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Terminal evaluation
of the project
“Strengthening of
governance for the
protection of biodiversity
through the formulation
and implementation of
the National Strategy on
Invasive Alien Species”



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**Terminal evaluation of the project
“Strengthening of governance for the
protection of biodiversity through the
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National Strategy on Invasive Alien
Species”**

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Abstract

The Strengthening of governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (NSIAS) project, implemented in Argentina from July 2015 to June 2022, aimed to develop a reinforced governance framework. This framework would allow for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of invasive alien species (IAS). It also sought to reinforce the current and future socioeconomic benefits that stem from the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. This includes natural resources and ecosystem services through the appropriate management of biological invasions.

This evaluation aims to independently assess the strategic relevance of the project's design and implementation, its effectiveness in achieving outputs and outcomes, and its efficiency in the use of resources. It also focuses on factors that may have affected project performance, the mainstreaming of cross-cutting perspectives and the likelihood of lasting impacts once financing is no longer provided.

The assessment utilized a participatory and collaboration-based methodology to highlight lessons learned and qualitative aspects. It relied on the following information collection techniques: a review of project documents (PRODOCs) and reports; in-depth interviews and focus group discussions; and on-site observations of the project's processes and promoted effects.

The Evaluation Team deems that, as a result of project implementation, Argentina is better prepared to face the challenge of managing IAS. Moreover, by controlling IAS, Argentina has moved towards reinforcing the socioeconomic benefits stemming from conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity.

The project's main outputs involve the regulatory field. The focus has been on reinforcing public policies to manage IAS in Argentina. This includes the approval of the NSIAS by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, which was designed by the project, and its associated Communications and Public Awareness Strategy (CPAS). Further, the project played a role in 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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Abbreviations

AOP	annual operating plan
CPAS	Communications and Public Awareness Raising Strategy of NSIAS
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
NPA	National Parks Administration
NSIAS	National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
OVI	objectively verifiable indicator
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PPR	project progress report
PRODOC	project document
SENASA	National Service of Agrifood Health and Quality
SNIEEI	National Information System on Invasive Alien Species
TOC	theory of change

Executive summary

1. The following is the executive summary for the final evaluation of the project, Strengthening of 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. It was also 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 evaluation aimed to conduct an independent assessment of the project’s strategic relevance in terms of design and implementation. It covers: effectiveness in achieving outputs, outcomes and objectives; efficiency in the use of resources; factors that may have affected performance; the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues; and the likelihood of lasting impacts, that is, sustainability, once funding is no longer provided. The lessons learned and recommendations aim to improve the impact potential of this initiative and any other future initiatives.

Main findings by evaluation criteria

Strategic relevance. Rating: highly satisfactory

4. The Evaluation Team confirms that the project was highly relevant for Outcome 3 Objective 2 within the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area and Objective 2 of the FAO Strategic Framework. The latter was effective during project formulation and throughout much of its execution.
5. The project was also consistent with Argentina’s National Strategy for Biological Diversity. It aligns with article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ratified by Argentina, and with the Aichi targets that are in its strategic plan.
6. Effective invasive alien species (IAS) management proved to be relevant for communities that use ecosystem services where biodiversity is under threat.

Effectiveness. Rating: satisfactory

7. Fulfilment of the outlined objectives is satisfactory. The Evaluation Team asserts that Argentina is better prepared to face the challenge of IAS management (global environmental objective) and that it has made progress towards strengthening the socioeconomic benefits of conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity by controlling IAS (development objective). This is a result of project implementation.
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 by its Spanish acronym). The design of high quality risk analysis systems, protocols, strategies and regulatory proposals support this strengthening. The development of functional and technical capacities and a successful communications strategy are also contributing factors.
9. Further, project execution led to the adoption of legal and regulatory frameworks (Component 2) that highlight the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (NSIAS) and its Communications and Public Awareness Raising Strategy (CPAS). The aforementioned

outcomes foster a favourable prescriptive institutional scenario for effectively managing the protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

10. All nine pilot initiatives (Components 3 and 4) fulfilled their main function to: test management practices, methodologies and protocols; generate knowledge; place the issue on the public agenda; build capacities; and raise awareness among the different stakeholders.
11. Overall, the pilot projects were positive. They were, however, flawed in terms of design, goal feasibility, execution scope and results monitoring. They have also been faulty in producing evidence on the environmental, social, productive and economic benefits that adequate management of each IAS under the different initiatives could provide to the participating communities.
12. The Evaluation Team confirms that specific agreements and joint working groups have been established between the Republic of Argentina and the Republic of Chile (Component 4). However, political agreements on the viability and formalization of a new phase of a binational beaver management programme was not included in the scope of the project.

Efficiency. Rating: moderately satisfactory

13. The Evaluation Team asserts that the financial resources provided by the GEF (USD 3.8 million) were enough to carry out the activities and achieve the quality outputs committed to in the project document (PRODOC).
14. The Evaluation Team confirms that the organizational structure and assigned responsibilities were adequate to implement the project.
15. Although the project reached 99 percent financial delivery by May 2022, delays resulted in two justified extensions due to a remaining budget (USD 1 030 003 and USD 634 407 in 2019 and 2021, respectively). The Evaluation Team opines that the exchange rate and context (governmental change and health emergency) are the reasons for not meeting budget execution levels.
16. Although high standards were met, the Evaluation Team collected enough evidence to assert that the administrative procedures for hiring external services and procuring equipment required by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were subject to red tape. This slowed down all procedures in the technical execution of certain project activities.

Factors affecting project performance. Rating: moderately satisfactory

17. Project design: the project design was weak in terms of the vertical and horizontal rationale of its results matrix, which had not been identified in a timely manner. These shortcomings did not hinder the planned effects and impacts. However, they did affect stakeholder management and accountability.
18. Implementation and execution: FAO's compliance with the role and responsibilities of both the implementing and executing agency hindered project implementation and execution. 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 had faced difficulties (governmental changes and defined roles and responsibilities for execution and implementation, which were not entirely evident) that affected its work as an executing agency. Regardless, the ministry was able to perform its functions within the requirements and in accordance with the institutional arrangements required by the GEF and those outlined in the formulation document.
20. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): the Evaluation Team found that a monitoring system for technical and financial execution, timely decision-making and easier access to information were omitted in the project's design and implementation. This seriously affected project performance.
21. Co-financing: as of May 2022, the institutions have reported a level of co-financing that is below the project design's committed amount (only 39 percent). This has not significantly affected the scope of the outputs and the execution of activities foreseen in the PRODOC. The Evaluation Team confirms that co-financing may be higher once the institutional contributions are reported upon project closure.
22. Stakeholder engagement: for key stakeholders and the Evaluation Team, the project design was carried out within a participatory framework, along with the formulation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (NSIAS) and the CPAS. The level of engagement was different depending on the stakeholder, organization or institution, but the procedures recommended by the GEF's policy on stakeholder engagement were generally respected.
23. Communications and knowledge management: the project had strong communications and knowledge management, which was highly valued. Designing and rolling out a strategy with an expert devoted to this aspect ensured that the generated knowledge was shared with stakeholders.

