protocols • Design of early detection and warning system • Promoted resolution 417/2020 • Promoted inclusion in the official IAS list • Knowledge management: collaboration at international meeting held in the Dominican Republic
American bullfrog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of population densities • Identification of chorus activity and larvae patterns • Geo-referenced cadaster and situation of bullfrog farms (71 all told) • Recommendations for management, minimum actions and bio-security
Didymo Algae	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS-based risk assessment related to expansion • 10 cleaning facilities • The province of Mendoza adopted ECCP-ENEEI recommendations and is completing development of its own IAS management plan • Tierra del Fuego includes this problem in seasonal fishing permits
Early detection at ports and in surrounding areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation, validation and adoption of protocols • Preparation of a list of species and identification of taxonomic groups • Scalability: PNA designed and adopted a research project to analyze maritime traffic and its linkage to introduction of IAS at all ports across the country replicating pilot strategies. • Design of an early warning and action system • Identification of a new species • Knowledge management: Participation in conferences and scientific publications
Tamarisk or salt cedar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of a baseline on the status, condition and distribution • Outlining and validation of protocols • Control calculation by hectare • 180 ha cleared • Tools for monitoring restoration
Glossy privet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of control action protocols • Building of nurseries (2,000 plants) • Lessons learned for mainstreaming the indigenous peoples' perspective in the ENEEI • Promotion of added value options for privet waste: furniture and wood crafts • Based on the project's experience, the Province of Jujuy is preparing an IAS management strategy.

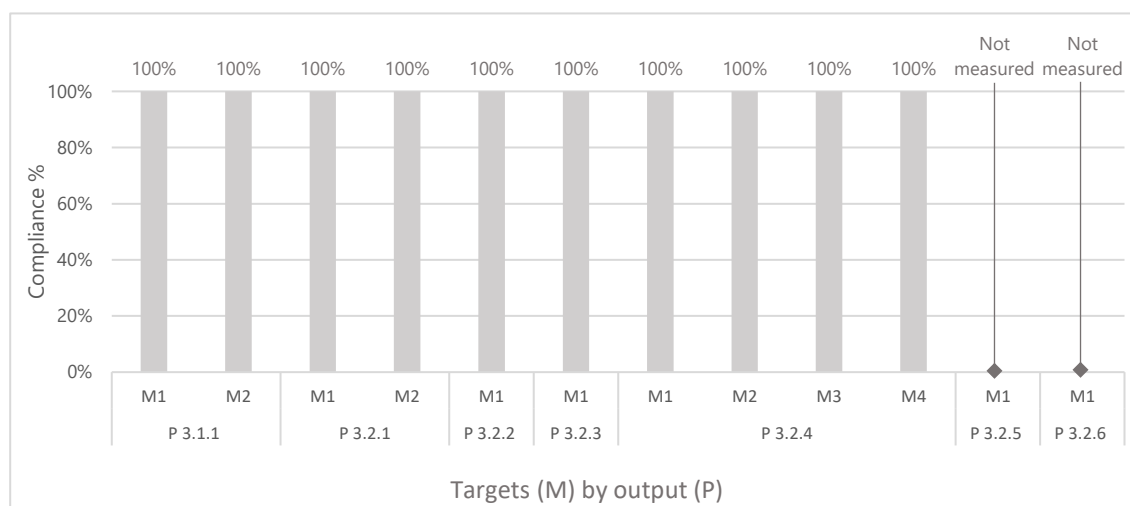


Communication, dissemination, awareness-raising, capacity-building and education cutting across all pilot initiatives.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

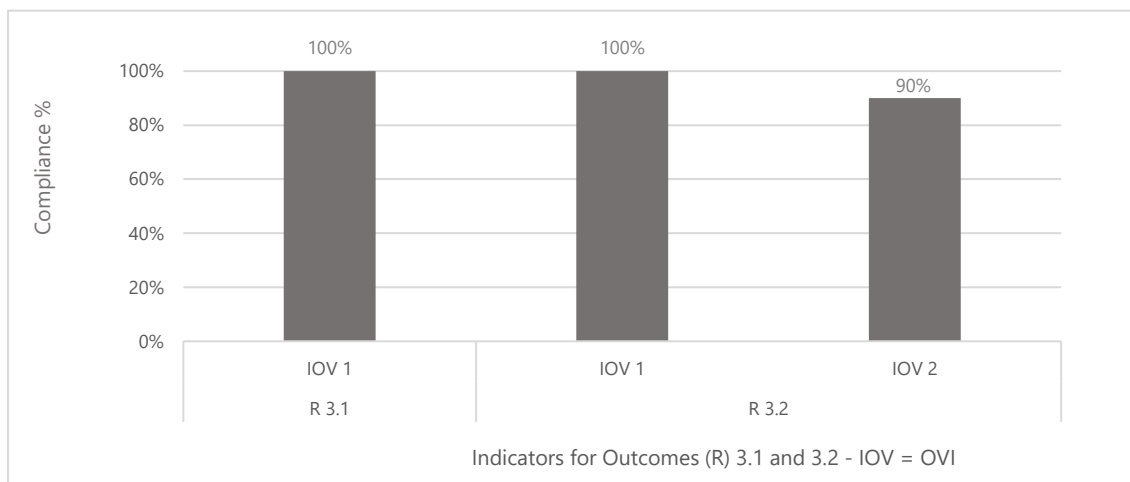
102. With regard to the output targets and outcome indicators, the evaluation team considers they were satisfactorily fulfilled. The outcome indicators reached a scope of 100% (2) and 90% (1), while there is full compliance with almost all of the output targets. The exceptions are Target 1, Output 3.2.5 "Density and distribution of snails reduced by at least 25% compared to the baseline to be established at pilot programme start-up, applying control, eradication and communication measures" and Target 1, Output 3.2.6 "At least 20 hectares under glossy privet control, resulting in a reduction of at least 50% in the density of glossy privet and assisted restoration with at least 1,500 native plants, planted with community and gender participation approach".
103. Key agents argued there were design issues with the target rather than ineffective compliance. The evaluation team agrees with the above and points to the need of timely identifying and correcting deficiencies in the design of targets and indicators (see Section 4.4 Factors affecting project performance).

Figure 7. Percentage of compliance with Component 3 output targets.



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

Figure 8. Percentage of compliance with Component 3 outcome indicators.



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

104. It must be pointed out that no indicators were formulated to account for the social, productive and economic co-benefits that IAS management would bring about for the communities. Having evidence in this regard would have enriched the possibilities of advocating for the adoption of practices in the private and community sectors, as well as of defining public policy instruments for the future.

4.2.1.4 Component 4. Developing a Pilot Programme to eradicate American Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) from Tierra del Fuego Province

Finding 12. As a result of the implementation of eight pilot areas in the Province of Tierra del Fuego, enough knowledge was generated and the necessary lessons were retrieved, leading to designing an evidence-based "Provincial Plan for Reclaiming Environments affected by beavers" that allows moving towards an effective control of beavers and the recovery of biodiversity.

105. Designing and implementing a "Provincial Plan for Reclaiming Environments affected by Beavers" is the challenge ahead for the Ministry of Production and Environment of Tierra del Fuego and the project.

106. Key informants affirm that the pilot initiative to eradicate American beavers in the province, plus other previous initiatives, have provided important inputs and enough lessons learned so that, based on the evidence of these initiatives, a robust Plan for effectively controlling beavers and recovering biodiversity can be prepared.

107. The lessons retrieved are of a different kind and on different subject matters, as summarized below:

- i. Possibility of eradication. The American beaver may be eradicated: the practices implemented in the eight pilot areas rendered good results, managing to eradicate - temporarily- the presence of American beavers in the area: 1,178 beavers were removed, and at least 75,000 ha were cleared, as well as over 600 km of watercourses.

- ii. The importance of biosecurity measures: the ex-post studies on the pilot's implementation show a repopulation in 100% of the areas, and that eradication requires the establishment of permanent measures aimed at avoiding reinvasions.
- iii. Efficacy of the tested traps: different traps were tested (snap, snare and non-locking traps). A total number of 23,878 traps were placed and their resulting average efficacy was 5%.
- iv. Research: different institutions and academicians carried out or are carrying out research projects in coordination with the pilot initiative. These initiatives have contributed or will contribute knowledge about: water quality and ichthyofauna in Tierra del Fuego streams before and after the removal of beaver dams; tree damage prevented by beaver eradication; the recovery of soil and vegetation in impacted sites; the application of molecular tools to control eradication; outlining objective criteria to declare the eradication of beavers from intervened areas; and the demographic characteristics of the American beaver.
- v. The usefulness of having information registration protocols and management systems: keeping a georeferenced, digital and standardized record of catches, as well as monitoring and other actions, improve the quality and fidelity of data, as well as its systematization and analysis.
- vi. Along this line, the project developed data collection protocols and installed a storage, processing, systematization and visualization system for georeferenced data in the province.
- vii. Estimating damages, eradication costs and time frames: the approximate cost of eradicating beavers in the province was estimated at USD 15,000,000 over 15 years. While the economic damages generated by their presence amounts to USD 60,000,000.
- viii. Coordination and governance: as to long-term management strategies -control or eradication- there is no consensus in the scientific community, civil society, state agencies, and among other stakeholders. The evaluation team believes that it is essential to reach agreements and support the decision that is made, whichever it may be. Managing this species will require the participation and commitment of all stakeholders.
- ix. Logistics, budgetary, and human efforts: beaver management calls for logistics, budgetary, and human resource efforts that were not ensured at the time of the evaluation. To implement the Plan, it will be necessary to strengthen existing capacities and seek financing options.
- x. The importance of political-institutional commitment: promoting the management of beavers -and any IAS- is ultimately a political decision that entails performance risks as perceived within the community and even in the Judiciary. The leadership and commitment of the Environment Secretariat of the Province of Tierra del Fuego and the inclusion of different stakeholders in the project's governance was essential for implementing the pilot initiative.

Finding 13. Within the framework of the execution of the GEF projects in Argentina and Chile, bi-national instances for reflection and exchange of experiences were set up, which have given rise to specific agreements and led to joint work and monitoring instances.

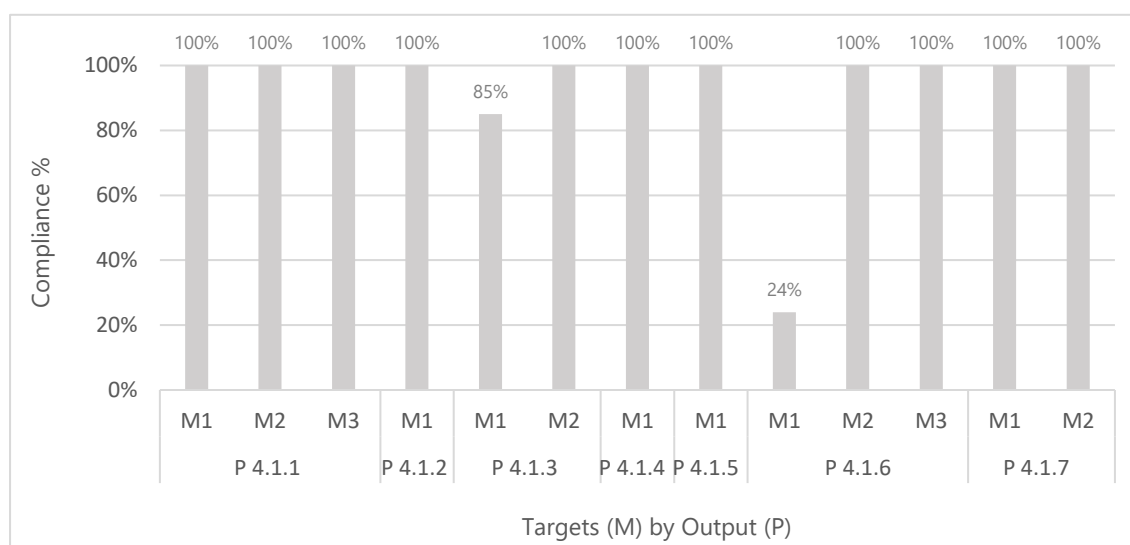
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108. The bi-national work of the project coincided with the second phase of implementation of the *Strategic Plan of the beaver eradication project in southern Patagonia* agreed upon between Chile and Argentina in 2011 (Funes, Minvielle, Saavedra and Schiavini, 2011).
109. The simultaneous execution of GEF projects related to beaver management in both countries created an enabling context to roll out the actions that were envisaged in said plan.
110. Within this context, four bi-national workshops were held and progress was made in setting up four working groups on governance; information and experience; communication; and information management that held at least 14 meetings with the participation of 81 people all told.
111. According to information collected from key agents, the participation in the bi-national workshops and the reviewed secondary information, as well as the work carried out by the committees that had been set up resulted in conclusions and recommendations to improve the possibilities of effective beaver management at the national and bi-national levels.
112. It was concluded that communications are essential for the success of management strategies; that eradication is technically possible, economically viable and impossible in the short term; that there is sufficient, quality and replicable information; and that bi-national work is crucial for the success of control and eradication strategies.
113. The following recommendations were put forward: to design more agile management mechanisms; more actively involve the private sector; standardize institutional positions; establish common protocols for information collection and processing, avoid academic ownership of data, set up use-related authorization mechanisms and establish the obligation to share them; and set up teams specialized in IAS management, among other recommendations.
114. At the bi-national workshops, besides sharing the experience of each country, agreements were reached to set up a bi-national working and follow-up group made up of the GEF Project Technical Committee (Chile) and the Inter-institutional Committee for governance of the American beaver eradication pilot programme (Argentina); validate a protocol for recording information on beaver management based on removals; appoint national reference leaders; and develop a coordinated communication and education strategy between the two countries.
115. For key agents from both countries, it is essential to continue with bi-national coordination and materialize the design and implementation of a new binational plan or programme for beaver management (Indicator 1, Outcome 4.2) that includes lessons learned and knowledge arising from the implementation of the GEF initiatives in Chile and Argentina.
116. In this regard, the project fulfilled its mission but formalizing a bi-national plan will call for the support of ministerial authorities and high-level dialogue forums to build the necessary consensus. FAO as coordinator and facilitator and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development as the country authority could play a relevant role in this regard.

Finding 14. Although the beaver pilot initiative achieved all the outputs spelled out in the PRODOC, contributed substantially to capacity-building and the generation of knowledge, the fulfillment of outcome indicators was not entirely satisfactory.

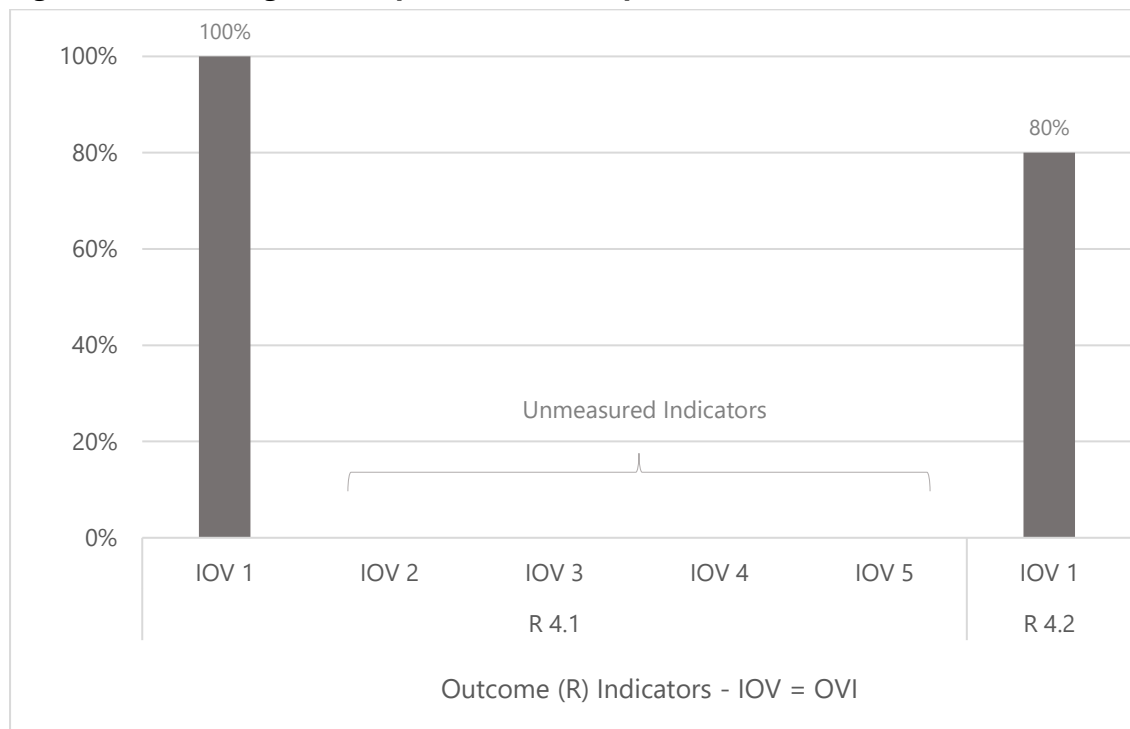
117. Although the pilot initiative in Tierra del Fuego developed the envisaged outputs and its outcomes are considered satisfactory as per the evaluation team, there are significant shortcomings in the fulfillment of outcome indicators and in an output target (Figures 9 and 10; for additional information see Appendix 4).
118. Outcome indicators, objectively verifiable indicators (OVI): 2. Benthic microhabitats in basin watercourses freed from beavers recovered to similar conditions as those watercourses not affected by beavers; OVI 3. Less organic matter in the sediments of watercourse beds in the basins freed from beavers; OVI 4. Streams in the Mimica River area and its surroundings recover their structure to become salmon spawning beds again; and OVI 5. Assisted recovery of lenga trees (*Nothofagus pumilio*), cherry trees and Antarctic beeches (*Nothofagus Antarctica*) in progress in areas affected but not flooded by beavers – No compliance therewith.
119. The foregoing does not mean that the environmental effects as a result of beaver eradication are null and that these indicators have not been achieved. The problem was that, due to logistic complications, delays in procurement of equipment, supplies and tools, and poor technical-financial planning, these were not finally measured.
120. For the evaluation team, not having this evidence diminishes the demonstrative value of the pilot initiatives regarding the environmental benefits that beaver eradication can bring about in the short and medium term.

