Final Report - Mid-term review
Executive Summary

Strengthening management and governance for the conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biodiversity in coastal marine ecosystems in Chile.

Country: Chile

GEF Agency: FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Executing Agency: Ministry of the Environment (MMA)

Funding Source: Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund

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Acronyms and abbreviations

MPCA	Multi-Purpose Conservation Area (Área de Conservación Múltiples Usos, in spanish)
BH	Budget Holder
BTOR	Back to Office Report
CGP	National Management Committee (spanish aconym)
CRUBC	Regional Committee for the Use of the Coastal Zone (spanish aconym)
NCP	National Coordinator of the Project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GORE	Regional Government (spanish acronym)
GTO	GEF Technical Officer
IFOP	Fisheries Development Institute (spanish acronym)
INDESPA	National Institute for the Sustainable Development of Artisanal Fisheries and Small-Scale Aquaculture (spanish acronym)
LoA	Letter of Agreement
LTO	Leader Technical Officer
MBN	Ministry of National Assets (spanish acronym)
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, GEF
MMA	Ministry of the Environment (spanish acronym)
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PNUBC	National Policy for Coastal Management (spanish acronym)
USD	United States dollar
SME	System of Monitoring and Evaluation

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Finally, we extend our gratitude to the beneficiaries. Their willingness and opinion were key to enriching the process. The perceptions of the local communities were a fundamental input for the preparation of this report.

Executive Summary

RE1. The project "Strengthening management and governance for the conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biodiversity in coastal marine ecosystems in Chile" - hereinafter the "Project" - is an initiative financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and executed by the Ministry of the Environment of Chile.

RE2. Its total budget is USD $25,331,101, of which USD $3,502,968 is contributed by the GEF and USD $21,828,133 corresponds to co-financing from national institutions.

RE3. The project formally started in July 2021 and is expected to be completed by December 2025.

RE4. In accordance with GEF and FAO policies and procedures, a Mid-Term Review (MTR) must be conducted at the mid-point of the project cycle implementation period. It is in this context that this report was prepared.

RE5. The objective of MTR was to conduct an independent assessment of the relevance of the design and actions implemented by the Project, its effectiveness in achieving results and objectives, the efficiency in the use of resources, the incorporation of cross-cutting perspectives, the likelihood that the effects obtained will be sustained once funding ceases (sustainability) and the incidence of other factors that may have affected the Project's performance. The purpose is to extract lessons learned and recommendations aimed at improving, correcting and/or enhancing future actions of the project.

RE6. The temporal scope was between the project start date -July 2021- and the start date of the MTR in May 2024.

RE7. The geographic scope coincided with the intervention territory and the interaction between the different scales. Institutions and actions of national and local scope were contemplated, with emphasis on the pilot sites located in the communes of Puerto Cisnes, La Higuera and Freirina.

MAIN FINDINGS BY DIMENSIONS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Strategic relevance

RE8. The project has adequately responded to the global priorities, the strategic guidelines of the national and international institutions involved, and to some of the interests of the beneficiary groups.

RE9. The actions accomplished and the results achieved so far have been consistent with the strategies proposed by GEF-7. Likewise, there is evidence of alignment with national efforts for biodiversity conservation and planning of the country's marine-coastal ecosystems. In addition to the above, it is valued as relevant for the development of FAO's strategy at the global and national levels and responds to three of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 agenda (SDGs 5, 14 and 15).

RE10. The direct beneficiaries of the project demand as a priority to solve social needs that have remained unsatisfied over time (housing, drinking water, road infrastructure, etc.), whose possibilities of being solved are beyond the project's scope of action.

RE11. However, the MTR team notes that the intervention has managed to respond to other types of community needs and interests: to conserve the environment and its resources and to have an articulate, effective and influential voice in decision-making processes.

Coherence

RE12. The Project has articulated actions with 32 institutions. These collaborations have been useful for the development and effective implementation of the products, as they have taken advantage of the ongoing processes, knowledge, experience and territorial presence of these institutions.

Effectiveness

RE13. RE13. The Project reports a technical progress of 31% with respect to its final goals. However, even though the project has not achieved the programmed in absolute terms, the MTR confirms that the project is on track to achieve it, presenting significant and promising progress in some key areas.