Cross-cutting issues. Rating: satisfactory

24. Gender: the PRODOC states that a gender approach would have been mainstreamed in various components and outputs, but that the design of a specific plan was not envisaged.
25. Although the implementation of most 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 NSIAS and the CPAS.
26. Indigenous Peoples (social safeguards): initially, the project faced difficulties in the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making. These shortcomings were resolved during implementation. The communities were able to hold free and informed discussions so that they could propose specific actions and agree to participate in the initiative where they became active lead 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 internationally applicable 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 (NSIAS and CPAS) adopted by Argentina during project 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 to the institutional framework, has a high probability of being upheld over time.
29. At the time of evaluation, the developed information system – the SNIEEI – was in the process of migrating its 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. The long-lasting effects and management of the NSIAS will be in the hands of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Its success will depend on the allocation of resources, periodic technical committee meetings to ensure 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 that have been promoted by the project.
32. The Evaluation Team identifies the following as risks that could jeopardize sustainability: a change in authorities and their priorities; difficulty in accessing funds; repercussions on advocacy efforts due to pressure groups that are against the control or eradication of IAS; and scarce human resources to work on this issue.

Conclusions

33. The following conclusions consider the main findings that are linked to the questions and criteria that have guided this evaluation.

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

Conclusion 2. Effectiveness: the Evaluation Team concludes that the actions implemented and the outcomes achieved translated into the strengthened ability of Argentina to face the challenge of IAS management. This entails a high technical level for executing activities and achieving most of the formulated goals and indicators.

34. The main reasons behind the achievement of the intended objectives involve: generating and integrating knowledge based on the implementation of the pilot initiatives; the design and institutional anchoring of public policy instruments, especially the NSIAS and the CPAS; strengthening the SNIEEI; and building functional and technical capacities, as well as individual, organizational and environmental ones for managing IAS.

Conclusion 3. Efficiency: the Evaluation Team concludes that efficient project execution was moderately satisfactory. The reasons for this assessment are: a) a highly technical team but with

insufficient human resources to quickly roll out actions; b) a financial execution close to 100 percent 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 outcomes does not account for the contribution or direct changes that the project would bring about nor the achievement and use of the expected outputs. Regarding the horizontal rationale (indicators, sources and assumptions), certain outcome indicators and output targets lacked specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound criteria.
36. Project implementation, execution and co-execution guaranteed the processes and outputs, as well as alignment with the GEF requirements. However, these aspects could have been better if the definition of roles and responsibilities of both the implementing and executing agencies would have been clearer, if the staff devoted to administrative tasks had been duly reinforced, and if the governmental changes had been better managed.
37. It is concluded that the lack of an M&E system (neither designed nor implemented) substantially affected technical and financial monitoring, as well as the availability of sources and other materials produced by the project.
38. The Evaluation Team stated that communications and knowledge management were a success factor. These aspects facilitated good dissemination of activities and awareness raising among various audiences. They also ensured the distribution of relevant data and background information, and good programmatic ownership on behalf of stakeholders.
39. It is concluded that the undermaterialization of 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 favourable in 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 issues, gender: despite the fact that no gender-responsive strategy was developed to monitor differentiated effects, the Evaluation Team highlights the mainstreaming of gender and Indigenous Peoples' perspectives in two of the most important project outputs. This involves the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (NSIAS) and the CPAS. This ensures, at least in the field of institutional planning, the considerations for these fields when designing and executing IAS management.

Conclusion 6. Participation of Indigenous Peoples, social safeguards: the Evaluation Team concludes that, although late, measures were satisfactorily adopted to safeguard the participation of Indigenous Peoples. This ensured that the communities could hold free and informed discussions, propose the inclusion of specific actions and agree to participate in the initiative. Ultimately, they became active lead players.

Conclusion 7. Environmental safeguards: the Evaluation Team was able to confirm that the project had adopted the necessary measures to avoid harmful impact on the habitats in which it

intervened. It did not go against applicable international environmental treaties or agreements, and did not promote the introduction of potential IAS.

Conclusion 8. Sustainability: three main factors ensure sustainability. They involve the institutional anchoring of public policy instruments and information systems; capacity building among institutions and state officials; and the establishment of a governance structure. All of these were achieved during project implementation.

41. Future challenges will be to: ensure financing; mitigate the effects that stakeholders may have on decision-makers; adequately manage governmental changes; and move forward in materializing intermediate conditions and assumptions as 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, then it will be necessary to make timely decisions aimed at overcoming this difficulty (include these timeframes in the annual operating plans [AOPs] or hire more personnel).

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

Lesson learned 3. A binational strategic plan is necessary for the effective control of cross-border IAS. The establishment of high-level political dialogue and binational interinstitutional 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, eventually, risks at the judicial level. Given this reality, communications, academic and 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, having an expert on 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 under evaluation. Such assistance carries 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 the 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. Part of the project's success is at stake when dealing with interinstitutional relationships and the proper functioning of the established governance bodies and mechanisms. The latter must be outlined explicitly, reviewed and updated if necessary. 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 advance the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. To FAO on strengthening M&E systems. It is highly recommended that projects design and implement robust M&E systems at the start of their execution. These should align with institutional M&E systems and have, at a minimum, the following: an organizational structure; instruments for technical-financial follow up (activities, outputs and indicators) and the 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 arranged by component, outcomes, outputs and activities.

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

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 interinstitutional coordination and management for future initiatives, it would be advisable that, at project launch and during their execution, the governance mechanisms be reviewed – and eventually updated or renewed – together with stakeholders. This 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 issues. The mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues throughout the entire project cycle is mandatory for initiatives implemented by FAO and financed by the GEF. To improve the response to this demand, it would be highly advisable to systematically and periodically build capacities among the project teams and the country office, actively disseminate the set of institutional tools for the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, 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 quality assurance and continuity of the SNIEEI. The quality assurance, permanent updating and sustainability of the SNIEEI mechanism should have a formal cooperation agreement with the *Universidad Nacional del Sur*. This should include, *inter alia*: mechanisms to systematically and bidirectionally share data and analyses so that the university can 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 interjurisdictional plans for

managing IAS. Given that a large part of the control or eradication of IAS takes place through provincial and interjurisdictional 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, the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development should harness the project's momentum to implement mechanisms for disseminating the NSIAS and the CPAS. This would manage the knowledge generated by the project in all provinces and support 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 and cultural) that effective control of IAS entails. This should be 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 communications strategies for managing IAS. The project has managed to develop a high quality communications strategy. It has an innovative approach to a complex communications agenda, such as the one on IAS. Therefore, it is highly recommended that continuity be provided to the communications challenge. Further, the impact of the communications pieces, messages and social perception of the IAS agenda should be constantly monitored.