Figure 9. Percentage of compliance with Component 4 output targets



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

Figure 10. Percentage of compliance with Component 4 outcome indicators

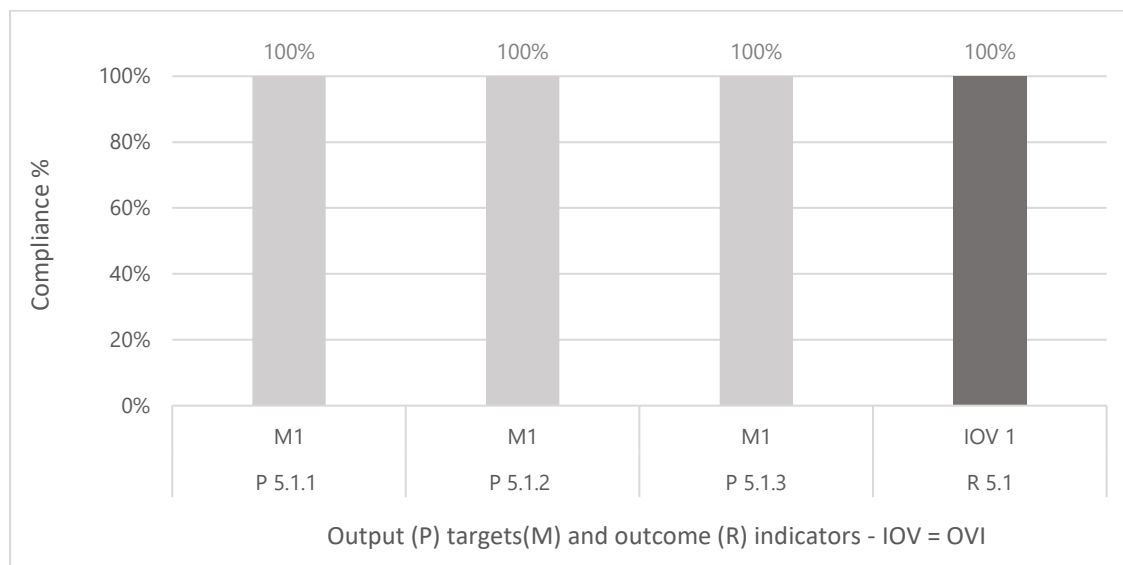


Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

4.2.1.5 Component 5. Project monitoring and evaluation and information dissemination

Finding 15. The project fulfilled Component 5 targets and indicators. However, there were serious flaws in the design and implementation of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system.

121. As can be seen in Figure 11, Component 5 met 100% of all its targets and indicators. The evaluation team deems this situation does not account for a robust monitoring and evaluation system (Section 4.4 Factors affecting project performance, includes a more thorough analysis of the monitoring and evaluation system rolled out by the initiative).

Figure 11. Percentage of compliance with Component 5 output targets and outcome indicators

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

4.3 Efficiency

Question 3. Have the implementation modalities, the institutional structure, the available financial, technical, programmatic and operational resources and procedures contributed to or hindered achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?

Finding 16. The financial resources provided by GEF (USD 3.8 million) were sufficient to carry out the activities and achieve the good-quality outputs pledged in the PRODOC.

122. The project had sufficient financial resources to implement with quality the different strategies considered in its design. The GEF grant (USD 3,870,000) allowed a team of high technical quality to be set up, and also to ensure the appropriate equipment and infrastructure was available to the project, providing resources to cover the operating expenses necessary to implement the different activities.

Finding 17. The project's financial execution experienced delays that resulted in two justified extensions due to the existence of a remaining budget (USD 1,030,003 and USD 634,407 in 2019 and 2021, respectively). The evaluation team deems the reasons accounting for this budget under-execution are: the initial adjustments, the exchange rate, risk management associated with changes in government and the health emergency caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

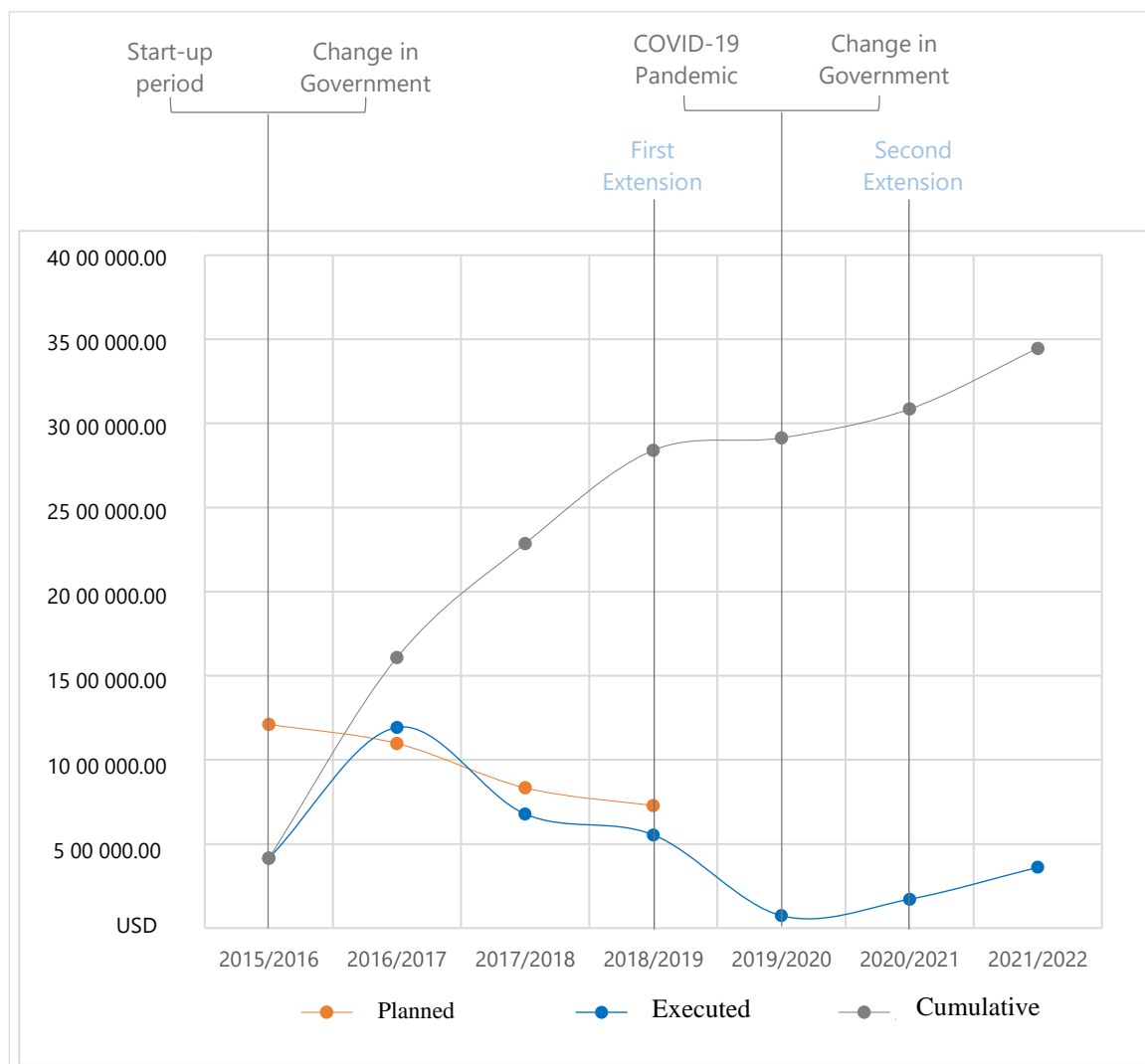
123. The project formally started up in July 2015. The financial planning scheduled for June 2016 was 1.2 million dollars. However, it can be seen that as at that date, only approximately 30% of the budget had been disbursed i.e., USD 400,000 (Figure 12).

124. The initial delay could be accounted for by two factors: firstly, by the initial start-up times of the technical teams; and secondly, because the transition associated with the change in government in December 2015 required time to renew the agreements and update the commitments with the executing partner (Figure 12).

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126. In the 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 periods, the gap between the budgeted and executed amounts was reduced considerably, with differences in one way or another of approximately 10%.
127. In 2019, the year scheduled for project completion, more than one million dollars still remained to be disbursed and activities and certain outputs committed in the PRODOC were still to be carried out. Given this scenario, a first two-year extension was requested.
128. After seven months (July 2019-March 2020), a health emergency was declared in Argentina due to COVID-19, with strong restrictions on mobility, limiting the possibilities of the project to carry out activities in the field, and thus significantly reducing execution costs.
129. In the month of December 2019, a newly elected National Government took office. This would entail a new period of organization and updating of the new government authorities in charge of the State's administration.
130. Besides these context conditions, there was the devaluation of the Argentine peso against the dollar. The exchange rate during the interval between project start-up and completion rose constantly and exponentially as from 2018. A situation that certainly improves the "performance" of the dollar against the national currency, lowering all operation costs calculated for the project.
131. As a result of these circumstances, during the first requested extension, the project was able to execute only 40% of the estimated amount (USD 400,000 approximately), leading the team, FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development to propose to GEF a second and last extension that finally allowed the project to be completed with 99% of the budget executed.

Figure 12. Expenditure evolution throughout the project's history

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

Finding 18. Adaptation to changes in the political context did not take place with the required agility; changes in the setting caused a delay in the project's technical and financial implementation.

132. The project went through two election periods and three government administrations. As mentioned in Finding 16, the new government officials taking office had to be updated on the project and had to renew the commitments taken on by the outgoing authorities and officials. These actions did not seem to have been agile enough, so they affected the planned time frames for the execution of activities.

133. Changes in government are normal and foreseeable in consolidated democracies such as that of Argentina. The actions that might be required to smoothly go through these processes of change in authorities could be planned in advance.

134. For the evaluation team, anticipating the facts through a good identification of the risks inherent in changes in the State's administration and designing a planned implementation of mitigation measures, could have alleviated the impact on the project's normal operation.

Finding 19. The organizational structure and assignment of responsibilities were sufficient and adequate for the project's execution. Nonetheless, to improve efficiency and effectiveness the team should have been strengthened from the early stages of implementation.

135. The project had an organizational structure and an assignment of responsibilities that, in light of the outcomes and outputs achieved, was enough and appropriate to cover the needs of the project's technical execution.
136. As will be seen in Section 4.4, the main weaknesses identified were in the project's monitoring and evaluation, as well as in its technical-financial management. These deficiencies were partly and belatedly covered by the inclusion in the team of a position profile to assist in coordination during the last year of implementation.
137. The evaluation team believes that for a project with such a big budget, territorial dispersion and number of activities as the one evaluated, it would have been appropriate to consider from the very beginning at least one full-time person in charge of monitoring and evaluation and one full-time administrative assistant.
138. Finally, it is worth noting what was stated by a large majority of the key agents consulted: that the team set up and the government executors are of high technical quality, have an outstanding and recognized track record in the professional, academic and government fields in the issues addressed by the project, besides having demonstrated a high degree of commitment and motivation to fulfill each of their responsibilities.

Finding 20. The procedures for hiring external services and procuring equipment required by FAO slowed down the technical implementation of some project activities.

139. FAO has standardized and demanding administrative procedures for its procurement and contracting, that the evaluation team considers an asset of the implementing agency.
140. However, this quality translated into a bureaucratic practice that slowed down the project's technical execution, since the implementation of some activities (especially those related to the pilot initiatives) were intensive as to procurement of goods and external services.
141. Potential delays due to administrative processes were not envisaged in the PRODOC, POAs, nor in the signed letters of agreement, affecting the timeliness and often forcing to postpone or even suspend some of the planned activities.

4.4 Factors affecting project performance

Question 4. What are the main factors that currently influence or have influenced project performance (design, implementation, execution, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, co-financing, and communication and knowledge management)?

4.4.1 Project design

Finding 21. The project's design has shortcomings in the vertical and horizontal rationale of its results matrix.

142. The project's vertical rationale (activities-outputs-outcomes-objectives) has consistency deficiencies at the outcome level. The formulation of most of the outcomes does not account for the contribution or direct changes that the project would bring about as a result of its activities and the achievement and use of the expected outputs.

143. All outcomes, with the exception of 2.1 "National and provincial legal, regulatory and financing frameworks are harmonized and contribute to the effective implementation of the ENEEI", are formulated as if they were general or long-term impact objectives and not as a direct project outcome. Good examples of the above are Outcome 1.1 "Increased effectiveness for protecting biodiversity, sensitive ecosystems, health and the economy at the national level by managing the IAS problem; and Outcome 4.1 "Native Forest and peat bog ecosystems under effective control of the American beavers in Tierra del Fuego and affected or endangered biodiversity in recovery".
144. For the horizontal rationale (indicators, sources of verification and assumptions), certain outcome indicators and output targets were identified that lacked SMART criteria, among which it is worth mentioning the following:
- i. They are not measurable or else the measurement instrument's associated verification source was not explicitly stated. For instance, Target 1, Output 3.2.5 "Density and distribution of snails reduced by at least 25% compared to the baseline to be established at pilot programme start-up, applying control, eradication and communication measures".
 - ii. They are outside the project's scope. For instance, Indicator 1, Outcome 4.2 "Bi-national mass beaver eradication programme in implementation within two to five years after completion of pilot programmes in each country".
 - iii. They are not specific. For instance, Target 4, Outcome 4.1 "Assisted recovery of lenga trees (*Nothofagus pumilio*), cherry trees and Antarctic beeches (*Nothofagus Antarctica*) in progress in areas affected but not flooded by beavers"; and Indicator 1, Outcome 3.2 "3-6 containment, control or eradication protocols for IAS prove their effectiveness through ecosystem and biodiversity recovery indicators on xx hectares."
145. The evaluation considers that these deficiencies did not substantially affect progress towards the effects and impacts sought by the project, but that, since they were not detected in time, they conditioned management and accountability to stakeholders.

4.4.2 Implementation and execution

Finding 22. The project' implementation and execution were exposed to conditions that hindered FAO's full compliance with the role and responsibilities of the project's implementing agency.

146. FAO's performance as an implementing agency and executing agency had strengths and weaknesses.
147. Among the former, it is worth highlighting technical quality assurance of the processes, the outputs generated and the institutional support provided to the project.
148. Among the weaknesses, deficiencies were noted in the project's administrative management and routine coordination. These shortcomings negatively impacted agility for procurement of goods and services; they brought about disagreements with the executing partner and caused delays in the project's technical and financial execution.
149. The main reasons accounting for this situation are as follows:
- i. Turnover of representatives: during the project's implementation cycle, FAO Argentina had four different representatives -interim, officer in charge and deputies- which

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affected the overall operation and led the office's inter-institutional links to be more complex.