RE14. Products that have already materialized, such as: capacity building programs for beneficiaries and government officials; the establishment and support of 18 local committees; the hake marketing strategy; and the resolution on the "puye" fishery, in addition to others yet to materialize, such as: the development instrument to be elaborated jointly with INDESPA; the financing of entrepreneurship to promote a blue economy; the process of zoning the use of the coastal edge in the southern pilot site, with strategic environmental evaluation and incorporating Marine Spatial Planning (MSP); the management plan for the MPCA "Archipelago de Humboldt"; and the updating of the National Policy for Coastal Management (PNUBC). All of these have a high potential for replication, scalability and mobility to achieve expected results and advance towards the project's objective.

Progress towards impact

RE15. Although the project presents important achievements in product development, these are not clearly expressed in a contribution to the progression of the theory of change towards the intended effects and impacts yet.

RE16. For the MTR team, this situation is mainly due to assumptions that were not identified at the beginning and have not materialized, acting as "bottlenecks" in the achievement of results and objectives.

RE17. There is still time to make corrections. Some products associated with these assumptions are not yet developed (such as incentive mechanisms) and the products already developed have not had the opportunity to be used in favor of the success of institutional governance spaces to be implemented in the pilot sites.

Additionality

RE18. The MTR finds that the Project has generated incremental benefits in four of the five dimensions of additionality suggested by the GEF. As follows: Technology transfer and/or adoption; Financing flows; Legal and/or regulatory changes; Improvements in the standard of living of beneficiary groups.

RE19. The generation of global environmental benefits (fifth dimension of additionality) will depend on the added value that the project is able to give to the processes of Marine Spatial Planning in the commune of Puerto Cisnes and the elaboration of the management plan of the MPCA "Archipelago de Humboldt".

Efficiency

RE20. The extension and territorial dispersion of the pilot sites, the thematic diversity and the multiplicity of activities to be executed, have implied significant programmatic, logistical and management challenges for the Project.

RE21. To handle these complexities and fulfill their responsibilities in a timely manner, the teams have pushed themselves to the limits of their capabilities and have had to cross disciplinary boundaries to do so.

RE22. Although the efforts made show a good efficiency of the human resources available, key stakeholders point out that there are shortcomings in the structure of the profiles and the number of professionals in the team. The most notorious, given its importance for the revised project, is the profile of a person with expertise in political management, with knowledge of the functioning of the State and governance at the institutional level.

RE23. In budgetary terms, the project has experienced a 40% under-execution. As of May 2024, it has materialized $1.7 million USD against $2.8 million USD planned, leaving $1.8 million USD to be executed.

RE24. Although this situation can be seen as a weakness, it is also an opportunity; it offers financial space for an eventual extension and for programmatic adjustments aimed at maximizing the project's results over the remaining time.

Catalytic effect

RE25. Although at the time of the Review there is no clear catalytic effect underway, some processes and products already materialized that have good potential and others yet to be executed that could have it are identified.

RE26. Among those already developed, the training sessions for public officials and local stakeholders and the multi-stakeholder dialogues held at the southern pilot site stand out. Specifically, those that resulted in the resolution of the "Puye" fishery in the MPCA "Pitipalena Añihue" in Puerto Cisnes and the agreements established between the salmon farms and the recyclers in the same commune.

RE27. In the future, the Project will support a coastal zoning process using the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) methodology in the commune of Puerto Cisnes and will be responsible for supporting the development of the MPCA "Archipelago de Humboldt" Management Plan. The MTR identifies here an opportunity to generate favorable conditions for replication. Good systematization and proper management of the knowledge generated will be key to taking advantage of this opportunity.

Factors affecting performance

Design

RE28. The design of the Project contemplates a wide range of activities, a great diversity of actors involved and an ambitious objective, characteristics that resulted in a significant level of complexity both in its comprehension and execution.

RE29. The development of a theory of change should help to clarify this type of complexities, however, the one constructed for the Project at the design stage is an almost exact reflection of the results matrix, limiting the effectiveness of the enlightening function expected for this instrument.