Recommendation 9. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development in charge of presiding over the interinstitutional technical committee. Part of the sustainability of the project's efforts and achievements focuses on the creation and implementation of the committee. Given 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 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 operate and ensure the participation of all institutions involved.

Recommendation 10. To FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development on the scalability and sustainability of interventions. To maximize project sustainability and scalability, FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development should consider the development of advocacy strategies for institutional anchoring and the establishment of agreements between public and private stakeholders. This should be in the sustainability plan framework and the project design, and then implemented at an early stage.

Executive Summary Table 1. Rating of GEF evaluation criteria

GEF criterion/subcriterion	Rating	Summarized comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	MS	Project design and implementation are consistent with the priorities and interest of the different stakeholders.
A1.1. Consistency with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	MS	The project was highly relevant for Objective 2, Outcome 2 of the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area and Objective 2 of the FAO Strategic Framework.
A1.2. Relevance for national, regional and global priorities and beneficiaries' needs	MS	Project design and execution are consistent with Argentina's priorities and needs of the beneficiary groups.
A1.3. Complimentarity with existing interventions	MS	The project's coordinated actions with IAS management initiatives are underway.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall evaluation of project outcomes	S	The outcomes contributed to strengthening Argentina's management of IAS.
B1.1. Fulfilment of project outcomes	S	The project achieved the planned outcomes.
B1.2. Progress towards achieving project outcomes and objectives	S	The achieved outputs and outcomes decisively contributed to strengthening Argentine public institutions (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 communications strategy was rolled out, generating lessons learned to design an NSIAS strategy.
Outcome 2.1	MS	Over 12 legal and regulatory frameworks were adopted and NSIAS financing mechanisms were identified.
Outcome 3.1	MS	The pilot project for early detection at ports and surrounding areas was scaled up. Four ports were replicated independently at all sea and river ports in the country (14).
Outcome 3.2	S	The pilot projects tested management practices, methodologies and protocols; generated knowledge; placed the issue on the public agenda; built capacities; and raised awareness among 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	Binational fora were set up to reflect on and share experiences, leading to specific agreements, joint work and follow-up activities.
Outcome 5.1	MS	Although indicators were met, the project's monitoring and accountability system did not meet the required quality standards.

GEF criterion/subcriterion	Rating	Summarized comments
Global rating of progress towards fulfilling the objectives	S	The project met the objectives envisaged in the PRODOC.
B1.3 Likelihood of producing the intended effects	L	Public policy instruments were anchored to Argentine institutions and capacities were built, setting the foundations for achieving medium- and long-term results.
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency	MS	The project had 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	Certain risks could materialize.
D1.1. Financial risks	L	Despite political will, financial resources – when assessed – are not ensured for project continuity.
D1.2. Sociopolitical risks	ML	Pressure groups against the control of IAS may influence decision-makers.
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	Although the project designed a governance group, it has yet to meet and has no regulations or funding.
D1.4. Environmental risks	MU	No environmental risks that could threaten project sustainability have been noted.
D2. Enhancement and replication	L	The political and institutional scenario favours the project's replication and scalability.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and preparation	MS	Vertical and horizontal consistency shortcomings are present in the results matrix.
E2. Project implementation quality	MS	Conditioning factors that had 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 in appropriately serving as implementing agency.
E2.2 Project oversight (project steering committee, Project Task Force, etc.)	MS	The governance structure did not work as stated in the PRODOC. However, coordination mechanisms and governance bodies were established pursuant to the project's implementation and execution needs, especially during the last stage.
E3. Project execution quality	S	The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development had faced complex situations that affected its role and responsibilities inherent in the executing agency. Nonetheless, it performed its duties according to the requirements and to the institutional arrangements required by the GEF.

GEF criterion/subcriterion	Rating	Summarized comments
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MS	Co-financing as of May 2022 stood at 39 percent of the committed amount. This did not substantially affect output quality and achievement. However, the evaluation mission was informed that co-financing had reached 78 percent at project completion (two months after the evaluation took place).
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Both the project design and NSIAS formulation were participatory processes.
E6. Communications, knowledge management and knowledge outputs	HS	Communications and knowledge management were successfully addressed and implemented.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	U	The project neither designed nor launched a monitoring system to follow up on its technical-financial execution, make timely decisions or facilitate access to means of verification.
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 project design and implementation.
F. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	No specific plan was designed to address the gender perspective. Nonetheless, the project envisaged this in two of its main outcomes: the NSIAS and CPAS.
F2. Human rights/Indigenous Peoples' issues	S	Initially, the project had faced difficulties in including Indigenous Peoples in decision-making. These shortcomings were satisfactorily resolved during project implementation.
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	S	Measures were taken to protect the environment and ensure that those who had been involved in the project were not affected.
Overall project rating	S	

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

1. Introduction

1. This is the final evaluation of the Strengthening of 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 (hereinafter the “project”) (Table 1. General information on the project).
2. The evaluated project was financed by the Global Environment Facility (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 the Republic of Argentina.
4. The project formally began in July 2015 and was completed in June 2022.

Table 1. Overall project information

Project title: Strengthening of 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 date: July 2015 • Expected project completion date: 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 Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development): USD 2 375 000; National Council for Scientific and Technical Research: USD 803 682; National Institute of Agricultural Technology: USD 83 000; National Agrifood Health and Quality Service (SENASA): USD 176 900; Secretariat of Public Communications: USD 8 417 774; National Parks Administration: USD 335 588; Argentine Naval Prefecture, 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 briefly describe the project’s context, its framework and its reconstructed theory of change (TOC), as well as its evaluation. These sections will be followed by a description of the methodology used to conduct 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 on recommendations for the different project stakeholders.
6. This document has seven appendices: 1) the list of key stakeholders 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 context