- ii. Insufficient number of technical and administrative staff: for the administrative and financial work of the Representative's Office, FAO Argentina has two staff members who must serve all projects and cover the different aspects related to the office's general administration. Furthermore, only during the last year was there a person on the project team in charge of supporting financial aspects; these human resources that were insufficient to adequately meet the required implementation needs.
- iii. Internal red tape: besides the small number of administrative staff, there is FAO's internal bureaucracy. These two factors together slowed down processes more than normal and expected.
- iv. Lack of orderly, accessible and traceable systems showing the project's technical and financial progress: although the overall accounts were kept by the accounting sector at the FAO office in Argentina, the project did not have an orderly and traceable financial monitoring system which hindered timely access to the track record of expenses incurred by the project.
- v. Governance: the governance mechanisms, establishment of inter-institutional relations and decision-making linked to the project depended on the personal will and ways of working and were not included in mechanisms that were standardized, institutionalized and known to all parties. This situation was corrected during the last year of implementation

4.4.3 Co-execution

Finding 23. The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development faced complex situations that affected the responsibilities inherent in role of executing agency.

150. The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development as co-executor of the project, performed its duties within the established requirements and according to the institutional arrangements required by GEF and those set forth in the PRODOC.

151. Despite its compliance with the provisions, it faced difficulties that conditioned an optimal fulfillment of the co-executing agency's responsibilities, such as:

- i. Changes in government: as already mentioned, the project faced three different changes in State administrations. These changes resulted in the replacement of directors, coordinators and led to changes (temporary and permanent) of other officials with some sort of responsibility concerning the project, thus affecting the continuity of actions, ownership, interest and knowledge about the initiative.
- ii. Definition of roles: the line between political roles (Management and coordination: Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development), executive roles (Project Executing Unit) and FAO were not entirely obvious which, in some cases brought about an overlap of responsibilities, procedural disagreements and tensions between the different governance bodies.
- iii. Internal communication: decision-making mechanisms, coordination and inter-party communication channels (partner, implementing agency, and executing unit) were misaligned during part of the project cycle. These started linking with one another as the initiative moved forward, achieving their best performance during the project's last extension (2021-2022)

4.4.4 Monitoring and evaluation

Finding 24. The project lacked a monitoring system (that was neither designed nor implemented) to allow systematic monitoring of its technical and financial execution, timely decisions, and easy access to sources of verification.

152. The project did not have a system for monitoring, follow-up and evaluation with adequate quality standards. This was one of the main shortfalls noted by the evaluation team.
153. The lack of a monitoring and evaluation system was depicted in an absence of specialized staff, a lack of standardized instruments for technical follow-up and monitoring of effects (other than the PIR and the project progress report), the inexistence of a management structure, the lack of an orderly virtual space for storage and systematization of information and sources of verification linked to each output and outcome, among other shortcomings.
154. These weaknesses brought about consequences that were verified by the evaluation team when requesting documentation, *inter alia*: difficulties in retrieving consultants' reports, contracts, letters of agreement, among other documents and sources of verification; inaccurate and duplicate beneficiary counts; and a disorganized and incomplete mapping of expenses associated with technical execution (with improvements in recent months), among others.
155. One last point to mention in this regard is the quality of the semi-annual and annual reports. In such reports, progress indicators are reported in a descriptive manner and most of the time they do not reflect the achievement of a given target but instead the table is completed with information related to actions implemented.

4.4.5 Stakeholder engagement

Finding 25. The process of designing the project and formulating the ENEEI was participatory.

Finding 26. The degree of involvement of stakeholders was different depending on the player, organization or institution, respecting overall the procedures recommended by the GEF stakeholder engagement policy.

156. Stakeholders were consulted, were able to freely express their views, and were actively involved during the project's identification, formulation, and implementation, as well as in the ENEEI design process.
157. The procedures and standards recommended by GEF in its *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement* (GEF, 2017b) were mostly followed, that is: stakeholders were identified and others joined spontaneously; they participated in significant consultations without interference or coercion; there was access to a public registry of participating institutions; and the relevant information generated by the project (for instance, regulatory proposals and the ENEEI) was shared and discussed with those institutions interested in the matter.
158. Shortcomings in following the GEF guidelines seem to have been linked to the difficulty of having well-known and fluent systems for stakeholders to request information from the project, and to the non-existence of procedures to ensure that the consultations were gender-sensitive and that measures to include indigenous communities be considered from the outset (see Section 4.5 Cross-cutting matters)

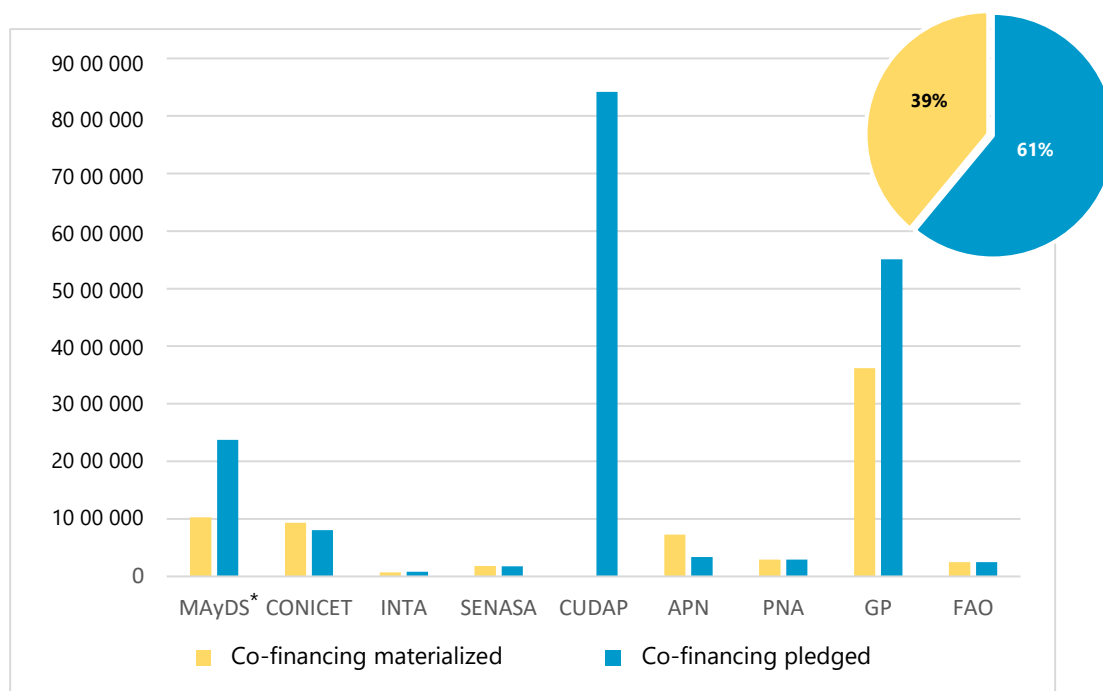
Finding 27. The institutions reported that less co-financing than pledged in the design of the project was materialized, a situation that has not significantly affected the scope of the outputs or the execution of activities foreseen in the PRODOC.

159. At the time of the evaluation (May 2022), the reported co-financing was equivalent to 39% - i.e., USD 7,098,398 - of the amount pledged at project start-up i.e., 18,247,901 USD (Figure 13 and Appendix 7. Table on co-financing). Note that the co-financing could be higher once the institutional contributions were reported when nearing project completion in July 2022.

160. Under-materialization is due to several factors. The most important is the withdrawal, for budgetary reasons and a change in priorities, of the co-financing pledged by the Public Communications Secretariat (USD 8,000,000), an amount that was intended to support communication outputs. Vis-à-vis the above, the project successfully covered the deficit, supported mainly by the use of digital media that at the time of formulation were not as widespread as they are today.

161. Other institutions that have gaps between the pledged and materialized co-financing are the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and the regional governments. Key institutional agents stated that the financial contribution deficit was due to two factors: the exchange rate that devalued the Argentine peso and the impossibility of executing actions due to COVID-19. The evaluation team believes these are plausible justifications.

Figure 13. Co-financing materialized and pledged



* Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development
 Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

4.4.6 Communication and knowledge management

Finding 28. Communication and knowledge management were addressed and implemented successfully, thus meeting project demands in this field.

162. Communications and knowledge management was one of the strong and highly valued aspects of the project. Designing and rolling out a strategy with a full-time expert ensured that the knowledge generated was disclosed and shared with those interested in the matter.
163. Different strategies were used for this purpose: the SNIEEI website hosted in the domain of the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* (Universidad Nacional del Sur, 2021); training workshops, coordination meetings and spaces for reflection with different stakeholders; the preparation and distribution of brochures, posters, booklets and other written material, audiovisual and radio products, among others.
164. It is important to highlight the systematization of information available on the official website of the initiative managed by the Ministry (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, accessed on 17 October 2022). One aspect that could be improved for future projects is to consider the inclusion of information regarding project progress, good practices identified and lessons learned arising from its implementation.
165. During the project closing workshop, at least two speakers gave examples of how knowledge generated was managed: the incorporation of lessons learned to be used in similar projects in Chile and Cuba; and the development of an IAS management strategy in the Provinces of Mendoza and Jujuy.

4.5 Cross-cutting matters

Question 5a – Gender. To what extent have gender considerations been taken into account in project design and implementation?

Finding 29. The project formulation document mentions that the gender approach will be mainstreamed in different components and outputs although no specific plan was designed on the gender perspective.

Finding 30. The project envisaged the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in two of its main outcomes: the ENEEI and the ECCP.

166. A retrospective evaluation based on current standards and those included in the GEF Policy on Gender Equality (GEF, 2017a) and the FAO Regional Gender Policy (FAO, 2019b) does not seem to be the most appropriate and fairest approach since these instruments were outlined in 2017 and 2019, respectively, after project start-up.
167. However, FAO'S first global policy on gender equality (FAO, 2013), although not binding for GEF projects, is considered to be a guide for promoting the mainstreaming of this approach in FAO offices, projects and across intervention territories. In FAO's policy, "minimum standards for gender mainstreaming" is the name given to these essential actions to be implemented (FAO, 2013, p. 10). Out of the 13 established in the instrument, at least four are related to project cycle management. These are, in brief: a. Use of data disaggregated by gender; b. Capacity strengthening on gender mainstreaming to teams and partners; c. Gender analysis included in the formulation of all programmes and field projects; and d. Programme evaluations and reviews fully integrate gender analysis.
168. Although these parameters were established during the initiative's design period and had not yet been fully internalized at the institutional level at the time of project start-up, the formulation document does refer to the cross-cutting mainstreaming of the gender approach in different activities, outputs, outcomes and components; the way in which mainstreaming is proposed was

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insufficient: descriptive, general, without providing guidelines that would allow planning an effective mainstreaming of the approach during the implementation cycle.

169. Since no gender-responsive strategy was developed, no follow-up could be carried out on differentiated effects and the narrowing of gaps brought about by the project's execution. However, the evaluation team highlights the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in two of the most important project outputs: the ENEEI and the ECCP.

Question 5b – Participation of indigenous peoples (social safeguards). To what extent have the rights of indigenous peoples been respected and promoted in the project's design, decision-making and implementation?

Finding 31. The project at first faced difficulties to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making, a shortfall that was satisfactorily solved during implementation.

170. GEF, FAO and the Argentine State have regulations and policies aimed at ensuring the engagement and safeguarding of the rights of indigenous peoples who participate in projects, or in other actions that may affect them (Table 8).

Table 8. Institutional policies and regulations on indigenous peoples' safeguards

Argentine State regulations related to indigenous community safeguards:

- Law No. 24,071 - Ratification of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: "Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making on issues that affect their rights" (Article 18), and governments must consult them using appropriate procedures (Article 6) (The Argentine Republic, 2002a).
- General Law on the Environment (Law No. 25,675): "Every person has the right to be consulted and to voice an opinion in administrative procedures related to the preservation and protection of the environment, having a general or particular impact, and of general scope" (Article 19) (The Argentine Republic, 2002b)
- Law No. 23,302: Ensures the rights to land, education, health and participation of indigenous communities (The Argentine Republic, 1985)

FAO Policies on Indigenous Peoples

- Free, prior and informed consent: a right of Indigenous Peoples and a good practice for local communities (FAO, 2016);
- FAO Policy on Indigenous Tribal Peoples (FAO, 2011).

GEF Regulations on indigenous peoples' safeguards

- Policy on minimum standards concerning environmental and social safeguards to be met by GEF partner institutions (GEF, 2011);
- Principles and guidelines for engagement with indigenous peoples (GEF, 2012b).

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

171. The common thread of these instruments is the obligation to establish consultation and participation mechanisms *ex ante* and during the project's implementation so that the indigenous communities give their consent in a free and informed manner.
172. At the request of certain community leaders in a workshop held in 2012, the evaluated project included in its formulation a pilot initiative for managing the glossy privet in a territory where the Ocloya indigenous peoples live. The request by itself did not seem to suffice to trigger the normal execution of the pilot initiative.

173. Four years elapsed between said request and the project's start-up. During this period there was no formal contact with the communities, which was resumed to kick off the intervention in 2016.
174. According to secondary information reviewed, this situation caused discomfort among the Ocloya Peoples leaders, not only because of the years that had elapsed but also because they were not consulted during the pilot initiative's design process, nor were they formally informed of their inclusion in the project.
175. However, after several attempts to come closer to the communities and coordinate with them, they held an informed and free internal deliberation and proposed the inclusion of specific actions and agreed to participate in the initiative, ultimately becoming active leading players.
176. The evaluation team and key agents consulted believed these setbacks were lessons learned for future interventions. In this regard, they all learned about the need to maintain the bond during the formulation stage, establish formal mechanisms for participation and prior consultation, take into account the times frames, pace and cultural forms for decision-making, keep the community informed regarding the time that can elapse between the idea and the implementation of a project, and foresee the use of the guidelines and directives outlined and provided by the different institutions.

Question 5c – Environmental safeguards. To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into account in the project's design and implementation?

Finding 32. According to its risk rating and the GEF guidelines, the project took the necessary measures to avoid harmful effects on the habitats in its areas of intervention.

177. In line with the updated GEF policy on environmental safeguards, the project had the capacities and procedures to ensure that its execution would not cause harmful effects on the habitats in its areas of intervention, avoid violation of applicable international treaties or agreements on the environment and not encourage the introduction of potentially invasive alien species.

4.6 Sustainability

Question 6. How sustainable are the outcomes achieved at the environmental, social, institutional and financial levels? How can the sustainability of the implementation of the ENEEI beyond the life of the project be ensured? What are the risks that may affect the sustainability of the project's achievements and effects?

Finding 33. The main project outcomes, particularly those related to institutional strengthening remained anchored in the Argentine State.

178. The ENEEI and ECCP regulations adopted by the Argentine State during and due to the project's implementation are a framework in support of a formal institutional mandate and a guide for managing IAS in the country. It is most likely that these instruments will remain in place over time since they are formally anchored in institutions.
179. At the time of the evaluation, the information system developed was being transferred from the Universidad Nacional del Sur to the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable

Development. Its sustainability is subject to the technical, human and financial capacities of the Ministry to keep the system updated throughout time.

Finding 34. Ensuring everlasting effects and managing the ENEEI once the project has been completed will remain in the hands of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Its success will be conditioned by the allocation of resources, Technical Committee regular meetings and diversity, as well as the social and political validation of the decisions it makes.

180. Keeping and monitoring the effects achieved by the project, implementing the ENEEI and the ECCP and the governance mechanisms, will remain under the responsibility of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development.
181. Allocation of the necessary human and financial resources to roll it out and support the provincial governments in the preparation of their own IAS management strategies will be key in the first few years of implementation.
182. Similarly, the ENEEI Technical Committee on Governance, harnessing the favourable political and institutional times and with a view to increasing the chances of sustaining itself over time, should begin its regular operation promptly, draw up a regulation and convene the largest diversity of stakeholders possible, so that its decisions have the necessary social and political validation in complex issues like this.

Finding 35. The capacities developed by State officials at all levels facilitate the continuity of the processes and the application of management practices, protocols, strategies and systems promoted by the project.

183. The project built capacities in different areas and for a significant number of Argentine State officials. Having trained human resources is an important step forward for sustainability purposes since, if they have funding for action plans, the institutions would have the installed capacity to implement them.

Finding 36. Sustainability of the pilot initiatives in particular and of initiatives at the provincial level overall, is conditioned by the contribution and support from the federal level, the preparation of management plans (short, medium and long term) and the mobilization of resources needed to implement them.