RE30. Despite these difficulties, the MTR highlights a good capacity for adaptation. The team has responded effectively and appropriately to these changes and/or inconveniences and has sought to build a narrative that allows the various stakeholders to understand the Project as a whole.

Implementation and execution

RE31. FAO, as implementing agency, has satisfactorily accompanied the identification, preparation of the idea, formulation and implementation of the Project and has ensured quality monitoring and evaluation.

RE32. The execution functions are also satisfactory. The management of the Project's day-to-day activities has been carried out in accordance with the agreements established with the partners. Likewise, financial accountability, use of funds, procurement and contracting have been carried out with due probity and transparency.

Co-financing

RE33. By June 2023, the project's co-financing institutions have reported an amount equivalent to only 4.5% of the total amount committed, i.e. USD 988,026 out of USD 21,828,133.

RE34. According to key informants, this figure does not coincide with the actual contributions; it is due to a lack of recording and follow-up of the contributions made, rather than to a failure to make resources available. Regularizing this situation should be a priority task for the remaining period of execution.

Knowledge Management

RE35. Although certain activities and processes have been recorded in data and reports, the Project has lacked a systematization and knowledge management approach aimed at transferring learning and replicating good practices.

RE36. To tell and share organized learning, evidence of the benefits that the promoted processes are generating and documentation such as manuals and guides, for example, could be useful inputs to support the work of promoting the initiative at the State level in order to promote and/or improve the prospects for sustainability and institutional attachment.

Comunication

RE37. The project has developed and maintained communication products that, according to the interviewees, are of good quality.

RE38. These products respond satisfactorily and mostly to the first of the four objectives of the communication strategy designed: "To highlight the importance of advancing towards a governance oriented towards the conservation and sustainable use of coastal marine ecosystems".

RE39. For the other three objectives: "Support access to information, participation and empowerment of local stakeholders"; "Strengthen communication and foster relationships between the project and strategic partners"; and "Support compliance with actions carried out in the context of project implementation", the scope has been weaker and it would be positive to strengthen it.

Stakeholder engagement

RE40. Stakeholders have declared active participation in the design. Likewise, during implementation, they have stated that they have been convened and have actively participated in the Project's internal governance spaces, the governance mechanisms that the Project intends to strengthen and generate, and the interchange and training opportunities offered. However, institutional partners say it is essential to establish better information flows and ensure greater participation in decision making in order to improve their involvement and commitment.

Monitoring and evaluation

RE41. The Project has implemented a comprehensive and quality monitoring and evaluation system. This system has allowed effective monitoring of the progress of indicators and annual plans (POA), as well as monitoring of risks and gender and indigenous peoples' action plans.

Cross-cutting dimensions

RE42. The Project, in accordance with the guidelines established by the GEF, carried out diagnoses and the formulation of action plans for the inclusion of transversal perspectives of gender and

indigenous peoples, including consultations and the signing of the informed consent of the indigenous communities of the intervention territory.

RE43. It has maintained a database with information disaggregated by sex, and designed indicators that respond to gender issues. In addition to the above, it has developed capacities in the team and beneficiaries and has also promoted the active participation and empowerment of women in the spaces provided by the Project.

Safeguards

RE44. The environmental and social risk categorization of the project remains "moderate". In accordance with this rating, the necessary measures have been implemented to comply with the safeguards required by the GEF.

Sustainability

RE45. The MTR identifies risks associated with future changes in the administration of the State; these changes could affect the continuity and institutional support for the Project, thus threatening its sustainability.