7. The presence of invasive alien species (IAS) introduced by forestry and agriculture; aquaculture; transport related to trade and tourism; the importation and breeding of pets; and the importation of ornamental species are some of the most significant threats to biodiversity conservation. These also threaten natural resources and related ecosystem services.¹
8. The Inter-American Network on IAS documented the presence of 652 species of alien plants, vertebrates, invertebrates, algae and mushrooms that have colonized natural environments across Argentina's 18 ecoregions.
9. The presence of some of these species has a socioeconomic impact on society's vulnerable sectors. Many of the pests and weeds affecting agriculture in Argentina are alien species. The same happens with invasive plants, which reduce the forage value of natural grasslands. Deposit-feeder fauna species also eat grain and other feed products.
10. Several studies have reported on the impact of IAS on native biodiversity and how ecosystems operate in Argentina. These studies assess their impact as herbivores or predator competitors, pathogens, or transformers of full ecological systems.
11. These species include the following: 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 the key regional economic activity of sport fishing; the red-bellied tree squirrel (*Callosciurus erythraeus*), which causes economic loss since it eats fruit, strips tree bark, breaks irrigation hoses and damages telephone, electricity and television cable coating and power transformers; the tamarisk or salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*), which impacts low-irrigation agriculture in dryland areas since it consumes lots of water and salinizes the top layers of soil; the giant African land snails (*Achatina fulica*) that bring about very significant losses in agriculture, mainly affecting small farmers and subsistence farmers, and threaten the population's health; and the privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*), which colonizes native forests in the central and northern parts of the country, and greatly affects Indigenous communities that depend on wildlife resources.
12. An IAS of particular concern is the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) because it affects a unique ecosystem in the country: Tierra del Fuego.
13. The beaver population has reached approximately 100 000 individuals. This has led to the destruction of trees due to girdling and overwhelming in the *Nothofagus* forests. Their presence also changes nutrient dynamics in the forest. Beavers have reduced forest volumes and seriously impacted ecosystem services in peat bogs.

¹ Background information retrieved from the Evaluation Team's terms of reference and the project document (PRODOC).

14. Further, there are the effects of climate change. Climate change acts in synergy with biological invasions. Changes in rainfall and temperature allow IAS to spread and colonize new ecosystems – even with species that have never expressed their invasive capacity. This situation can be particularly significant in countries like Argentina where there are huge arid or semi-arid ecosystems. Here, an increase in CO₂ could increase efficiency in the use of water by invasive plants, thus augmenting their capacity to settle and expand.
15. The environmental stress resulting from climate change can also reduce the resilience of natural ecosystems, increasing their vulnerability to invasions. Similarly, alterations in the frequency and intensity of disturbances (floods, fires and strong storms) provide the opportunity for new IAS to settle. Dispersal pathways and vectors can change in light of the direct effects of climate change and the indirect effects related to changes in land use patterns among inhabitants.
16. Considering the aforementioned context, Argentina had already made progress in establishing guidelines for the control of IAS at the time of project formulation. However, it lacked a National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (NSIAS), which limited the ability to manage the complexity of IAS.
17. Although there were some legal and regulatory instruments and a nation-wide database, these were not coordinated nor harmonized among sectors and between the national and provincial management levels. Knowledge about IAS and capacities to apply prevention and control instruments to early detection and immediate action were insufficient and weakly coordinated. This involved the country's established communications and awareness raising initiatives, prioritization, and control and eradication efforts.
18. Among the barriers accounting for these shortcomings, the following were highlighted in the project document (PRODOC): a) the lack of analysis and information about the socioeconomic costs and impacts on native biodiversity; b) a wealth of information about IAS but spread out and not easily accessible; c) the lack of an NSIAS; d) a lack of knowledge about the IAS problem and an ability to apply instruments; e) weaknesses in communications and awareness raising initiatives on IAS; 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) a lack of prioritization and actions to control and eradicate IAS that had been introduced and established in the country; and i) limited capacity building and the lack of a realistic binational programme for mass eradication and restoration.