184. As mentioned by some speakers at the project closure workshop, the ENEEI is like "our minimum standards law" in terms of IAS management; it provides guidelines, directives, information and general premises to all jurisdictions. In this regard, the ENEEI in itself does not ensure the sustainability of the pilot initiatives or other initiatives at the provincial level. It will be necessary to ensure technical support from the federal level to deepen capacity-building, facilitate coordination, provide communication materials and support, insofar as possible, the preparation of provincial and inter-jurisdictional strategies and operational plans for managing IAS so that, based on the plans prepared, they can seek the necessary financing for their implementation.

Finding 37. The evaluation team identifies the following as risks that could jeopardize the project's sustainability: changes in the authorities and their priorities; difficulty to access financing; effects of pressure groups on decision-makers.

185. The main risks to sustainability detected by the evaluation team are the following

- i. Institutional changes: upon project completion, the support and interest of the authorities is substantial and there are no short-term risks that could lead to questioning the processes promoted by the project. Sustainability could be threatened by potential changes in authorities that prioritize other issues, downplay the importance of, and remove funding for IAS management.
- ii. Access to financing: IAS management requires resources. In this regard, the project prepared a list of financing instruments that could be used for this purpose. The identified risk focuses on the time-related, human, and institutional capacity to apply for and award these funds that, in turn, within a context of global economic contraction, will be constantly scarcer, at least in the medium run.

Interest groups: the control and eradication of IAS has detractors organized in civil society groups with the capacity to exert influence on decision-makers and officials. The identified risk is that these state agents, due to public pressure, may adopt measures contrary to the technical-scientific recommendations to face the threats that the IAS represent for the conservation of biodiversity.

5 Conclusions

186. The following are the conclusions after considering the main findings related to this evaluation's questions and criteria.

Conclusion 1. Strategic relevance: the project's design, implementation and effects are highly relevant. The components, outcomes and outputs were aligned with GEF's strategic priorities, FAO's objectives, and the policies and laws of the Argentine State, and the beneficiaries of the initiative. Such high relevance led to better support to the actions rolled out, and to the interest and motivation to participate in the process, and a good ownership of outcomes among stakeholders.

Conclusion 2. Efficacy: the evaluation team concludes that the actions implemented and the outcomes achieved translated into a strengthening of the Argentine State to face the challenge of IAS management. The above entails a high technical level for executing activities and achieving most of the formulated goals and indicators.

187. Generating and integrating knowledge based on the implementation of the pilot initiatives; the design and institutional anchoring of public policy instruments, especially the ENEEI and the ECCP; strengthening the SNIEEI; and building functional and technical capacities, as well as individual, organizational and environmental ones for managing IAS, are the main reasons accounting for the achievement of the intended objectives.

Conclusion 3. Efficiency: the evaluation team believes that the efficiency of activity execution within the project was moderately satisfactory. The reasons accounting for this assessment are: a) a high-quality technical team but with insufficient human resources to quickly roll out actions; b) a financial execution close to 100% but materialized with a three-year delay; c) the establishment of stringent but slow procurement procedures based on the project's technical execution needs; and d) poorly planned risk management associated with institutional changes.

Conclusion 4. Factors affecting project performance:

- i. The project's vertical rationale (activities-outputs-outcomes-objectives) has consistency deficits at the outcome level. The formulation of most of the outcomes does not account for the contribution or direct changes that the project would bring about as a result of its activities and the achievement and use of the expected outputs. As to the horizontal rationale (indicators, sources of verification, and assumptions), certain outcome indicators and output targets were identified that lacked specific, quantifiable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) criteria.
- ii. The evaluation team concludes that although the implementation, execution and co-execution of the project ensured the quality of the processes and outputs and were in agreement with GEF's requirements, they could have done better if the definition of roles and responsibilities of the implementing agency and the executing institution would have been clearer for the parties; if the personnel devoted to administrative tasks had been duly reinforced; and if the changes in government had been better managed.
- iii. It is concluded that the lack of a monitoring and evaluation system (not designed or implemented) substantially affected technical and financial monitoring and the availability of sources of verification and other materials produced by the project.
- iv. The evaluation team stated that communications and knowledge management were a success factor: they allowed good dissemination of activities, awareness-

raising among the different audiences, ensured the distribution of relevant data and background information, and good programmatic ownership by stakeholders.

- v. It is concluded that the under-materialization of the co-financing pledged during project formulation did not significantly affect the achievement and quality of the project's outputs.
- vi. The evaluation team is conclusive when affirming that the involvement of the institutional stakeholders helped towards taking ownership of the initiative, and was decisive for the approval of the norms and strategies designed within the project's framework

Conclusion 5. Cross-cutting matters, gender: despite the fact that no gender-responsive strategy was developed that would allow monitoring the differentiated effects, the evaluation team highlights the mainstreaming of this perspective -and that of indigenous peoples- in two of the most important project outputs: the ENEEI and the ECCP ensuring, at least in the field of institutional planning, the considerations to be borne in mind in these fields when designing and executing actions targeted to IAS management.

Conclusion 6. Participation of indigenous peoples, social safeguards: the evaluation team concludes that, although belatedly, measures were satisfactorily adopted to safeguard the indigenous peoples' engagement, which ensured the communities could hold free and informed discussions, propose the inclusion of specific actions and agree to participating in the initiative, of which they were ultimately active leading players.

Conclusion 7. Environmental safeguards: the evaluation team was able to confirm that the project had adopted the necessary measures so as to not have a harmful impact on the habitats in which it intervened, and not go against applicable international environmental treaties or agreements, and not promote the introduction of potentially invasive alien species

Conclusion 8. Sustainability: it is concluded that three of the main conditions to ensure sustainability are the following: institutional anchoring of public policy instruments and information systems; capacity-building at institutions and of State officials; and the establishment of a governance structure, all of which were achieved during the project's implementation.

- 188. The challenge for the future will be to ensure financing, mitigate the effects that stakeholders may have on decision-makers, adequately manage changes in government and move forward in materializing intermediate conditions and assumptions summarized in the project's Theory of Change (ToC).

6 Lessons learned

189. The following lessons learned were drawn from the evaluation:

Lesson learned 1. If the number of human resources available and FAO's institutional procurement procedures do not offer an agile and satisfactory solution for the procurement of project goods and services to mitigate any potential risks concerning effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the technical implementation, it will be necessary to make timely decisions aimed at overcoming this difficulty (include these time frames in the annual operating plans [POAs] or hire more staff).

Lesson learned 2. The economic and institutional sustainability of the ENEEI and the management of IAS at the provincial level will be subject to and will require the establishment of multi-stakeholder agreements that politically and socially support the strategies to be rolled out and the design and implementation of action plans budgeted for the short, medium and long term.

Lesson learned 3. A bi-national strategic plan is necessary for the effective control of cross-border IAS. The establishment of high-level political dialogue and bi-national inter-institutional technical coordination are key to the above.

Lesson learned 4. Implementing actions to manage IAS (control or eradication) is, ultimately, a political decision that entails considerations in public budgets and has related social risks -public opinion- and also eventually risks at the judicial level. Given this reality, communicational and academic support, evidence-based support and the endorsement of international commitments are essential to mitigate the costs of this kind of decision.

Lesson learned 5. Including a specific communications output in the design, considering an expert in the project team and rolling out a quality strategy was a successful measure that can be replicated in other initiatives implemented by FAO and executed by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Lesson learned 6. Having full-time administrative assistance from the very beginning is essential for a project of the size and characteristics of the one evaluated to carry out technical-financial follow-up pursuant to FAO standards and its executing partners' requirements.

Lesson learned 7. The presence and control of IAS can bring about differentiated effects between men and women. Being aware of and addressing potential gaps to help reduce them -mandatory according to FAO (2013) and GEF (2017)- called for personnel with developed capacities, the preparation of a diagnostic analysis and a specific plan to be implemented throughout the project cycle.

Lesson learned 8. A part of the projects' success is at stake when dealing with inter-institutional relationships and the proper functioning of the established governance bodies and mechanisms. The latter must be spelled out explicitly, reviewed and updated if necessary; and agreements must be reached on the responsibilities of each institution, the attributions of each instance, the decision-making procedures and the communication channels to be implemented.

7 Recommendations

190. The evaluation team deems it timely to set forth the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. To FAO on strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems. It is highly recommended that projects design and implement robust monitoring and evaluation systems, from the beginning of their execution, aligned with the institutional monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring and evaluation should at least have: an organizational structure; instruments for financial and technical follow-up (activities, outputs and indicators) and monitoring of effects; a detailed implementation schedule; standardized annual planning instruments aligned with the results matrix; and an online system for storing information, and sources of verification arranged by component, outcomes, outputs and activities.

Recommendation 2. To FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development on the composition of the project teams. Projects with budgetary volumes, dense in activities, territorially spread out and procurement-intensive such as the one evaluated, require teams that can adequately meet these demands. To achieve the above, it would be advisable to consider the incorporation from the beginning of staff providing executive assistance to coordination, in charge of administrative and financial management, and responsible for project monitoring and evaluation.

191. Suggestion: to have a person in charge of M&E at the Country Office to provide services and support to all projects in their design and execution. This would enable financing the position by more than one project and the post would be placed under the programme sector and not under a specific project.

Recommendation 3. To FAO, the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and other stakeholders on strengthening the mechanisms of project governance and internal communication. As a way to improve inter-institutional coordination and management, for future initiatives it would be advisable that, at project start-up and during their execution, the governance mechanisms be reviewed -and eventually updated or renewed- together with stakeholders. The above should at least lead to defining and sharing the following with everyone: the roles and responsibilities of each institution and each member of the project organization chart; the procedures and instances of operational and strategic decision-making; the channels and forms of internal communication; and the protocols for settling disputes, disagreements, or conflicts.

Recommendation 4. To FAO on the mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters. The mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters throughout the entire project cycle is mandatory for initiatives implemented by FAO and financed by GEF. To improve the response to this demand, it would be highly advisable to systematically and periodically build capacities in the project teams and in country offices, actively disseminate the set of institutional tools for the mainstreaming of cross-cutting matters, and design a monitoring instrument -a simple one- to check compliance with the standards established by the institutions.

Recommendation 5. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and other stakeholders on assurance of the quality and continuity of the SNIEEI. As a mechanism targeted to quality assurance, permanent updating and sustainability of the SNIEEI, it would be advisable to formally establish a cooperation agreement with the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* including, *inter alia*: mechanisms to systematically and bi-directionally share data and analyses; also to have the University provide scientific-technical advice to the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development; and, moreover, ensure mutual integration into national and international academic and state networks.

Recommendation 6. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and provincial governments on the design of strategies and provincial and inter-jurisdictional plans for managing IAS. Given that a large part of the control or eradication of IAS takes place through provincial and inter-jurisdictional actions, it would be beneficial for provincial governments to outline and improve their strategies and IAS management plans. To enhance the possibilities of developing quality instruments, it is recommended that the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, taking advantage of the project's momentum, implements mechanisms for disseminating the ENEEI and the ECCP, managing the knowledge generated by the project in all the provinces and supporting the jurisdictions in outlining their plans and strategies.

Recommendation 7. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and provincial governments on incentives for the private sector and communities concerning IAS management. In order to encourage the participation of the private sector and the community in managing IAS, it is recommended that the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and the provincial governments in partnership with academic institutions (if necessary) generate, systematize and share evidence on the multidimensional benefits (environmental, economic, social, productive, cultural) that an effective control of IAS entails, in collaboration with the territories, communities and producers affected by biological invasions.

Recommendation 8. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, provincial governments, academic institutions and other stakeholders on communication strategies for managing IAS. Since the project has managed to develop a high-quality Communication Strategy that has allowed an innovative approach to a complex communication agenda such as the one on IAS, it is highly recommended that continuity be provided to the communication challenge and that the impact of the communication pieces, messages, as well as the social perception of the IAS agenda be permanently monitored.

Recommendation 9. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development in charge of presiding over the Inter-institutional Technical Committee. A part of the sustainability of the project's efforts and achievements focuses on the creation and implementation of the Committee. In view of the foundational nature of this space, it would be advisable to generate collaborative participation mechanisms so that stakeholders can actively participate in the initial outlining thereof that will lay the foundations for the country's public policies in the long term. Likewise, it is essential for the Committee to have the necessary budget to be able to operate and ensure the participation of all the institutions involved.

Recommendation 10. To FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development on the scalability and sustainability of interventions. As a measure aimed at maximizing the possibilities of sustainability and scalability of the projects, it is recommended that FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development consider the development of advocacy strategies targeted to institutional anchoring and the establishment of agreements between public and private stakeholders within the framework of a sustainability plan included in the projects' design and implemented from the early stages of their implementation.

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Appendix 1. List of key agents consulted

	Surname	Name	Title/Institution
Project Team			
1	Galarza	Cesar	FAO-ENEEI Project Coordinator (2021-2022)
2	Morandi	Marcelo	FAO-ENEEI former Project Coordinator (2015-2020)
3	Zalba	Sergio	Expert, FAO-ENEEI IAS Project
4	Nowak	Carla	Communication Lead, FAO-ENEEI Project
5	Cuevas	Yannina	Project Assistant Technician/Biologist
6	Sanhueza	Cristina	Project Assistant Technician/Biologist
7	Gobet	Victoria	Project Coordination Assistant
FAO Argentina			
8	Yofre	Francisco	Coordinator of the Results-Based Payments Project /Programme Officer, Representative a.i. during project design and most of its implementation (until 2020 inclusive)
9	Cabello	María Julia	Assistant, Environment Programme Officer, FAO Argentina
10	Huykman	Natalia	Environment and Natural Resources Programme Officer
11	Petersen	Carlos	Admin Officer, FAO Argentina
12	Morel	Francisco	Admin Assistant, FAO Argentina
Argentina's Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development			
13	Kasulin	Ines	National Project Coordinator
14	Domingorena	Beatriz	National Secretariat for Environmental Policy for Natural Resources
15	Moreno	Diego	Former Secretary of Environmental Policies, Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat
16	Seresi	Rosana	National Biodiversity Director, Regulatory technician
17	Duarte	Dolores Pereira	Communications
18	Prado	Walter	Fauna Directorate, Technician
Consultants			
19	Schiavini	Adrian	Former FAO-ENEEI consultant
20	Zilio	Mariana	Former FAO-ENEEI consultant, Expert in Economics
21	Belfer	Laura	Former FAO-ENEEI consultant
22	Ibáñez	Hernán	Former FAO-ENEEI consultant
23	Curto	Erio	FAO-ENEEI Consultant, Beaver Component
24	Natale	Evangelina	Former FAO-ENEEI consultant
FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean			
25	Campos	Lorenzo	Liaison Officer, Financial Resources
26	Casaza	Jessica	Project lead technical consultant
Provinces			
27	Alvarez	Eugenia	Environment Secretariat, Tierra del Fuego

	Surname	Name	Title/Institution
28	Carranza	María Luisa	Provincial System of Natural Protected Areas, Tierra del Fuego
29	Pacheco	Jessica Diaz	Director of Biodiversity, Ministry of Ecology, Misiones
30	Benítez	Alan	Under-secretary of Biodiversity, Ministry of Ecology, Misiones
31	Hollman	Federico	Former Environment Secretary, Rio Negro
Other institutions			
32	Abelando	Mariana	Coast Guard (PNA), Environmental Protection Directorate
33	Gavier	Gregorio	Focal Point, National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA)
34	Guerra	Felipe	GEF Project Coordinator, FAO Chile
35	Malmierca	Laura	Natural Protected Areas, Tierra del Fuego
36	Marinero	José Alberto	Environment Secretariat, San Juan
37	Medero	Silvana	Communications, National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA)
38	Menvielle	Maria Fernanda	Focal Point, National Parks Administration (APN), Natural Protected Areas
39	Orellana	Jorge	Plant Health Directorate, SENASA
40	Outi	Yanina	Plant Health Directorate, SENASA
41	de Gracia	Mario	Plant Health Directorate, SENASA
42	Montero	Germán	<i>Asociación Ambiente Sur</i> , Santa Cruz
Wild boar Pilot –El Palmar National Park			
43	Amaranta	Aristobulo	APN, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
44	Gonzalez	Claudio	APN, Board Member
45	Duran	Liliana	APN, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
46	Beltrane	José	APN, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
47	Guzmán	Monica	APN, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
48	Sanguinetti	Javier	APN, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
49	Treboux	Guillermo	APN, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
50		Oscar	Hunter/Hunting Club for the conservation of El Palmar National Park
51		Ariel	Hunter/Hunting Club for the conservation of El Palmar National Park
52		Hunter	Hunter/Hunting Club for the conservation of El Palmar National Park
53		Hunter	Hunter/Hunting Club for the conservation of El Palmar National Park
54		Hunter	Hunter/Dissidents Group. Hunters at El Palmar National Park
55		Hunter	Hunter/Dissidents Group. Hunters at El Palmar National Park
56		Hunter	Hunter/Dissidents Group. Hunters at El Palmar National Park