RE46. To mitigate these risks, it will be essential to consider a period of handover of the Project, to update commitments with the new local, regional and national governments and, above all, to focus on institutionalization through concrete planning and financing instruments such as, for example: budget glosses, resolutions, protocols of agreement, among others.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Lesson learned 1.** The governance model that the project intends to install will be more effective and sustainable if it is linked to concrete objectives and processes and, if possible, if it is attached to institutionalized, mandatory and/or binding spaces, ideally pre-existing in the State's institutional framework. (GEF category: Results**)**
- **Lesson learned 2.** For the bottom-up processes proposed by the project, to work properly, it will be crucial for the higher levels to have an articulated response capacity to the emerging demands from the grassroots level. (GEF category: Results**)**
- **Lesson learned 3.** To achieve a good framing of the calls to stakeholders at the local level, with an approach focused on the project objectives and assertive in the responses to the demands that will arise, it is better, if before the formation of local committees, an analysis of the situation of the territory and, in collaboration with regional partners, an implementation plan is made. (GEF category: Planning)
- **Lesson learned 4.** For the success of the multilevel governance promoted by the project, it is essential, along with the formation and strengthening of local spaces, to do so simultaneously at the regional and inter-institutional levels, always seeking to ensure coherence and synergy between the different levels. (GEF category: Planning)
- **Lesson learned 5.** The teaching and learning spaces were an effective alternative for fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues; they brought together a wide variety of people with conflicting interests who were initially reticent to participate in the governance committees set up by the project. (GEF category: Learning)
- **Lesson learned 6.** The interest, adherence and cooperation of and among the project's institutional stakeholders has been and will be conditioned by the timeliness and clarity of the information shared and the fluidity of the communication channels established. (GEF category: Communication)
- **Lesson learned 7.** It is crucial to concentrate efforts on key areas and precise objectives to avoid falling into a programmatic dispersion that could compromise project effectiveness. (GEF category: Planning)

- **Lesson learned 8.** The complexity inherent to the establishment of inter-institutional, multi-actor and multilevel articulation spaces requires multidisciplinary teams, including competencies in public management and knowledge of the functioning of the State, which is crucial. (GEF category: Human Resources)
- **Lesson learned 9.** Betting that, as a consequence of project implementation, gender gaps historically entrenched in the territories will be solved is unrealistic and generates fatigue and frustration in the teams and stakeholders. It is better to implement a limited plan that is consistent with the possibilities and resources available to the project. (GEF category: Gender)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. To the project team, FAO, the Ministry of Environment and other strategic partners of the project.

In order to strengthen the processes, frame the intervention, begin to institutionalize the project and make the best possible use of the pilot sites, it is recommended to concentrate implementation efforts on linking the work done, to be done and the approaches promoted (Ecosystem approach, Ecosystem approach to fisheries, gender approach, intercultural approach) with the following:

- The strategic environmental assessment process with marine spatial planning in Puerto Cisnes. To understand it as a pilot of a part of the PNUBC update (zoning guide, functions of the CRUBC and mechanisms for local and regional participation and governance).
- The elaboration of the management plan and the establishment of the bi-regional multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance model of the MPCA "Archipielago de Humboldt". Consider it as a pilot for the participatory elaboration of MPA planning instruments within the context of the new environmental institutional framework.

Suggestions:

- Reach consensus on mechanisms and responsibilities for greater visibility and protagonism of the institutions responsible for these processes.
- Take advantage of the temporal overlap of the GEF project "Strengthening inter-institutional coordination for the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in national, regional and local public policies in Chile" (GCP /CHI/11208/GFF) to articulate joint actions and sustain support to the management of the MPCA "Archipiélago de Humboldt" once the project ends.
- Consider the possibility of integrating an expert in political management with knowledge of the functioning of the state and governance at an institutional level.
- Explore possibilities for interoperability of MSP data and information with existing state platforms.
- Explore the possibilities of interoperability of MSP data and information with existing State platforms.
- Bring together experiences from other countries in the incorporation and institutionalization of gender and intercultural perspectives in the instruments to be piloted (PNUBC/ Elaboration of MPCA Management Plan).

Recommendation 2. The project team, FAO and the Ministry of Environment.

Generate a good systematization of the processes and results of the strategic environmental assessment with marine spatial planning in Puerto Cisnes and the elaboration of the management plan and the establishment of the bi-regional multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance model of the MPCA "Archipelago de Humboldt".

Suggestions:

- Generate technical documents or guidelines to support the institutional anchoring process.
- Prioritise together with strategic partners the knowledge products to be generated.
- Host the systematizations on the digital platforms of strategic partners and in FAO document repository.

Recommendation 3. The project team, FAO and the Ministry of Environment.