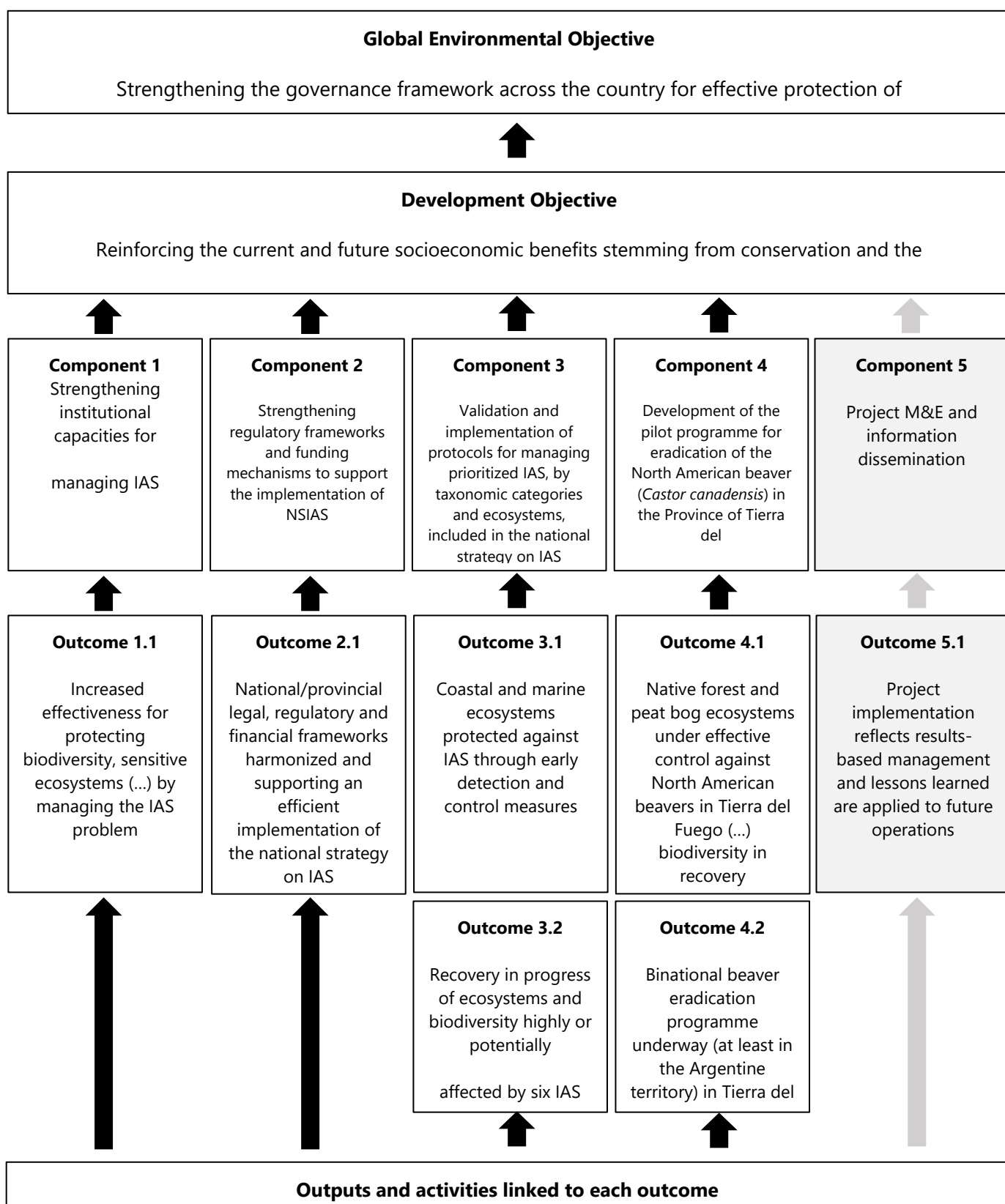
1.2 Project framework

19. The project was formulated to overcome identified barriers. An intervention strategy was designed to achieve a global environmental objective: "strengthening 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 of "reinforcing the current and future socioeconomic 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 fulfilment of seven outcomes organized into five related

components. Four of these are programmatic (Components 1, 2, 3 and 4), and one refers to knowledge management and project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (Component 5) (Figure 1. Project intervention rationale).

21. Regarding the intervention territory in which the actions were carried out, the project considered four levels: binational, 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; and
 - viii. pilot programme for the eradication of the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) in the Province of Tierra del Fuego (Component 4).

Figure 1. Project intervention rationale (designed in the PRODOC)

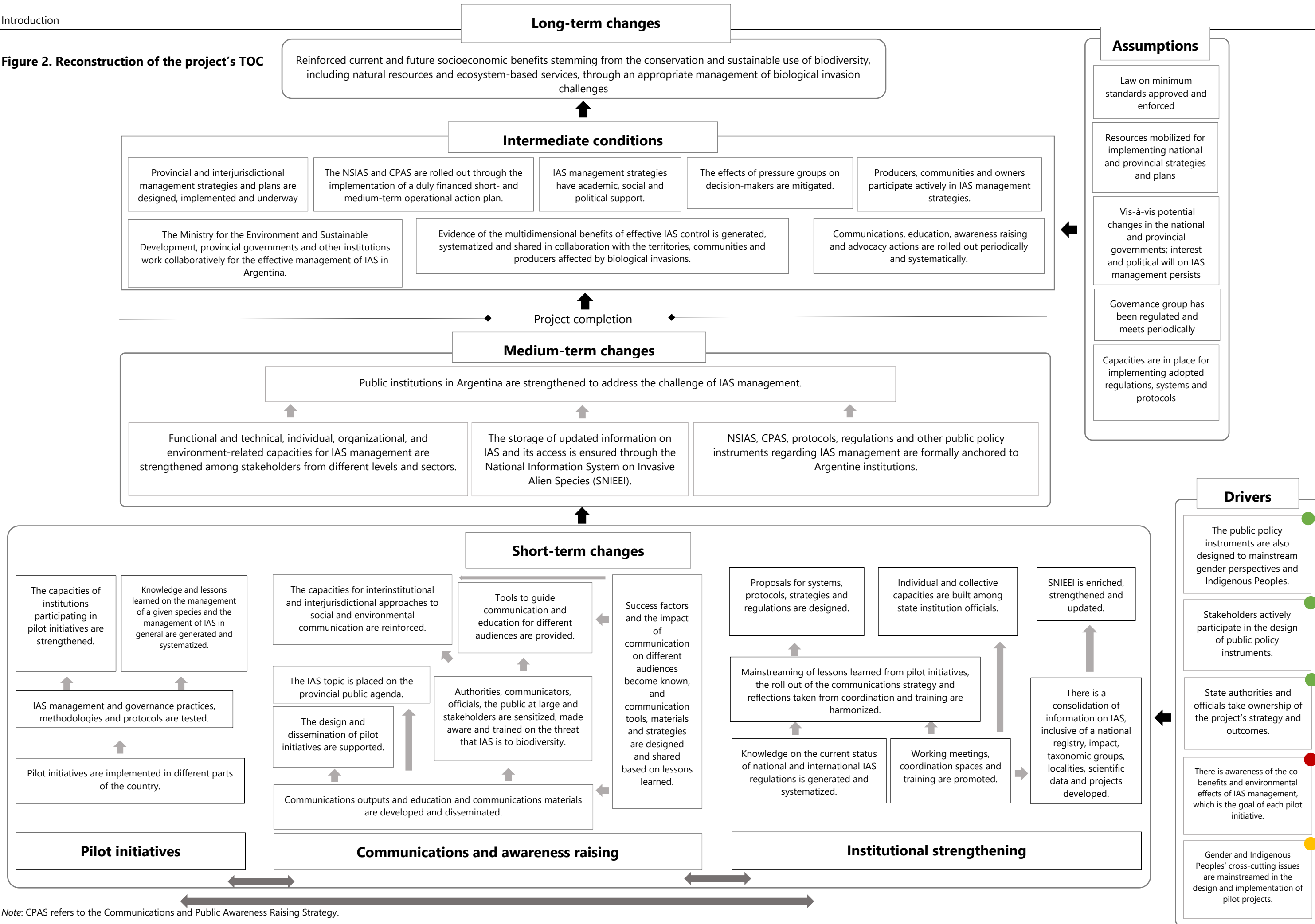


Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on the PRODOC.

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, 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 appropriate to advance 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 in order to progress towards desired change in the short, medium and long terms. This will lead to identifying and acting on future realities that are not only evident but also likely and desirable. The project's reconstructed TOC is structured as follows:
 - i. Strategies for change: these relate to the identification of intervention pillars on which the project strategy is implemented. In the case of the evaluated initiative, three strategies aimed to start, guide and interact along the path of change. The strategies are as follows:
 - Strategy for Change 1: implementation of pilot initiatives
 - Strategy for Change 2: strengthening of Argentine institutions
 - Strategy for Change 3: communications and awareness raising
 - ii. Short-term changes: these relate to changes due to project implementation and execution.
 - iii. Medium-term changes: these are the direct achievements upon project completion.
 - iv. Intermediate conditions: these refer to changes in the medium and long terms, as well as the necessary preconditions to achieve the desired change or the intended impact.
 - v. Changes in the long term: these are the impacts to which the project will contribute if the above effects and assumptions materialize.
 - vi. Drivers: these are important conditions that, if present, contribute to the quality and achievement of changes in the short and medium terms.
 - vii. Assumptions: these are external factors and conditions that could have an impact on the materialization of the intermediate conditions and, therefore, the intended impact.