Appendix 2. Table of GEF evaluation criteria ratings

GEF Criterion/sub-criterion	Rating	Summarized comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Project design and implementation is consistent with the priorities and interest of the different stakeholders.
M1.1. Consistency with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	Project was highly relevant for Objective 2, Outcome 2 of the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area and for Objective 2 of the FAO strategic framework.
A1.2. Relevance for national, regional and global priorities and beneficiaries' needs	HS	Project design and execution is consistent with the Argentine State's priorities and the needs of beneficiary groups.
A1.3. Complementariness with existing interventions	HS	The project coordinated actions with IAS management initiatives already underway.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall evaluation of project outcomes	S	Outcomes contributed to strengthening the Argentine State for managing IAS.
B1.1. Fulfillment of project outcomes	S	Outcomes planned for the project were achieved.
B1.2. Progress towards achieving project outcomes and objectives	S	Achieved outputs and outcomes contributed decisively to strengthening public institutions in Argentina (Project objective).
Outcome 1.1	HS	Information was generated, collected and systematized; high-quality systems, protocols, strategies and regulation proposals were developed; and a successful project communication strategy was rolled out, generating lessons learned to design an ENEEI strategy.
Outcome 2.1	HS	Over 12 legal and regulatory frameworks were adopted and financing mechanisms for ENEEI were identified.
Outcome 3.1	HS	The pilot for early detection at ports and surrounding areas was scaled up: the project experience at four ports was replicated independently in all the countries sea and river ports (14).
Outcome 3.2	S	Pilots tested management practices, methodologies and protocols, generated knowledge, placed the issue on the public agenda, built capacities and raised awareness among the different stakeholders.
Outcome 4.1	S	Enough knowledge was generated and the necessary lessons were retrieved to design an evidence-based "Provincial plan for reclaiming environments affected by beavers".
Outcome 4.2	S	Bi-national fora were set up to reflect on and exchange experiences, leading to specific agreements and joint work and follow-up.
Outcome 5.1	MS	Although indicators were met, the project's monitoring and accountability system did not meet the required quality standards.
Global rating of progress towards fulfilling the objectives.	S	The project met the objectives foreseen in the PRODOC.
B1.3 Probability of producing the intended effects	L	Public policy instruments were anchored in Argentine institutions and capacities were built, setting the foundations for achieving medium and long-term effects.
C. EFFICIENCY		

GEF Criterion/sub-criterion	Rating	Summarized comments
C1. Efficiency	MS	The project experienced a three-year delay for its completion and its administrative procedures were not the best.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Global probability of sustainability-related risks	MP	There are certain risks that could materialize.
D1.1. Financial risks	L	Although there is political will, financial resources, when assessed, are not ensured for project continuity.
D1.2. Social and political risks	ML	There are pressure groups that are against the control of IAS that could influence decision makers.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	Although the project designed a governance group, it has not yet started meeting, it has no regulations or funding.
D1.4. Environmental risks	MU	No environmental risks have been noted that could threaten the project's sustainability.
D2. Enhancement and replication	L	There is an enabling political and institutional scenario for the project's replication and scalability.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING FULFILLMENT OF OBJECTIVES		
E1. Project design and preparation	MS	There are vertical and horizontal consistency shortcomings in the results matrix.
E2. Project implementation quality	MS	Conditioning factors that reduced implementation quality were identified.
E2.1 FAO project implementation quality (budget holder, lead technical officer, project task force, etc.)	MS	FAO ensured the technical quality of the processes and outputs but faced difficulties to appropriately play its role as implementing agency.
E2.1 Project oversight (project steering committee, project task force, etc.)	MS	The governance structure did not work as provided for in the PRODOC. However, and especially during the last stage of the project, coordination mechanisms and governance bodies were established pursuant to the project's implementation and execution needs.
E3. Project execution quality	S	The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development faced complex situations that affected its role and the responsibilities inherent in the executing agency. Nonetheless, it performed its duties according to the requirements and to the institutional arrangements required by GEF.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MS	Co-financing as at May 2022 stood at 39% of the committed amount but this did not substantially affect output quality and achievement. However, the evaluation mission was informed that at project completion (two months after the evaluation took place) co-financing had reached 78%.
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Project design and ENEEI formulation were both participatory processes.
E6 Communication, knowledge management and knowledge outputs	AS	Communication and knowledge management were successfully addressed and implemented.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	U	The project did not design and start up a monitoring system allowing it to systematically follow up on its technical and financial execution, make timely decisions and facilitate access to means of verification.
E7.1 M&E design	U	The project did not design a monitoring system.

GEF Criterion/sub-criterion	Rating	Summarized comments
E7.2. Implementation of the M&E plan (including financial and human resources)	U	No monitoring system was implemented. Actions in this field were the semi-annual and annual reports, and evaluations.
E8. Global evaluation of factors affecting outcomes	MS	There were deficiencies in M&E and co-financing, and difficulties concerning the project's design and implementation.
F. CROSS-CUTTING MATTERS		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	No specific plan was designed for addressing the gender perspective. Nonetheless, the project envisaged the gender perspective in two of its main outcomes: the ENEEI and ECCP.
F2. Human rights/indigenous peoples' issues	S	The project faced difficulties at first to include indigenous peoples in decision-making. These shortcomings were satisfactorily solved during the project's implementation.
F2. Environmental and social safeguards	S	Measures were taken to protect the environment and make sure persons involved in the project were not affected.
Project Overall Rating	S	

Appendix 3. GEF Rating Scheme

Project Outcomes and Outputs

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Outcomes achieved clearly surpass expectations or there have been no shortcomings.
Satisfactory (S)	The outcomes achieved are as expected or no shortcomings or only minimum ones.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The outcomes achieved are more or less as expected or there have been only moderate shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Outcomes achieved are somehow below expectations or there have been significant shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Outcomes achieved are substantially below expectations or there have been major shortcomings.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Outcomes achieved are insignificant or there have been severe shortcomings.
Unable to Assess (UA)	Information available does not allow assessing outcomes achieved.

Project Implementation and Execution

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	No shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution surpasses expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	No shortcomings or only minor ones and the quality of implementation/execution meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were a few shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution is somehow below expectations.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution is substantially below expectations.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in the quality of implementation/execution.
Unable to Assess (UA)	Information available does not allow a quality assessment of implementation/execution.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	No shortcomings and the quality of M&E design and implementation surpasses expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	No shortcomings or only minor ones and the quality of M&E design/implementation meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were a few shortcomings and the quality of the M&E design/Implementation more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and the quality of the M&E design/implementation is somehow below expectations.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and the quality of the M&E design/implementation is substantially below expectations.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in the M&E design/implementation.

Unable to Assess (UA)	Information available does not allow a quality assessment of the M&E design/implementation.
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Sustainability

Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There are no risks affecting sustainability or only a minimum risk.
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks that affect sustainability.
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks that affect sustainability.
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks affecting sustainability.
Unable to Assess (UA)	Unable to assess the impact or size of expected risk affecting sustainability.

Appendix 4. Results Matrix

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 1.1: Increased effectiveness for protecting biodiversity, sensitive ecosystems, health and the economy at the national level by managing the IAS problem.	a) Coordinated risk analysis and border control mechanisms agreed upon and, after enactment of the pertinent regulations, 100% of requests for introducing IAS will have been duly analyzed by the system;	100%	Risk analysis monism established, adopted and institutionalized.
	b) Early detection and immediate action systems implemented in at least 25% of the National Parks and in five provincial protected areas (PA) across the country, and at ports on the Atlantic coastline;	100%	33 park administrations developed early detection and immediate action systems based on training workshops
	c) IAS management strategies included in the annual operations plans (POAs) of at least 25% of the country's park administrations	70%	It was not possible to access POAs of the park administrations but, based on a survey, it is estimated that at least 70% had them.
	d) Score of 11/15 obtained in the GEF Tracking Tool (Part VI on IAS, questions 1,2, 4, 5)	100%	Score of 11/15 obtained according to the last PIR.
Output 1.1.1 The national information system on IAS includes updated information on: the presence, distribution, characteristics and impacts of IAS; specialists within and outside Argentina with experience in the management and taxonomy of the species of interest; IAS management projects in Argentina	a) 150 scientists, technicians and naturalists registered and active as information providers in seven COFEMA regions;	+100%	280 experts/naturalists trained in the use of the SNIEEI
	b) 9300 occurrence sites registered;	97%	776 taxa, and 9,024 occurrence sites in the database.
	c) 240 registered specialists;	+100%	591 scientists/naturalists included in the database.
	d) 120 registered projects;	+100%	121 registered projects.
	e) No less than 1400 annual visits consulting the database at the end of the project.	+100%	Over 25,727 visits to the page since project start-up (Since 1 August 2017), entailing an average of 5,200 visits/year.
Output 1.1.2 Defined official list of IAS present across the country, organized into categories	An official list of IAS signed by the Argentine Government, the Provincial Governments participating in Component 3 and 4 pilot initiatives and also by representatives from the six regions of the Federal Environment Council (COFEMA).	100%	Official list adopted and Inter-institutional Technical Committee for follow-up purposes set up. Resolutions of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development 109/21 and 13/21.
Output 1.1.3. National Strategy on IAS (ENEEI) – a guiding document to coordinate actions on communication and education, prevention, early detection and rapid response, priority setting, control and eradication.	National Strategy on IAS (ENEEI) signed by GoA and provincial governments participating in the pilot programmes under Components 3 and 4, as well as by representatives from the six Federal Environment Council (COFEMA) regions.	100%	Resolution adopting ENNEI.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Output 1.1.3.a Strategy for preventing the introduction of IAS in Argentina (sub-output of ENEEI)	a) List classifying the main vectors for IAS introduction and dispersal pathways in the country;	100%	Completed list classifying the main vectors for IAS introduction and dispersal pathways in the country;
	b) Risk analysis system and protocols adjusted to include alien species of aquatic and terrestrial vertebrates and plants, and two Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat (SAyDS) technicians trained in their use	100%	Adjusted and validated risk analysis systems for plants, terrestrial vertebrates and fish. Eight SAyDS technicians trained for application thereof. Representatives from 12 provinces plus the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, APN and SENASA.
	c) 30 technicians trained in border control of IAS introduction (SENASA, Border Patrol, Customs, Airport Security Police –PSA- and the Argentine Coast Guard –PNA);	100%	More than 20 Coast Guard (PNA) technicians trained to apply maritime border control, and 600 attended virtual workshops.
	d) Adjustment of regulations on the introduction and use of alien species endorsed by CFEEI;	100%	Resolution 109/21 of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development approving the Official List of IAS and potentially invasive species (EEPI).
	e) Two (2) voluntary codes of conduct (for Botanical Gardens under the Argentine Network of Botanical Gardens (RAJB) and vets and pet shops).	100%	Voluntary codes of conduct for Botanical Gardens signed by 16 representatives of Argentine botanical gardens.
Output 1.1.3.b Systems and protocols for early detection and rapid response developed and implemented for national and provincial Protected Areas (PAs).	a) At least 15 Park Administrations (PAs) have early detection and rapid response systems and protocols in place and operational;	+100%	Based on training workshops, 33 park administrations developed early detection and rapid response systems and protocols
	b) At least 80 conservation agents, including park rangers, trained in early detection, rapid response, control and eradication techniques.	+100%	249 trained park rangers and conservation agents.
Output 1.1.3.c Prioritization, control and eradication systems for national and provincial Park Administrations developed and implemented.	a) At least 15 PAs have prioritization, control and eradication systems in place and operational	+100%	Based on training workshops, 33 park administrations developed prioritization, control and eradication systems
	b) At least 80 conservation agents, including park rangers, trained in prioritization, control and/or eradication techniques for IAS linked to ecosystem restoration, composition and resilience	+100%	249 trained park rangers and conservation agents.

Output 1.1.4 Knowledge and perception on IAS and the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL) increased by the end of the project through the implementation of a communication and awareness-raising strategy (ECCP, particularly supporting the six pilot programmes, Outputs 3.2.1-6).	Communication strategy (ECCP) implemented through communication measures focused on: a) government agencies; b) the public at large; c) children and youth	100%	Resolution for adopting and implementing ECCP.
Intervention rational	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 2.1: National and provincial legal, regulatory and financial frameworks harmonized and support the effective implementation of the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL)	Score of three/six in the GEF Tracking Tool	100%	Score according to the last PIR.
Output 2.1.1 IAS regulatory frameworks harmonized among jurisdictions and sectors (agriculture, forestry, fish farming, tourism, health, foreign trade, transport and environment)	a) Harmonized regulatory frameworks in eight sectors	100%	Over 13 regulatory frameworks including different sectors were outlined and adopted.
	b) 150 Judiciary and Public Ministry staff trained in IAS regulations	100% Pending confirmation	100% was reported but the evaluation team found no source of verification to check this information.
Output 2.1.2 Financing mechanisms for the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL) developed	At least 1 (one) mechanism agreed upon and developed (Payment of Ecosystem Services (PES) Fund, environmental risk insurance or charge for IAS, inclusion of good prevention practices for IAS in FSC certifications, organic fish farming, environmentally-friendly tourism).	100%	Financing mechanisms identified, listed and designed.
Output 2.1.3 Bill on minimum standards for IAS developed in a participatory manner and sent to Congress.	Bill on minimum standards sent to Congress	100%	Bill on minimum standards designed and ready to be discussed.
Output 2.1.4 The agenda of the MERCOSUR Ministers for the Environment includes the topic of IAS.	IAS included on the agenda.	100%	The Ministers for the Environment of MERCOSUR, Sub-group 6, included the topic of IAS on their agenda

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 3.1: Coastal and marine ecosystems protected against invasive alien species through early detection and rapid response measures	Score of three/five obtained in the GEF Tracking Tool	100%	Score of four according to the last PIR.
Outcome 3.2: Recovery in progress of ecosystems and biodiversity highly or potentially affected by six IAS, and risks for health and the forestry and farming sector mitigated, by applying containment and eradication protocols	a) three/six containment, control or eradication protocols for IAS prove their effectiveness through ecosystem and biodiversity recovery indicators on xx hectares	100% Pending confirmation	The evaluation team has not yet been able to confirm that ecosystem and biodiversity recovery indicators have been constructed and measured. Furthermore, the indicator does not specify the number of hectares to be measured.
	b) Score of 24/48 obtained in GEF Tracking Tool (part IV, question 6);	90%	Score of 22 according to the last PIR.
	c) Adjustment of the National Strategy on IAS (ENNEI) and its implementation based on six reports on lessons learnt from pilot IAS control programmes	100%	ENNEI included lessons learned from implementation of pilot initiatives.
Output 3.2.1 Red-bellied tree squirrel pilot initiative	a) 70% of the competent authorities and the population of the site selected based on a perception survey, and its rural area of influence ("the site"), will be aware of the negative impact of squirrels and support their control	100%	86.6% of key stakeholders were influenced.
	b) 1 (one) SAyDS resolution and 3 (three) provincial resolutions adopted, declaring the red-bellied tree squirrel a harmful species	100%	The red-bellied tree squirrel was included on the national IAS list, and it was also declared a harmful species in the Province of Buenos Aires.
Output 3.2.2 The invasion of the Didymo algae detained in areas of high conservation value in the provinces of Rio Negro, Neuquén, and Chubut.	The risk of Didymo algae invasion in at least 10 areas of high conservation value is mitigated through measures for voluntary cleaning of fishing gear in 20 municipalities of the affected area, and dissemination activities.	100%	Ten self-cleaning posts were built and voluntary cleaning days were organized.
Output 3.2.3 Control of the tamarisk species and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services in two natural protected areas (Ramsar sites at the Guanacache, Desaguadero and Del Bebedero lakes and at Laguna de Llancañelo	Control of tamarisks and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services on 180 hectares (90 hectares in Laguna de Llancañelo Lake and 90 hectares in the Guanacache, Desaguadero and Del Bebedero lakes)	100%	The target of 180 hectares freed from tamarisks was achieved and resilience processes were assessed.