In order to expand the number of local beneficiaries with strengthened capacities, it is recommended to develop compact training modules that can be easily distributed in the territories, ensuring that the contents are accessible and adapted to local needs.

Suggestions:

- Explore the use of digital platforms to facilitate access to autonomous learning.
- Create and distribute educational materials that are attractive and easy to understand for different audiences at the local level.
- Establish a system of institutional recognition for people who complete training courses, providing certificates that validate and recognise their efforts and skills acquired.

Recommendation 4. To the project team and project partners.

In order to keep stakeholders informed and achieve better integration, participation and ownership, it is recommended to strengthen the Project's governance spaces as spaces for deliberation, communication and consultation.

Suggestions:

- Establish at regional level a replica space of the national management committee.
- Agree on mechanisms to ensure timely information flows.
- Hold an event at each pilot site (symposium type) to report on progress to date (state of the art), to socialize the lessons learned and knowledge generated, and to project what the intervention will be in the future.

Recommendation 5. To the team, FAO and project partners.

To strengthen the project's communications, the review recommends developing and implementing an operational action plan that includes measures aimed at:

- Streamline review and consultation processes to ensure more efficient and less bureaucratic communication.
- Ensure timely and effective delivery of information to all institutional actors (national and regional) and beneficiaries in the pilot sites.
- Promote joint and daily work with the communications teams of partner institutions.
- Develop and diversify communication channels and products, adjusting them specifically to the needs and characteristics of each target audience.

Recommendation 6. To the team, FAO and project partners.

Given the new institutional setting and the eventual reprioritization of the project, it is recommended that adjustments be made to the results matrix - changes in outputs, updating of targets and sources of verification (see details of the proposed adjustment in appendix 7).

Recommendation 7. To the team, FAO and project partners.

In order to achieve a budget execution close to 100% and to hand over the project's products and processes to the new administration, it is recommended to request a project extension of at least six months.

GEF Criteria Table

Criterias/dimensions of GEF	Clasification	Summary comments
A. RESULTS		
A1. Relevance/Pertinence	AS	The design and implementation of the project has responded to the global priorities and strategic guidelines of FAO, GEF, the 2030 Agenda, the Chilean State and beneficiary groups.
A2. Coherence	S	The project has generated partnerships with 32 institutions that contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the initiative.
A3. Effectiveness	MS	At mid-term the project presents outputs that are important and have the potential to contribute to the results and objectives. However, its technical implementation is 31% and progress linked to overcoming barriers and achieving impact in the medium term is not yet clearly visible.
A4. Efficiency	S	The financial resources provided by the GEF have been sufficient to set up a quality team, the implementation of the project activities has suffered justified delays in its implementation.
B. SUSTAINABILITY		
B1. Financial risks	MI	At the time of the MTR there are no additional resources committed over and above those of the project to sustain the processes once funding ceases.
B2. Socio-political risks	MI	The project aims to bring together multiple actors, often with disparate interests and influences. If broad consensus is not reached, there is a risk that the project will not achieve its objective.
B3. Institutional risks	MI	The country will have regional and local elections in 2023 and general elections in 2024. This is a major risk for the sustainability and continuity of the processes promoted by the project.
B4. Environmental risks	P	No environmental risks are observed that endanger the environmental sustainability of the Project.
C. IMPLEMENTATION	S	FAO as implementing agency has successfully accompanied the identification, preparation of the idea, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project.
D. EXECUTION	S	The management of the day-to-day activities of the project has been carried out in accordance with the agreements established with the partners. Accountability, use of funds, procurement and contracting have been carried out with due probity and transparency.
M&E Plan	S	The project designed and implemented a Monitoring and Evaluation System (SME) tailored to the monitoring and accountability needs of the initiative. It has maintained an orderly repository that allows easy access to sources of verification associated with the indicators and outputs developed.
Implementation of the M&E system	S	
Overall assessment of the project	MS	However, the efficiency and relevance criteria are satisfactory and highly satisfactory respectively. For the MTR, effectiveness has a higher relative weight. It is important to mention that the project has been exposed to external constraints that have prevented faster progress in achieving the desired results and outcomes.