Figure 2. Reconstruction of the project's TOC



Note: CPAS refers to the Communications and Public Awareness Raising Strategy.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

- 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 PRODOC. According to its terms of reference, such an evaluation is two-fold: comply with the accountability requirements for the donor, partners, and counterparts, and draw lessons learned from project implementation.

2.2 Objective of the evaluation

26. The evaluation aimed to independently assess: the strategic relevance of the project design and its implemented actions; its effectiveness in achieving outputs, 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 issues; and the likelihood that the achieved effects will be sustained once financing ends (sustainability). These aspects lead to lessons learned and recommendations for improving the impact potential of this project and, eventually, future initiatives.

2.3 Scope of the evaluation

27. The evaluation's timeline covered the entire project execution period: from its July 2015 start to its June 2022 evaluation.
28. The geographical scope matched the intervention territory and the interaction between the different levels. Therefore, the institutions and actions at the binational, national, provincial and local levels were considered.
29. The project team and the evaluation mission agreed on three territories for field visits: Buenos Aires, El Palmar National Park and Tierra del Fuego.
30. The sites were chosen based on their relative significance concerning project execution (the pilot programme, in the case of Tierra del Fuego); the number and availability of key stakeholders; the implementation level of pilot initiatives; the time frame; and the financial and logistical 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 steering committee; the project team; the Lead Technical Officer; the project's working group; the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development; beneficiary groups; and national stakeholders, as follows:
- 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's conclusions to improve the scope and sustainability of outcomes upon completion of the intervention.
 - 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 project completion.
- iv. FAO-GEF coordination unit. It will use the outcomes for accountability to the GEF and report on the achievement of project objectives and indicators.
- v. Beneficiaries and other national stakeholders. They may use the evaluation to analyse the possibility of similar actions that provide continuity to project outcomes.

2.5 Limitations

32. The project covered a broad spectrum of institutions. It had interventions in various territories, and a large number of people participated in the initiative. The evaluation had a time and logistical limitation in that it could only 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. It was difficult to contact key beneficiary stakeholders and coordinate interviews with them since many pilot initiatives were executed three or more years ago. However, this limitation was overcome by selecting a representative group that had participated in the initiatives, reviewing secondary information, and having some of the beneficiaries attend and deliver 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 evaluation. The last semi-annual technical and financial report (July–December 2021), pending revisions, was only shared when nearing the end of fieldwork. Further, there was no M&E system with a project documentation repository for easily finding and accessing sources for each output.
35. It is important to point out that the aforementioned limitations were overcome thanks to the goodwill, efforts and constant communication of the project team. These limitations 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. It focused on lessons learned and qualitative aspects.
37. The information was triangulated in order to mitigate bias. This confirmed the information collected (from primary and secondary sources), which was then exchanged between the evaluation consultants and the project team to verify conclusions.
38. In addition, the regulations and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the project evaluation guide from the FAO 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 questions

39. The information under review is determined based on the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the terms of reference. Each of these elements will be analysed, taking into consideration the project's design, performance, promoted processes and outcomes.²
40. The following 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 issues and sustainability).

² The terms of reference for the evaluation included 26 questions and nine criteria. This information is covered in this report and included in the evaluation matrix. To improve internal consistency and make the report easier to understand, all 26 questions were taken into consideration as subquestions and rearranged into six evaluation criteria. Each criterion was assigned a general question that summarizes or encompasses the subquestions.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria and questions

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

Source: Terms of reference for the evaluation.

3.2 Information collection techniques

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

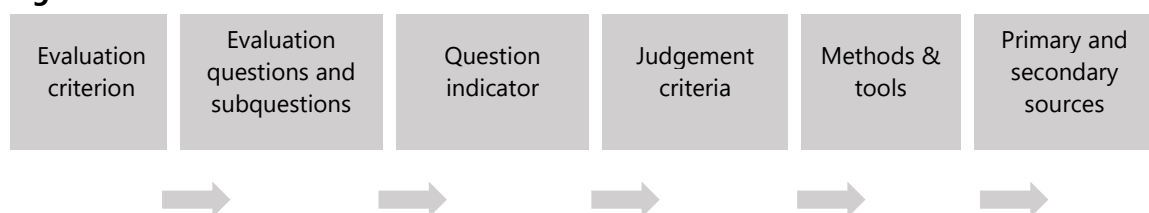
Table 3. Information collection techniques

Technique	Description
Review of existing reports and documents	The semi-annual and annual progress reports and technical reports generated under the four components; training materials; studies; national legislation; resolutions; key press articles; publications; and available outputs, among others, were reviewed.
In-depth interviews	Face-to-face and online interviews were held with key stakeholders to obtain in-depth information on people's impressions or experiences. They were targeted at those responsible for project 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 observations	Detailed observations were conducted to obtain accurate on-site information about how the project worked; the activities carried out; processes; debates; social interactions; and perceptible outcomes, as witnessed during the development of an initiative. This technique was used at FAO Argentina, El Palmar National Park, the binational 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 subquestions 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. OED and the GEF developed reference frameworks that technically and methodologically guide the evaluation of gender mainstreaming (FAO, 2017), the 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, judgement 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 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 manual that establishes the guidelines for mainstreaming this dimension. The manual 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 manual formulated by OED, the evaluation matrix includes evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators to obtain information on the degree of compliance with gender equality standards and objectives. This will generate findings that contribute to assessing the inclusion of this dimension in the project.

3.4.2 Evaluating Indigenous Peoples' participation

48. FAO developed a policy on Indigenous Peoples in 2011 (FAO, 2010b) 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

Evaluation question 1: Were the project's design and outcomes aligned – and continue to align – with the FAO Strategic Framework, GEF-5 strategies and Argentina's national priorities? Has the project been relevant in meeting 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 Objective 2 of the FAO Strategic Framework that was in force at the time of formulation and for much of the project implementation period.

49. During the design, launch and almost the entire project execution, the 2017 revised FAO Strategic Framework was in force (FAO, 2017b). The project was aligned with some of the outcomes of Strategic Objective 2: "Increase and improve 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 project's relevance to be 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 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 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 design (Outcomes 1.1 and 2.1) were targeted to manage IAS and therefore reduce subsequent environmental degradation.
2.3. Countries improved the 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 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 implemented actions are highly relevant to all three outcomes under Objective 2: "Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors."

52. Furthermore, an increase in managed landscapes, the development of regulatory frameworks for the conservation of biodiversity, and improved management to prevent and control 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, the biodiversity focal area and the 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 at sites where IAS management protocols would be tested in differently affected territories.
Outcome 2. Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy and regulatory frameworks	Outcomes 1.1, and especially 2.1, were designed and implemented to establish regulatory frameworks and public policies for managing IAS that were considered a threat to biodiversity conservation.
Outcome 3. Improved management frameworks to prevent, control and manage IAS	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 design and execution are consistent with five of the six objectives of subpillar 1.4: National Strategy for Biological Diversity. This reflects Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ratified by the Argentine Republic, as well as the Aichi targets that are in its strategic plan.