lake) of high conservation value in the Cuyo Region.			
Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Output 3.2.4 Diversity of amphibians in Argentina's wetlands protected against the invasion of bullfrogs, by implementing a national strategy for managing bullfrogs.	a) 100% of active and inactive farms and distribution of bullfrogs across the country surveyed;	100%	A geo-referenced cadaster on the situation of bullfrog farms was carried out (71 all told)
	b) A proposal on supplementing the regulations governing bullfrog farms;	100%	The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development adopted Resolution No. 283/2020 declaring the bullfrog an IAS.
	c) Control protocols validated;	100%	Control and monitoring actions were implemented in areas invaded by the species.
	d) A communication strategy coordinated with the ENNEI's ECCP (Output 1.1.4)	100%	Strategy implemented.
Output 3.2.5 Biodiversity in the Paranaense jungle protected vis-à-vis the invasion of the Giant African Snail, by applying control and eradication measures, together with public health measures related to this IAS.	Density and distribution of snails reduced by at least 25% compared to the baseline to be established at pilot programme start-up, applying control, eradication and communication measures.	-	Indicator not measured by the project.
Output 3.2.6 Recovery of native forest vegetation species in Northwest Argentina (NOA) and of the livelihood of the Ocloya indigenous community, traditionally using these native forests, by reducing the density and the area affected by the invasion of glossy privet.	At least 20 hectares under glossy privet control, resulting in a reduction of at least 50% in the density of glossy privet and assisted restoration with at least 1,500 native plants, planted with community and a gender participation approach.	-	Indicator not measured by the project. With regard to the target, the creation of nurseries with 2000 plants is reported. Key agents ratified that the target was probably not achieved.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 4.1: Native Forest and peat bog ecosystems under effective control of the American beavers in Tierra del Fuego and affected or endangered biodiversity in recovery	a) 121,280 hectares free from beavers;	100%	75,000 hectares and over 600 km of watercourses were freed from beavers during the project's implementation.
	b) Benthic microhabitats in basin watercourses freed from beavers recovered to similar conditions as those watercourses not affected by beavers;	-	Indicator not measured by project.
	c) Less organic matter in the sediments of watercourse beds in the basins freed from beavers;	-	Indicator not measured by project.
	d) Streams in the Mimica River area and its surroundings recover their structure to become salmon spawning beds again;	-	Indicator not measured by project.
	e) Assisted recovery of lenga trees (<i>Nothofagus pumilio</i>), cherry trees and Antarctic beeches (<i>Nothofagus Antarctica</i>) in progress in areas affected but not flooded by beavers	-	Indicator not measured by project.
Outcome 4.2: Bi-national beaver eradication programme in implementation (at least in the Argentine territory of Tierra del Fuego)	Bi-national mass beaver eradication programme implemented within two to five years after completion of pilot projects in each country.	80%	Both projects have not yet ended. There is agreement to implement a second phase of the beaver eradication programme but the final decision will be political.
Output 4.1.1 Governance and management structure for the beaver control and eradication Programme, developed and operational	a) An Inter-Institutional Committee for the programme's Governance and Management in place, holding at least two meetings a year, and a Governance and Management System for the eradication pilot programme adopted by the Committee;	100%	A decree issued by the Government of Tierra del Fuego created the Inter-Institutional Committee. Held three meetings in a year.
	b) Team for managing the programme established and operational;	100%	The team responsible for project implementation was established and worked as agreed.
	c) Social participation group in place and operating.	100%	The Social Participation Group was established by the Provincial Environment Council made up of the Provinces, Municipalities, Universities, NGOs, among others.
Output 4.1.2 Operational Plans and Eradication Protocols (POE) for each of the Demonstration Units.	7 POEs for demonstration units including: a) inter-institutional agreements and agreements with other key stakeholders for the implementation of the Plan; b) baseline on beaver population density in Demonstration Units	100%	Baseline established on sites affected by beavers. Operational Plan outlined and implemented Indicator Monitoring Plan prepared and Implemented by the

	and level of degradation of the ecosystem; c) biodiversity recovery indicators (forest, physical structure of riverbeds, grassland recovery) for monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of the Plans.		Southern Center for Scientific Research of the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), and the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Secretariat -Tierra del Fuego.
Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Output 4.1.3 Capacities strengthened for managing and eradicating beavers, including human resources and instruments for planning and monitoring.	a) 150 officials from provincial institutions, the authorities and private landowners, forestry, oil and livestock sectors have the capacity to support implementation of POEs (trainees must obtain an average score of 75% in the final test);	85% Pending confirmation	85% compliance with the indicator was reported, although the evaluation team did not find the linked source.
	b) Geographic Information System (GIS) and beaver population density maps for Tierra del Fuego developed, particularly for the demonstration units.	100%	GIS prepared by Space Sur.
Output 4.1.4 Trappers, hunters and supervisors have the appropriate capacities for the effective application of eradication protocols.	150 – 300 trappers, hunters and supervisors trained in protocol application (trainees should obtain an average score of 75% in the final test).	100% Pending confirmation	In the last monitoring report, it was confirmed that 24 persons were trained, although a 100% compliance with the indicator is reported.
Output 4.1.5 POEs implemented in demonstration units.	Seven POEs implemented in demonstration units	100%	Interventions were carried out in all proposed areas. A new demonstration unit was added: Arroyo Grande, Ushuaia.
Output 4.1.6 Permanent biosecurity systems established (for control, monitoring and prevention of re-invasion) including: bio-security plan; systematic monitoring of ecosystem recovery indicators (see Outcome 4.1); and sustainable funding	a) At least 160 persons trained in bio-security and monitoring of re-invasion;	24%	The target was not achieved for reasons related to COVID-19 restrictions and the lack of interested parties.
	b) Database on actions of the Bio-security Plan for the whole Pilot Programme;	100%	Database generated.

	c) 121,280 hectares in seven demonstration units under permanent control, monitoring and prevention of re-invasion, keeping beaver population at a level that prevents adverse impacts on the native forest and peat bog ecosystems.	100% Pending confirmation	75,000 hectares and over 600 km of watercourses were freed from beavers during the project's implementation. The project reported a 100% compliance. However, the evaluation team confirmed that the freed hectares are not "under permanent control, monitoring and prevention of re-invasion keeping beaver population at a level that prevents adverse effects on the native forest and peat bog ecosystems".
Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Output 4.1.7 Increased knowledge and understanding of the Tierra del Fuego population on beaver invasion and the control measures increased at the end of Project through the implementation of a communication strategy.	a) Brochures and webpage on the eradication pilot programme prepared;	100%	Brochures and project web page available
	b) Lessons learned and outcomes of the Beaver Pilot Programme, systematized and published.	100%	Study carried out on lessons learned
Output 4.2.1 Chile and Argentina exchange experiences and coordinate the leaning process on the Pilot Programmes on control and eradication, which will also inform the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEI)	a) Three (3) bi-national workshops to exchange experiences and coordinate the pilot learning process;	100%	Workshops held.
	b) One (1) national workshop for providing feedback to the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEI).	100%	Workshop held.
Output 4.2.2 Governance framework and Bi-national beaver eradication programme agreed upon.	At least two bi-national workshops will have led to an agreement on the Governance Framework and Bi-national Programme.	100%	Bi-national workshops were held and preparatory agreements were reached for a bi-national programme although its approval is beyond the scope of the project.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	% Achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 5.1 The implementation of the project is based on results-based management and outcomes and lessons learned are applied in future operations.	Project outcomes are achieved and sustained	100%	All outputs were developed and there are good sustainability prospects.
Output 5.1.1 Project monitoring system	Eight semi-annual project progress reports issued.	100%	Eight project progress reports delivered.

operational, providing systematic information on progress in achieving project outcomes and outputs.			
Output 5.1.2 Mid-term and final evaluations	Two evaluations: mid-term and final	100%	Evaluations carried out.
Output 5.1.3 Best practices and lessons learned from the Project disseminated.	Best practices and lessons learnt from the Project disseminated	100%	An exercise on lessons learned from the MTR was carried out. At the 2022 bi-national workshop work was carried out on the lessons from the beaver pilot programme. Lessons learned included in the ENEEI. Closing workshop was held to exchange experiences.

Appendix 5. Evaluation Matrix

Criterion: Strategic Relevance			
Question 1. Were the project's design and outcomes aligned -and continue to be so- with the FAO strategic framework, the GEF-5 strategies and Argentina's national priorities? Has the project been relevant to meet the needs of the beneficiary groups?			
Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators/Judgment criteria	Methods	Sources
Sub-question 1.1. Was the project's design and ambition appropriate to deliver the expected outcomes, given the political context, institutional capacities, and GEF objectives?	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of consistency of the project's design and aspirations with the national context, institutional capacities, environmental policies and Argentina's National Strategy on Alien Species. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification in the project's design that refers to the Argentine State's priorities and the installed capacities at the national, provincial and local levels. • Inclusion in the design of the intervention rationale (vertical and horizontal) of objectives, outcomes and actions aimed at addressing the priorities and needs of the Argentine State concerning IAS. • Perception of the key agents regarding the evaluation. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Technical documents • PIR/Project Performance Report (PPR) / MTR • Government and Argentine State institutional, strategic and legal framework <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO Officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • State officials and authorities • Partner institutions

<p>Sub-question 1.2. Have the project's outcomes (intended and unintended) been (and continue to be) consistent with the GEF-5 operational strategies and national priorities and the FAO Country Programme Framework and beneficiaries' needs?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of contribution of project design, implementation and outcomes to FAO's programme framework, policy and mandate at the national, regional and global levels. • Level of harmony between the project outcomes and the perceived needs of the beneficiary groups. • Degree of alignment, adequacy and contribution of the project's outcomes to the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area priorities. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification in the project design that refers to FAO and GEF strategies. • Inclusion in the PRODOC of the outcomes and a description of the mechanisms to contribute to FAO and GEF priorities • Assessment of the project's actions and outcomes based on their contribution to the achievement of FAO and GEF priorities. • Assessment (positive or negative) of the staff, government officials and the Project Beneficiaries on how project activities match the needs of the communities. • Existence of a diagnosis that accounts for the priorities of the beneficiary communities. • Assessment of project staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders on addressing the FAO, GEF and beneficiary group priorities. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Technical documents • PIR/PPR/MTR • FAO Strategic Framework • FAO Argentina Programme Framework • FAO RLC regional strategies • GEF-5 Strategy • Initial diagnostic studies • Others <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Beneficiaries
<p>Evaluation Sub-question</p>	<p>Indicators/Judgment criteria</p>	<p>Methods</p>	<p>Sources</p>
<p>Sub-question 1.3. Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design (new national/provincial policies, plans or programmes that affected the relevance of the project's objectives)?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of influence, response and adequacy of the project to changes in the political, social and environmental context. • Level of harmony and relevance of the project's innovations vis-à-vis the political, institutional, regulatory, social and health scenario. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project's adaptation and response capacity to any potential changes in context. • Assessment of project staff and stakeholders vis-à-vis changes in context, and the project's ability and timeliness to respond. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Technical documents • PIR/PPR/MTR • Government and Argentine State institutional, strategic and legal framework <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions

Criterion: Effectiveness and progress made in achieving the intended effects			
Question 2. What outcomes, intended and unintended, has the project achieved? To what extent did these outcomes contribute to progress towards achieving the objectives and intended impacts of the project? What achievements, outcomes and effects have been achieved within each component?			
Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators/Judgment criteria	Methods	Sources
<p>Sub-question 2.1. What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved, and to what extent have these contributed to the achievement of the project's environmental and development objectives?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project's contribution to the strengthening of governance for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of IAS. • Extent to which project outcomes translated into an enhancement of current and future socioeconomic benefits stemming from the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of execution of activities and compliance with outcome and goal indicators. • Contribution to the project's objective of the implementation of the four programmatic components. • Installed capacities, good practices adopted and level of institutional and organizational strengthening achieved. • Assessment of stakeholders, beneficiaries, State officials and authorities, FAO team, partner organizations and others. • Replicability, scaling-up and sustainability of the project's effects. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Logical framework matrix updated • External service reports (letters of agreement and consultants) • PIR/PPR/MTR • Annual reports, set of topics and assessment of training and workshops • Others <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Beneficiaries • External services (consultants and others) • Partner organizations and other stakeholders

<p>Sub-question 2.2.</p> <p>Component 1. Strengthening institutional capacities at the national and provincial levels for managing IAS: What achievements and outcomes have been accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s contribution (quantitative and qualitative) to the strengthening of institutional capacities for IAS management. • Level of increased effectiveness for protecting the biodiversity of sensitive ecosystems. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of execution of activities and compliance with indicators for project outcome 1.1, its four activities and three sub-activities. • Quality, functionality of the coordination instances and governance mechanisms of the national information system, the ENEEI and its associated components. • Quality and timeliness of internal and external communication and related outputs. • Accessibility and usefulness of the information system and its contents. • Drivers, opportunities and barriers to achieving Component 1 outcomes. • Stakeholders’ assessment (positive or negative) of the training programmes developed, governance instances and the information system implemented. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Logical framework matrix updated • External services reports (information systems; training, others) • PIR/PPR/MTR • Work plans and reports of the different coordination instances • ENNEI • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems • Others <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • State officials • External services (consultants and others) • Partner institutions • Other stakeholders
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<p>Sub-question 2.3.</p> <p>Component 2. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and funding mechanisms in support of the implementation of the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEI): What achievements and outcomes have been accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project's contribution (quantitative and qualitative) to the strengthening of regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms that support the application of the ENEEI. • Degree of contribution of such strengthening to the effective implementation of the ENEEI. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of execution of activities and compliance with indicators for project outcome 2.1 and its four activities. • Ownership by decision-makers of the regulatory frameworks, laws and financing mechanisms promoted by the project. • Drivers, opportunities and barriers to achieving Component 2 outcomes. • Stakeholder assessment (positive or negative) on the effects arising from the strengthening of regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Logical framework matrix updated • External services reports • Regulatory frameworks • Financing mechanism • Studies carried out • MTR/PIR/PPR • Others <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • External Services (consultants and others) • State officials • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Other stakeholders
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<p>Sub-question 2.4.</p> <p>Component 3. Validation and implementation of protocols for managing prioritized IAS, by taxonomic categories and ecosystems, included in the National Strategy on IAS: What achievements and outcomes have been accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s contribution to the implementation and validation of protocols to manage IAS at pilot sites. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of execution of activities and compliance with indicators for project outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 and the one/six related activities, respectively. • Effectiveness of the measures and methodologies promoted by the project for early detection and early control of IAS. • Contribution of methodologies and protocols to the recovery of ecosystems and biodiversity, highly or potentially affected by IAS in pilot sites. • Drivers, opportunities and barriers to achieving Component 3 outcomes. • Positive or negative perception of the project’s key agents regarding the effects of the awareness-raising strategies generated by the project. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems • Pilot experience systematization • Studies carried out • MTR/PIR/PPR <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • External services (consultants and others) • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Partner organizations • Beneficiaries
<p>Sub-question 2.5.</p> <p>Component 4. Development of the Pilot Programme for eradication of the American beaver (<i>Castor canadensis</i>) in Tierra del Fuego Province, based on IAS governance: What achievements and outcomes have been accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of implementation of the pilot programme to eradicate the American beaver (<i>Castor canadensis</i>) in the Province of Tierra del Fuego. • Degree of progress of the bi-national programme to eradicate the American beaver from Tierra del Fuego Province (on the Argentine side of the island). <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution and fulfillment of indicators for project outcomes 4.1 and 4.2 and its seven/two related activities, respectively. • Evidence of effective management American beaver management resulting from the implementation of actions and achievement of outputs envisaged by the pilot initiative’s implementation. • Quality and ownership of national, provincial and bi-national governance mechanisms. • Positive or negative perception of the project’s key agents regarding the process, outcomes and effects of the pilot initiative implemented by the project. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems • Pilot experience systematization • Studies carried out • MTR/PIR/PPR <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • External services (consultants and others) • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Partner organizations • Beneficiaries