53. The key stakeholders and consulted documentation confirm that, at the time of formulation, project design and implementation have been relevant to strengthening and developing insufficient or non-existent national public policies, regulations and strategies. They also aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was signed by Argentina.
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” (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 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 subpillar 4: Prevention, control and oversight of related alien species. Its specific objectives reflect the intervention rationale designed and implemented by the project.
56. Full strategic relevance is underscored in that 6 out of 7 intended objectives of the National Strategy for Biological Diversity were in the design, as well as the promoted processes and the intended and achieved outcomes of the evaluated project (Table 6).

Table 6. Project alignment with the National Biodiversity Strategy

Pillar 1. Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	
Subpillar 1.4. Prevention, control and oversight of related alien species	
Specific objectives	Project alignment
Strategic Objective 1. Develop a strengthened governance framework across the country 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.
Strategic Objective 2. Strengthen institutional capacities for IAS management at the national and provincial levels.	Capacity building throughout the entire project design and its executed outcomes.
Strategic Objective 3. Strengthen the regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms that support the application of the NSIAS.	Outcome 2.1, national and provincial legal, regulatory and financing frameworks harmonized (...) fully reflect this objective.
Strategic Objective 4. Validate and implement protocols for managing prioritized IAS in taxa and ecosystems included in the NSIAS.	Project formulation included the design and testing of protocols for managing IAS (Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2).
Strategic Objective 5. Develop a pilot programme for the eradication of the North American beaver in 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 North American beaver.
Strategic Objective 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) for IAS management.
Strategic Objective 7. Before executing plans to repopulate wild species, it is necessary to ensure the effective historical presence of the species in the same habitat that is being repopulated. This should be based on reliable scientific information.	The project did not consider actions to introduce wild species in its implementation.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

57. With regard to Argentina's international commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity (UN, 1992) and the Aichi targets (CBD, n.d.) in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 (CBD, 2010), the project, in all its components, is very 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. Moreover, it significantly contributes to the fulfilment 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 project formulation.

58. The project's execution provided spaces for awareness raising, sensitization, and the training of different state agents and other stakeholders. It placed the IAS issue on provincial agendas, promoted regulations and strategies, made knowledge available and provided visibility to the topic by disseminating different communications outputs. These

are actions that, *inter alia*, enabled implementation and the obtainment of outcomes to be increasingly understood as relevant for the country – especially the intervention territories. These aspects will be further outlined in Section 4.2 on effectiveness and progress in achieving the intended impacts.

Finding 4. The project meets the needs of communities that rely on ecosystem services where biodiversity is threatened by IAS.

59. Based on the premise that IAS is a threat to biodiversity conservation, jeopardizes ecosystem services and generates negative cultural, economic, productive and social impacts (Matthews & Brand, 2005; Cerda *et al.*, 2017), creating institutional conditions that enable 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

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

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

60. The project's global environmental objective was "strengthening the governance framework across the country to allow for 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 the fulfilment 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 country with instruments and capacities to manage the effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

Finding 6. The materialization of intermediate conditions and the realization of certain assumptions will be a precondition for the project's contribution, namely the socioeconomic benefits that follow effective IAS management in preserving and sustainably using biological diversity.

62. The development objective, "reinforcing the current and future socioeconomic 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. There are no expectations that the effects described in its design will be achieved by mere execution and during project implementation. The initiative has been able to create enabling conditions that allow progress to be made towards achieving this objective.

64. A substantive contribution that moves in the direction of the intended impact largely depends on the materialization of the assumptions and intermediate conditions identified by the Evaluation Team. This is also outlined in the reconstructed theory of change, as presented in Section 1.3.

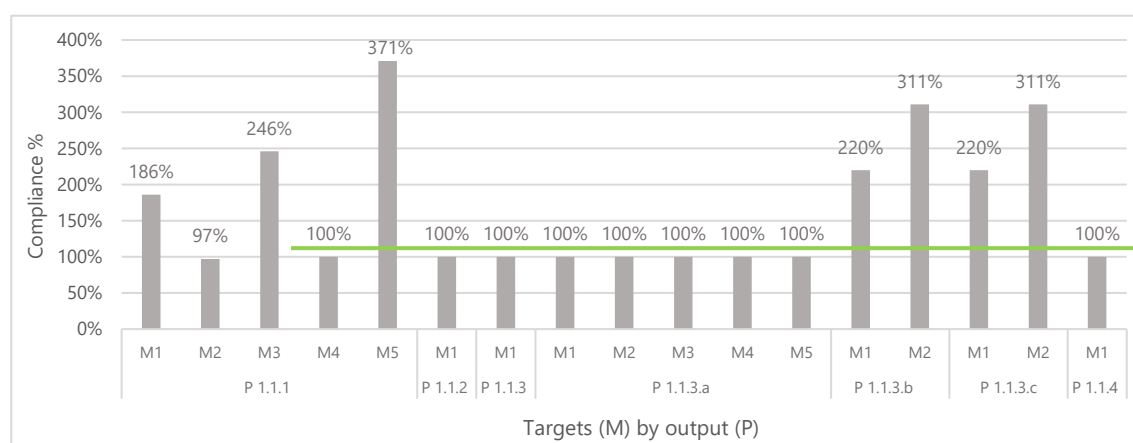
4.2.1 Components and outcomes³

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, Argentine public institutions have been strengthened. Information was generated, collected and systematized; high quality systems, protocols, strategies and regulatory proposals were developed; and a successful project communications strategy was rolled out to generate lessons learned for the design of an NSIAS.

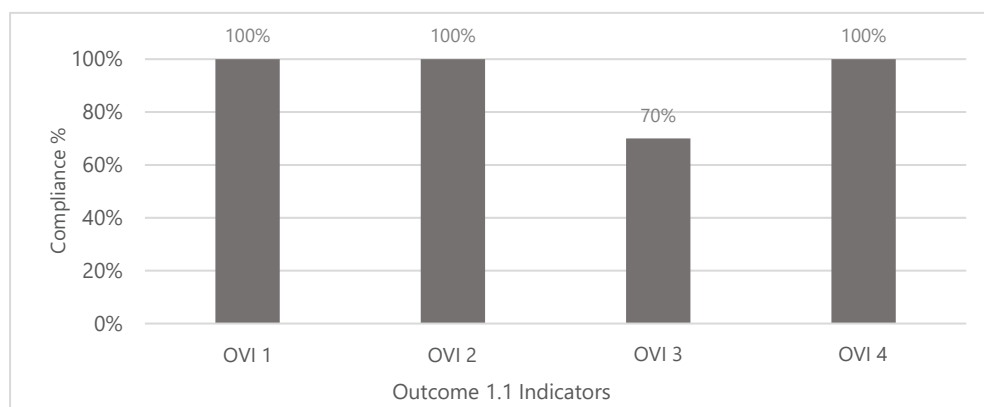
65. Component 1 achieved and, in some cases, far exceeded the output targets and outcome indicators – except for one as justified in Appendix 4 – that had been established during project formulation (Figures 4 and 5; see Appendix 4 for detailed information).