<p>Sub-question 2.6. What outcomes have been achieved as a result of capacity building?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project effects (qualitative/quantitative) on government officials and institutions, resulting from capacity-building and knowledge generated by the initiative. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of ownership of the built capacities. • Institutional capacity to incorporate the skills and knowledge developed by its officials. • Assessment (positive or negative) of the project's key agents regarding the effects generated as a result of capacity-building. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews and Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports (training; monitoring system, practice manual; others) • MTR/PIR/PPR <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • External services (consultants and others) • State officials • Partner organizations and other stakeholders
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<p>Sub-question 2.7. To what extent can outcome achievement be attributed to this project?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s level of contribution to achieving the project’s environmental outcomes and objectives and its development objective. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes promoted and catalyzed as a result of project execution. • Project outputs and innovations aiming at a better control of IAS. • Advocacy processes rolled out by the project and outcomes achieved. • Installed capacity resulting from the project. • Knowledge generated as a result of the project’s execution. • Stakeholders’ perception concerning the effects of project execution. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems • Regulatory frameworks • Financing mechanisms • Pilot experience systematization • Studies carried out • MTR/PIR/PPR • Others <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • External services (consultants and others) • State officials • Partner organizations • Beneficiaries
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<p>Sub-question 2.8. To what extent can progress towards achieving the impact be attributed to the project?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of project's contribution to strengthening governance for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of IAS, and enhancement of current and future socioeconomic benefits stemming from the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to its objective of the implementation of the four project programme components. • Installed capacities, good practices adopted and level of institutional and organizational strengthening achieved. • Assessment of stakeholders, beneficiaries, State officials and authorities, FAO team, partner organizations and others. • Replicability, scaling-up and sustainability of the project's effects. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • PIR/PPR/MTR • ENEEI • Laws drafted and adopted • Financing mechanisms • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Beneficiaries • External services (consultants and others) • State officials and authorities • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Other stakeholders
<p>Sub-question 2.9. Was there evidence of less environmental stress and a change in environmental status, or any change in the policy/legal/regulatory framework?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of project's contribution to lessening environmental stress and bringing about changes in regulations. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws drafted and adopted with the project's support and advocacy. • Evidence of less climate stress in intervention areas. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports • PIR/PPR/MTR • Laws drafted and adopted • Studies carried out <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • External services (consultants and others) • State officials and authorities • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<p>Sub-question 2.10. Are there any barriers or risks than can</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of risks than can affect the project's impact in the future 	<p>Document review</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC

<p>affect future progress towards achieving the project's impact?</p>	<p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of environmental, social, cultural, political and economic risks, their causes and the necessary mitigation measures to reduce negative effects on the path to achieving the project's intended impact. • Stakeholders' perception with regard to risks related to reducing the impact sought by the project. 	<p>Interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External services reports • PIR/PPR/MTR • Laws drafted and adopted • Studies carried out <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • External services (consultants and others) • State officials and authorities (national, regional and local) • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Beneficiaries • Other stakeholders
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Criterion: Efficiency			
Question 3. Have the implementation modalities, the institutional structure, the available financial, technical, programmatic and operational resources and procedures contributed to or hindered achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?			
Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators/Judgment criteria	Methods	Sources
Sub Question 3.1. Were the institutional structure, resources and financial, technical and operational procedures available in a timely manner?	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment and level of ownership by project personnel of the implemented procedures. ● Comparison between budgeted and spent financial resources with the planned and executed technical execution. ● Assessment of favourable and unfavourable aspects of the project's institutional/organizational structure regarding the achievement of outcomes and budget delivery. ● Suitability of the mechanisms, institutional arrangements, processes and technical and operational procedures established. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reallocations of budget items and their justification. ● Technical execution of activities/Budget delivery. ● Suitability of the implemented institutional/organizational architecture. ● Existence, usefulness and monitoring of a project organization chart. ● Existence and usefulness of protocols for stakeholder coordination. ● Quality, timeliness of the technical and operational support provided by the FAO regional and global offices. ● Functionality, adequacy and efficiency of the coordination mechanisms between FAO/the Project team and the stakeholders ● Perception of the project managers and stakeholders regarding the scope and quality of the outputs and outcomes vis-à-vis available resources; project management; usefulness of the designed structure. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PRODOC ● PIR/PPR/MTR ● Financial Reports ● POAs (Annual Operations Plans) ● Budget ● Other internal documents <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project team ● FAO officials ● Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions ● Partner organizations
Sub-question 3.2. Has the project management been able to adjust to changing conditions (changes in government policies, COVID, etc.) to ensure efficient project implementation?	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment of the response capacity vis-à-vis these context conditions. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changes and innovations due to changes in the political and health context. ● Project execution options designed within the context of mobility restrictions due to COVID-19 and the results achieved. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PIR/PPR/MTR ● Letters of agreement ● Agreements ● Other internal documents <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project team ● FAO officials

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and timeliness of the support provided by the FAO national, regional and global offices to adapt the project execution modalities. • Budgetary and programmatic adjustments made, their relevance and potential effects on the project’s normal execution. • Assessment (positive or negative) concerning the adaptability of the project vis-à-vis unexpected context variations. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Other stakeholders.
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Criterion: Factors Affecting Project Performance			
Question 4. What are the main factors that currently influence or have influenced project performance (design, implementation, execution, monitoring and evaluation, co-financing, stakeholders' engagement, and communication and knowledge management)?			
Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators/Judgment criteria	Methods	Sources
Sub-question 4.1. To what extent has FAO, as the implementing agency, provided supervision, guidance and support (technical, administrative and operational) during implementation? How timely has that support been? How well were risks identified and managed?	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and timeliness of the FAO office's technical, programmatic, administrative and operational support. <p>Judgment criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionality, adequacy and efficiency of FAO's coordination mechanisms with stakeholders. Perception of project managers and partner organizations regarding the timeliness and quality of the FAO Office's technical and operational support. Risk identification, management and mitigation. Ability to adapt to expected and unforeseen changes in context. Evidence of challenges and deficiencies in project management. Perception of the project managers and other stakeholders regarding the functioning and usefulness of the project's management and administration. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC MTR/PIR/PPR <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team FAO officials Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
Sub-question 4.2. To what extent did the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development effectively carry out its role and responsibilities related to project execution?	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of fulfillment of executing agency's responsibilities and performance. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of challenges, deficiencies and virtues in the programmatic administration of the project. Functionality, adequacy, opportunity, efficiency and effectiveness of the coordination mechanisms of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development with FAO. Perception of the project managers and other stakeholders regarding the functioning and usefulness of project management and administration, as well as of the governance instances. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC Strategic documents, Project reports and progress reports <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team FAO officials Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions

<p>Sub-question 4.3. To what extent did the M&E plan/design contribute to the project's outcomes? Was the budget allocated to the M&E system sufficient to implement all the planned tasks?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence, quality and financing of a monitoring, follow-up and evaluation system. <p>Judgment criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability of M&E mechanisms for operational and management decision-making. • Adequacy of the budget to implement the M&E system. • Evidence regarding use of information collected through M&E for project improvement. • The M&E system allows the dissemination of lessons learned, access to timely and quality information. • Stakeholders' assessment and perception regarding the monitoring mechanisms and tools generated and implemented throughout the project (technical and financial). 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • Monitoring and evaluation system • Others <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<p>Sub-question 4.4. Has information been collected systematically, using appropriate methodologies? To what extent has the information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achieve outcomes and ensure sustainability?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of contribution, usefulness and utilization of the M&E system to ensure efficient, effective and results-based management. <p>Judgment criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of personnel responsible for the design and implementation of the M&E system. • Availability of virtual storage space and organization of information. • Systematic monitoring of indicators. • Availability and application of technical follow-up and effects monitoring tools. • Use of the results framework as the basis for the design of the M&E system. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • Monitoring and evaluation system • Others <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO team • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<p>Sub-question 4.5. To what extent did the expected co-financing materialize? Or how did the failure to materialize the expected co-financing affect the project's outcomes?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-financing committed and materialized. • Number of additional resources contributed and leveraged by the project. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of committed and materialized financing. • Evidence of challenges and deficiencies in managing project co-financing. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • Monitoring and evaluation system • Financial reports • Others <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions.
<p>Sub-question 4.6. Stakeholders, such as civil society, indigenous peoples or the private sector, were involved in project design and implementation, and what was the effect on project outcomes?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of government institutions, civil society organizations, companies, local communities, and indigenous groups that participated in the project’s diagnosis, planning/design, and implementation. Level of and opportunity for the participation of government institutions, civil society organizations, companies, local communities and indigenous groups. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of participation mechanisms. Ownership of project activities and outcomes. Design and implementation of coordination mechanisms. Coordination instances at the local, national and regional levels. Assessment of key institutional agents and beneficiaries regarding participation in the different project cycle stages. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews and Focus groups</p>	<p>Secondary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC MTR/PIR/PPR <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team FAO officials Beneficiaries External services (consultants and others) State officials and authorities Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions Other stakeholders
<p>Question 4.7. How is the project evaluating, documenting and sharing its outcomes, lessons learned and experiences? To what extent can the communication outputs and activities support the sustainability and scaling-up of the project’s outcomes?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of communication and knowledge management strategies designed. Degree of understanding and ownership by stakeholders of the messages arising from the project. Level of access and understanding of knowledge and lessons learned by stakeholders and the audience at large. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a communication strategy. Quality, relevance and timeliness of communication outputs and the media used. Evidence of educational campaigns, awareness-raising plans and actions in the press and social media. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC MTR/PIR/PPR Strategy and communication materials Monitoring and evaluation system Others <p>Primary Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team FAO officials Beneficiaries External services (consultants and others) State officials and authorities (national, regional and local)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existence and quality of strategies and IT tools to ensure timely and quality management of the knowledge generated by the project.• Stakeholders' assessment regarding the quality and effectiveness of the communication of messages and outcomes.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
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Criterion: cross-sectional matters			
Question 5a – Gender. To what extent have gender considerations been taken into account in project design and implementation?			
Question 5b – Participation of indigenous peoples (social safeguards). To what extent have the rights of indigenous peoples been respected and promoted in the project’s design, decision-making and implementation?			
Question 5c – Environmental safeguards. To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into account in the project’s design and implementation?			
Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators/Judgment criteria	Methods	Sources
Sub-question 5a.1. To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in project design and implementation? Was the project implemented in a way that ensured the effective participation of women and equitable benefits between men and women?	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a gender perspective approach strategy in project design and implementation. • Existence of gender equality measures in the project’s design and implementation. • Mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the project’s design and implementation. • Degree of equal participation by gender in the different project phases. • Efforts to reduce gender gaps. • Level of inclusion of the guidelines on the country’s gender approach. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for the effective participation of women in project activities. • Evaluation of the project’s stakeholders regarding the gender approach mainstreaming. • Opinion of beneficiaries regarding mainstreaming of a gender approach in the project’s design and implementation. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • FAO-GEF reports • PIR/PPR/MTR • FAO Policy on Gender Equality • Argentina’s gender approach guidelines <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO-GEF Staff • Project team • Project beneficiaries • National Officials • Provincial Officials
Sub-question 5b.1. To what extent have the rights of indigenous peoples been respected and promoted in the project’s design, decision-making and implementation?	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation of indigenous peoples in the project’s design so as to mainstream the social, cultural and institutional specificities of beneficiaries. • Degree of adequacy of methodologies to address the local territorial dynamics. • Level of relationship of the project with the country’s National Safeguards System (as of its approval). <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for addressing cultural and social issues matters during the project’s implementation. • Degree of relationship with the National Safeguards System. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • project reports • MTR • FAO’s policy on free, prior and informed consent • FAO policy on indigenous peoples • National policies • GEF Guides <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO team • Project beneficiaries • National State Officials

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial State officials • Partner organizations
<p>Question 5c.1. To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into account in project design and implementation?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation in the project’s design to mainstream the social, cultural and institutional specificities of beneficiaries. • Degree of adequacy of methodologies to address the local territorial dynamics. • Level of relationship of the project with the country’s National Safeguards System (as of its approval). <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for addressing environmental and social matters during project implementation. • Degree of relationship with the National Safeguards System. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Project reports • MTR <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO team • Project beneficiaries • National State officials • Provincial State officials • Partner organizations

Criterion: Sustainability			
Question 6. How sustainable are the outcomes achieved at the environmental, social, institutional and financial levels? How can the sustainability of the implementation of the ENEEI beyond the life of the project be ensured? What are the risks that may affect sustainability of the project’s achievements and effects?			
Evaluation Sub-question	Indicators/Judgment criteria	Methods	Sources
<p>Sub-question 6.1. How sustainable are the outcomes achieved at the environmental, social, and institutional and financial levels? How is the sustainability of ENEEI’s implementation beyond the life of the project ensured?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of likelihood that the country will continue with the implementation of public policies related to the environment and ENEEI. • Degree of likelihood that the Provincial States will continue with the implementation of public policies related to the ENEEI approach. • Degree of likelihood that the knowledge acquired during the project will continue to be used after the project comes to an end. • Existence of a Sustainability Strategy. • Degree of implementation of actions in support of a sustainability strategy. • Level of ownership by officials, beneficiaries, provincial and national governments and/or other State institutions of the methodologies, knowledge and practices developed within the project’s framework. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that show the continuity of country level efforts for the continuity of ENEEI’s implementation. • Provinces that have shown interest in the continuity of ENEEI’s implementation. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIR/PPR/MTR • Regulatory frameworks • Letters of Agreements • Agreements • Other internal documents <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Provincial Officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Partner organizations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments by key agents of actions aimed at ensuring sustainability. • Relevance and effectiveness of the sustainability actions implemented. • The authorities and State officials have increased and replicated capacity-building with their peers. 		
<p>Sub-question 6.2. What are the risks that may affect the sustainability of the project's achievements and effects?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External factors that could affect ENEEI's sustainability, achievements and effects. • Institutional factors at the National Government level that could affect ENEEI's sustainability, achievements and effects. • Institutional factors at provincial government level that could affect ENEEI's sustainability, achievements and effects. • Sectoral factors that could affect ENEEI's sustainability, achievements and effects. <p>Judgment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk mitigation measures for sustainability. • Assessment by key agents of risk mitigation actions aimed at ensuring sustainability. • Stakeholders' perceptions and assessments. • Degree of turnover of State officials. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Secondary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • FAO-GEF reports • National Sustainability Strategy • Provincial Sustainability Strategy <p>Primary Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Provincial Officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Partner organizations

Appendix 6. Information collection instruments

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – PROJECT TEAM

Project: Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEEL)	
Target group of the instrument: Project team, FAO officials, Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions.	
Purpose of the Interview: Evaluate and compare qualitative information related to the project's criteria and evaluation questions.	
Duration: 45-60 minutes	Interviewers: Germán Luebert and Gabriela Sbarra
Observation: With a view to holding a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of questions will be adapted to the profile of the key agents interviewed.	
Questions to the key agent Not all questions will apply to all key agents. Some will be selected from this list based on responsibilities, thematic areas and the information managed by the interviewee.	
Introductory questions	
What is your name? What is your position and responsibility within the project?	
Criterion: Strategic Relevance	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking into account the national context and the strategic and political priorities of the Argentine State concerning biodiversity conservation and IAS management, do you think that the project's objectives and strategies were pertinent? 2. Was the project design and implementation consistent with and did it contribute to the GEF-5 focal areas, strategic priorities, and operational programmes? Which would you highlight more specifically? 3. Is the project design consistent with the FAO Strategic Framework and Country Programming Framework? 4. Have there been changes that have affected the relevance of the project since its formulation? If so, what changes? 5. Do you think the project satisfactorily meets the needs of the beneficiary groups? 6. Did the COVID-19 pandemic condition normal project execution? In what way? Were adjustments made and/or innovations implemented to adapt to this context? 	
Criterion: Effectiveness	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. In your opinion, which have been the main outcomes and effects stemming from project execution? 8. How do you believe the project has contributed to strengthening governance for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of IAS? 9. What aspects of the pilot experiences would you highlight? Can you identify differentiated effects in each of them? What factors account for these differences? 10. Component 1. In your opinion, to what extent has the project contributed to strengthening institutional capacities for IAS management? 11. Component 1. How do you assess the effects, functionality and methodologies used for: a. The design and start-up of the national information system; b. The establishment of coordination and governance mechanisms for the system; c. Capacity-building of the State and its officials? 12. Component 2. In your opinion, what is the project's contribution to the strengthening of regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms that support the application of the National Strategy on IAS (ENEEL)? What aspects would you highlight? What is your assessment regarding the quality and possibilities of implementation at the national, provincial and local levels? 13. Component 3. In your opinion, what has been the project's contribution to the implementation and validation of the protocol for managing IAS? What lessons would you draw from the developed pilot initiatives? 14. Component 3. Have the measures and methodologies for early detection and control of IAS promoted by the project been effective? 	

<p>15. Component 4. What has been the project's contribution to the implementation of the pilot programme for the eradication of American beavers in the Province of Tierra del Fuego? What are the main lessons learned from this programme?</p> <p>16. Component 4. What is the level of progress achieved by the bi-national beaver eradication programme in Tierra del Fuego? What barriers and enabling factors can you identify?</p> <p>17. In your opinion and taking into account your experience in executing the project, which have been the strengths and weaknesses that have allowed (or not) proposed indicators and outputs to be achieved?</p> <p>18. Have unplanned outcomes occurred? Could you describe and rate them?</p>
<p>Criterion: Efficiency</p>
<p>1. Were the financial resources provided for the project sufficient to achieve the planned outcomes with good quality?</p> <p>2. Were synergies and complementarities generated with other initiatives and institutions (national, regional and local)? What were the effects of the partnerships set up?</p> <p>3. Were there budget adjustments? Which? Why?</p> <p>4. In your opinion, were procedures and human resources available and were they enough and appropriate to implement the project strategy in a timely manner and with quality?</p> <p>5. Did the institutional/organizational structure of the project contribute to achieving efficient and results-based management? Was there clarity in the functions and roles to be fulfilled by each member? What were the main challenges with regard to the project's management and administration? What were the causes and results of the changes made to the Project team?</p> <p>6. Were there delays in financial and technical execution? What were the causes of these delays? Was there the ability to resolve any potential inconveniences?</p> <p>7. Did the mechanisms, institutional arrangements, and technical and financial management procedures contribute to achieving the project's outcomes and objectives? What elements would you highlight? What aspects would you reinforce?</p> <p>8. What are the factors that influenced the implementation costs that you can identify?</p>
<p>Criterion: Environmental and social safeguards</p>
<p>9. In your opinion, did the project take environmental and social concerns into account in its design and implementation?</p> <p>10. Have the social, cultural and institutional specificities of the beneficiaries been included in the design and implementation of actions? Have the methodologies been adjusted to deal with these specificities?</p> <p>11. As far as you know, has the project included into its actions the provisions of the country's National Safeguards System?</p>
<p>Criterion: cross-cutting matters</p>
<p>Gender</p> <p>12. To what extent did the project contribute to FAO's gender objectives? (List the objectives).</p> <p>13. To what extent did the project contribute to GEF's gender objectives? (List the objectives).</p> <p>14. Was there a strategy aimed at ensuring the inclusion of the gender dimension as from the time of the design or were other specific actions taken to mainstream the gender perspective? How did the project ensure parity in participation and representation of women in planning and implementation? (focus on indicators and activities, generation of conditions, incentives to make decisions for design or execution purposes, type of decisions made, increase in income).</p> <p>15. How did the project contribute to the empowerment of women? (focus on managerial positions and/or those entailing a certain level of responsibility, changes in power relations between men and women).</p>
<p>Indigenous peoples</p> <p>16. Were there beneficiaries that belonged to indigenous peoples across the intervention territories? Was the Free, Prior and Informed Consent Manual applied?</p>

17. To what extent were indigenous beneficiaries duly informed, consulted and involved in the decision-making process before and during the project's implementation? (focus on specific actions, key stakeholders/leaders/implementers).
18. Have appropriate mechanisms and procedures been established for the effective participation of beneficiary indigenous communities? Did the design and implementation of training material and methodologies take into account any potential cultural differences of the indigenous communities?
19. Has the project had specific effects on the indigenous peoples involved? Which?

Criterion: Sustainability

20. Have actions been taken to ensure the initiative's sustainability? If so, which?
21. What activities and effects generated by the project will be kept in place once the project's support comes to an end?
22. What activities and effects generated by the project will NOT be kept in place once support comes to an end? Why?
23. Have risks that could jeopardize the initiative's sustainability been identified? How have the identified risks and mitigation measures been managed?
24. Have the local stakeholders/beneficiaries taken ownership of the good practices learned during the project?
25. Do you consider that there are institutional conditions in the State to continue with the processes promoted by the project?
26. Does the State (national, regional and local) have the institutional capacity to replicate elsewhere the capacities and practices developed through the project? How likely is it for the project to be replicated within other national contexts?
27. Have resources been identified to replicate the project in other national or international contexts?
28. Has the project used existing FAO networks to ensure it is replicated within other contexts?

Criterion: Factors affecting project performance

Project implementation

29. Has FAO fulfilled the expected functions? To what extent has FAO provided supervision, guidance and support (technical, administrative and operational) during implementation? Was this support timely? What aspects would you highlight? What elements could be improved?

Project execution

30. Has the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development fulfilled the responsibilities related to the project's execution? Can you identify difficulties or obstacles (internal and external) that may have affected the project's execution?

Monitoring and evaluation

31. Has the project developed and implemented a monitoring and evaluation system? Did the monitoring and evaluation system collect information systematically, using appropriate methodologies? Did the monitoring and evaluation system contribute to better project management? Did the monitoring and evaluation system facilitate the project's technical and operational management? Was the budget allocated for monitoring and evaluation tasks suitable? What strengths and weaknesses can you identify in the monitoring and evaluation system?

Co-financing

32. Has the committed co-financing materialized as planned? What difficulties can you identify? Have the delays in co-financing affected the project's technical execution? Have resources additional to those planned been leveraged?

Stakeholder Engagement

33. How would you assess the participation of partners during the project cycle? What are the participation mechanisms? Are all partners still working on the project? What could have been improved in terms of quality, level of stakeholder involvement and coordination to make the project more successful? (think about design and implementation).

34. Have other stakeholders, such as academia, research centers, civil society or the private sector been involved in the project's design and/or implementation?

Communication, knowledge management and outputs

35. How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting the objectives, progress, outcomes and key messages to its partners, stakeholders and the public at large? Which would you highlight? What could have been done better in the field of communication and knowledge management?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS PROTOCOL – STATE OFFICIALS

Project: Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEI)

Target group of the instrument: Argentine State authorities and officials

Purpose of the Interview: Evaluate and compare qualitative information related to the project's criteria and evaluation questions.

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Interviewers: Germán Luebert and Gabriela Sbarra

Observation: With a view to holding a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of the questions will be adapted to the key agent(s) interviewed.

Questions to the key agent

Not all questions will apply to all key agents. Some will be selected from this list based on responsibilities, thematic areas and the information managed by the interviewee.

Introductory questions

What is your name?

What is your position and your responsibility within the project and the characteristics of your link therewith?

Criterion: Relevance

1. Taking into account the national context and the strategic and political priorities of the Argentine State regarding biodiversity conservation and IAS management, do you think that the project's objectives and strategies were pertinent?
2. Have there been changes affecting the relevance of the project since its formulation? If so, which are these changes?
3. Did the COVID-19 pandemic condition the project's normal execution? In what way? Were any adjustments and/or innovations implemented in response to this context?

Criterion: Effectiveness

4. In your opinion, which have been the main outcomes and effects stemming from the project's execution?
5. How do you believe the project has contributed to strengthening governance for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of IAS?
6. Component 1. In your opinion, to what extent has the project contributed to strengthening institutional capacities for IAS management?
7. Component 1. How do you assess the effects, functionality and methodologies used for: a. The design and start-up of the national information system; b. The establishment of coordination and governance mechanisms for the system; c. Capacity-building of the State and its officials?
8. Component 2. In your opinion, what is the project's contribution to the strengthening of regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms that support the application of the ENEI? What aspects would you highlight? What is your assessment regarding the quality and possibilities of implementation at the national, provincial and local levels?
9. Component 3. In your opinion, what has been the project's contribution to the implementation and validation of the protocol for managing IAS? What lessons would you draw from the developed pilot initiatives?
10. Component 3. Have the measures and methodologies for early detection and control of IAS promoted by the project been effective?

<p>11. Component 4. What has been the project’s contribution to the implementation of the pilot programme for the eradication of American beavers in the Province of Tierra del Fuego? What are the main lessons learned from this programme?</p> <p>12. Component 4. What is the level of progress achieved by the bi-national beaver eradication programme in Tierra del Fuego? What barriers and enabling factors can you identify?</p> <p>13. In your opinion and taking into account your experience in executing the project, which have been the strengths and weaknesses that have allowed (or not) proposed indicators and outputs to be achieved?</p> <p>14. Have unplanned outcomes occurred? Could you describe and rate them?</p>
<p>Criterion: Environmental and social safeguards</p>
<p>15. In your opinion, did the project take environmental and social concerns into account in its design and implementation?</p> <p>16. Have the social, cultural and institutional specificities of the beneficiaries been included in the design and implementation of actions? Have the methodologies been adjusted to deal with these specificities?</p> <p>17. As far as you know, has the project included into its actions the provisions of the country's National Safeguards System?</p>
<p>Criterion: cross-cutting matters</p>
<p>18. How did the project ensure parity in participation and representation in planning and implementation for the benefit of women? (focus on generating conditions, incentives to make decisions in design or execution, type of decisions made, increase in income).</p> <p>19. How did the project contribute to the empowerment of women? (Focus on managerial positions and/or those entailing a certain level of responsibility, changes in power relations between men and women).</p> <p>20. Have appropriate mechanisms and procedures been established for the effective participation of beneficiary indigenous communities? Did the design and implementation of training material and methodologies take into account any potential cultural differences of the indigenous communities and were they understood by them?</p>
<p>Criterion: Sustainability</p>
<p>21. Have actions been taken at the State level to ensure the initiative’s sustainability? If so, which?</p> <p>22. What project actions and effects will be kept in place once the project’s support comes to an end?</p> <p>23. Do you consider that the institutional conditions exist in the State to continue with the processes promoted by the project? Is there State institutional capacity to uphold the outcomes achieved?</p> <p>24. Is there the will and capacity in the State to replicate the project in other contexts?</p> <p>25. Are risks identified that could jeopardize the initiative’s sustainability? How could they have been mitigated?</p>
<p>Criterion: Factors affecting project performance</p>
<p>Project implementation</p> <p>26. Has FAO fulfilled the expected functions? To what extent has FAO provided supervision, guidance and support (technical, administrative and operational) during implementation? Was this support timely? What aspects would you highlight? What elements could be improved?</p>
<p>Project execution</p> <p>27. Has the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development fulfilled the responsibilities related to the project’s execution? Can you identify difficulties or obstacles (internal and external) that may have affected the project’s execution?</p>
<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>28. How would you assess the participation of State institutions during the project cycle? What are the mechanisms available for participation? How has the project’s coordination worked out at the national and regional level?</p>
<p>Co-financing</p> <p>Has the committed co-financing materialized as planned? What difficulties can you identify?</p>
<p>Communication, knowledge management and outputs</p>

How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting the objectives, progress, outcomes and key messages to its partners, stakeholders and the public at large? Which would you highlight? What could have been done better in the field of communication and knowledge management?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – BENEFICIARIES

Project: Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEEL)

Target group of the instrument: Social stakeholders who are the direct beneficiaries of the pilots implemented by the project.

Purpose of the Interview: Evaluate and compare qualitative information related to the project's criteria and evaluation questions.

Duration: 30-45 minutes

Interviewers: Germán Luebert and Gabriela Sbarra

Observation: With a view to holding a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of the questions will be adapted to the key agent(s) interviewed.

Questions to the key agent

Not all questions will apply to all key agents. Some will be selected from this list based on responsibilities, thematic areas and the information managed by the interviewee.

Introductory questions

What is your name?

What community/town do you belong to? What is your position in the community? What is your role in the project? In your opinion, what is the project's objective?

Criterion: Relevance

1. Do you think that the project satisfactorily meets your needs and those of your community?
2. Did the COVID-19 pandemic condition the project's normal execution? In what way? Were any adjustments and/or innovations implemented in response to this context?

Criterion: Effectiveness

3. Which do you think have been the main outcomes and effects stemming from the project's execution?
4. In your opinion, has the project managed to raise awareness, transfer knowledge and build capacities in the community? What aspects would you highlight? (detail the training spaces offered).
5. Have you had timely access to information of interest generated by the project? What elements of the implemented communication strategies would you highlight and which do you think were missing or should have been strengthened?
6. What effects has the project had on your community?
7. In your opinion, and taking into account your experience in executing the project, which have been the strengths and weaknesses that have allowed (or not) improvements in managing IAS?

Criterion: Environmental and social safeguards

8. In your opinion, did the project take environmental and social concerns into account in its design and implementation?
9. Have the social, cultural and institutional specificities of the beneficiaries been included in the design and implementation of actions? Have the methodologies been duly adjusted to deal with these specificities?

Criterion: cross-cutting matters

Gender

10. How were women engaged and represented in the planning, training and implementation processes of project activities? Have the necessary conditions been in place (appropriate time and space, day-care centers, etc.) to facilitate the participation of women in the project's actions?

<p>11. How did the project support women in taking leadership roles and in actively participating?</p> <p>12. What could have been done to improve women’s participation in the project, both in leadership positions and as beneficiaries?</p> <p>Indigenous Peoples</p> <p>13. To what extent have the (indigenous) communities been duly informed, consulted and involved in the decision-making process before and during project implementation? (specific actions)</p> <p>14. Have adequate mechanisms and procedures been established for the effective participation of beneficiary indigenous communities? Did the design and implementation of the training material and methodologies take into account any potential cultural differences of the indigenous communities?</p> <p>15. Does the project’s technical team have the capacity to work appropriately with the native peoples present across the intervention territory?</p> <p>16. Have the training materials and methodologies been easy to understand for you? Were they adapted to the social and cultural characteristics of your community?</p> <p>17. Has the project had specific effects on the indigenous peoples involved? If so, which effects?</p> <p>18. What could have been done to improve the participation of indigenous communities in the project?</p>
<p>Criterion: Sustainability</p>
<p>19. What capacities has your community/organization developed to promote stand-alone continuity of the project’s achievements? What activities and effects generated by the project will be kept in place once the project’s support comes to an end? What factors will allow this to happen?</p> <p>20. Has a strategy been developed for access to local, regional and national markets that allows them to continue their activities? (Use indicators from Annex 4 of the Terms of Reference).</p> <p>21. What project activities and effects will NOT be kept in place once the project’s support comes to an end? Why?</p> <p>22. Have you/your community/organization autonomously replicated the practices and knowledge acquired as a result of the project? Have they provided you with methodologies and materials to replicate what you have learned?</p> <p>23. What project achievements and benefits should be considered for their enhancement in other spaces?</p> <p>24. What aspects do you think should be strengthened to ensure the project’s sustainability?</p>
<p>Criterion: Factors affecting project performance</p>
<p>25. How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting the objectives, progress, outcomes and key messages to you and your community? Which would you highlight? What can be improved in this area?</p> <p>26. What could have been done better in the field of communication?</p>

BENEFICIARIES FOCUS GROUP

<p>Project: Strengthening governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (ENEI)</p>	
<p>Target group of the instrument: Project beneficiaries.</p>	
<p>Purpose of the interview: Evaluate and compare qualitative information related to the project’s criteria and evaluation.</p>	
<p>Moderators: Germán Luebert and Gabriela Sbarra</p>	
<p>Duration: 45 minutes</p>	<p>Number of participants: four to six.</p>
<p>Observation: With a view to holding a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of the questions will be adapted to the participating key agent(s).</p>	
<p>Introduction</p>	

- Welcome participants and thank them for being there and for their willingness to participate.
- Introduce moderator.
- Summarize the purpose of the project's evaluation.
- Briefly explain the focus group methodology.
- Emphasize confidentiality of the meeting.
- Promote participation: there are no incorrect answers or comments, on the contrary, all ideas are interesting, important and valid.
- Participants introduce themselves (name and organization).
- Request consent to record and/or take notes.

Guiding questions

1. How has your participation worked out in the project activities' planning, training and implementation processes?
2. What new techniques, skills and/or knowledge have you developed within the framework of the project? How have they impacted your work or community?
3. What benefits have the practices learned within the project's framework brought to you and/or your community?
4. What have been the noticeable changes —tangible and intangible— that you most value based on your participation in the project?
5. What has the participation and representation of women been like in the project activities' planning, training and implementation processes?
6. To what extent has your (indigenous) community been duly informed, consulted and involved in the decision-making process before and during project implementation?
7. How would you assess the degree of satisfaction with the process and its outcomes?
8. What could have been done differently to further improve the adaptive capacity of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to climate change?

Appendix 7. Co-financing Table⁴

Institution	Type of Institution	Committed co-financing (USD) at project formulation	Effective co-financing (USD) at the time of the evaluation	Percentage of Effective Co-financing
Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development	Government	USD 2,375,000	USD 1,026,733	43.2%
National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET)	Government	USD 803,682	USD 931,455	115.9%
National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA)	Government	USD 83,000	USD 70,000	84.3%
SENASA	Government	USD 176,900	USD 180,023	101.8%
Public Communications Secretariat	Government	USD 8,417,774	USD 0	0.0%
APN (Parks Admin)	Government	USD 335,588	USD 727,170	216.7%
Coast Guard (PNA), Environmental Protection Directorate	Government	USD 294,118	USD 295,083	100.3%
Provincial Governments	Government	USD 5,511,839	USD 3,617,934	65.6%
FAO	United Nations	USD 250,000	USD 250,000	100.0%

⁴ Co-financing reported as at May 2022. After this report was finalized, it was informed that upon project completion (July 2022) co-financing had reached 78%.