Figure 4. Percentage of compliance with Component 1 output targets



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

³ Section 4.4.1 reviews design issues as they relate to outcomes. 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, an assessment of effectiveness and progress made towards achieving the intended effects has been conducted. It also analyses the achievement of outputs and indicators based on actual changes and their contribution to the project’s objectives, considering its results framework and TOC. In addition, 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 source. Details of this and other observations can be found in Appendix 4, as well as 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, effective level of technical execution was expressed in the substantial strengthening of the Argentine public institutional framework. The processes and achieved outputs that contributed to this are, in summary, the following: the collection and systematization of compiled information on IAS; the National Information System on IAS (SNIEEI by its Spanish acronym); the development of technical and functional capacities; the design of high quality systems, protocols, strategies and regulatory proposals; and the implementation of a successful communications strategy that generated lessons learned for the design of a specific NSIAS. Each achievement is detailed in the following points.

National Information System on Invasive Alien Species

67. The project's execution led to consolidating, systematizing and updating information on IAS: 776 taxa, 9 024 sites of occurrence and 591 scientists were integrated into the system, and 121 projects were registered.
68. The work enriched and updated the database which, since 2006, has been managed by the Conservation and Management Studies Group within the Department of Biology, Biochemistry and Pharmacy of the *Universidad Nacional del Sur*, Argentina.
69. With these improvements, the SNIEEI was consolidated and understood as a virtual storage and consultation space on IAS in Argentina. It includes developed research projects, publications and identified collaborators and data providers.
70. The Evaluation Team verified that the webpage is up to date, of high quality and easy to understand for users who are not familiar with IAS.
71. One pending project action is the transfer of the SNIEEI from the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* to the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. This is currently being carried out with specialized support from a company known as Space Sur.
72. The Evaluation Team asserts that for this process to be successful and sustainable, it would be advisable to analyse and, if necessary, strengthen the institutional, technical, financial and IT capacities of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Formal coordination and long-term cooperation mechanisms should also be considered with the

Universidad Nacional del Sur, 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). These decisively contributed to strengthening IAS management capacity in Argentina.
74. The main achievements identified by the Evaluation Team and the key stakeholders are the country's preparation and ratification of the NSIAS and the Communications and Public Awareness Strategy (CPAS).
75. These instruments are a milestone in biodiversity conservation under IAS threat 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" (NSIAS). Furthermore, they are a contribution to strengthening capacities for an interinstitutional and interjurisdictional approach to the communications challenge on IAS (CPAS).
76. It should be noted that both documents were prepared collaboratively with state institutions, civil society organizations and private organizations. Information from previous experiences, particularly evidence and lessons learned from the implementation of pilot initiatives (see Section 4.2, Component 3), and overall project execution complemented this.
77. Beyond strategies, protocols, systems and regulations were generated to strengthen and provide institutional support to IAS management in the country. The following is worth highlighting: the preparation of an official IAS list; the design of systems and protocols for early detection and immediate action in 33 protected areas; the 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.

Communications

78. The project's communications strategy has been highly appreciated by the consulted key stakeholders. The Evaluation Team ratifies this perception, deeming this aspect as core to the rollout of various scheduled actions. In particular, communications served the purpose of and played a fundamental role in awareness raising; dissemination; media presence; coordination and education; underpinning overall project development; and decisively contributing to pilot initiatives.
79. The implementation of the communications strategy, among other contributions, provided the project with communications 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 communications on the population at large. This reflected an understanding of the relationship between knowledge and interest as a driving force for how IAS is perceived. It dealt with identifying the main ideas and giving rise to

recommendations for messages, among other findings that became fundamental inputs for drafting the CPAS.

Capacity building

80. The FAO OED Capacity Development Evaluation Framework (FAO, 2019) establishes three capacity building dimensions: individuals, organizations and enabling environments. The last two have already been detailed here and will be examined within the following components (the creation of enabling regulatory environments, the development of information systems, the outlining of strategies, the design of protocols and the establishment of governance frameworks). This part of the report will focus on the individual dimension, as mentioned.
81. Individual capacities that had been strengthened by the project were both functional and technical, per the classification presented by FAO (FAO, 2010).
82. The former, deemed necessary capacities to bring about and uphold change over time, were developed in specific training spaces (for instance, training for the use of SNIEEI). In particular, this involved collaboration to build different project outputs in four key areas proposed by FAO. As a result, this strengthened capacity to formulate policies, carry out reforms and advance legislative proposals; generate, access and exchange information and knowledge; set up partnerships and collaboration networks; and manage plans and strategies.
83. For the second set of individual capacities – the technical ones – the project promoted training processes on several topics with various stakeholders in different territories. There was an awareness that state officials and people working for private institutions and civil society require tools to adequately face the challenge of IAS management.
84. Among training processes, the following are underscored: IAS communications; border control; techniques for early detection and immediate action; and invasion prevention tools. In addition, but within other components, people were trained on biosecurity and reinvasion monitoring. This included privet and beaver control protocols, as well as awareness raising and the dissemination of regulations on IAS for the judicial and public ministries.
85. Approximately 3 000 people were trained by participating in over 150 sessions. According to key stakeholders consulted by the Evaluation Team, training people was essential to implement certain actions, improve project ownership and generate favourable conditions to enable continuity of the promoted processes once the initiative ends.

Finding 8. The project's execution led to strengthening and gathering lessons learned from IAS management initiatives that had been underway at the time of project launch.

86. The project supported tests, gathered lessons learned and strengthened IAS management initiatives that had been underway in different provinces.
87. Within this context, coordination was established with national parks, provincial governments and non-governmental institutions (*Aves Argentinas* and *Ambiente Sur*) to develop specific initiatives for learning about and strengthening wild boar management strategies in the provinces of Entre Ríos, Buenos Aires and Rio Negro; the American Mink

in the Patagonia and Perito Moreno National Parks; and the rainbow trout in the Plateau of Lake Strobel. The latter two are considered a threat to the survival of endangered and critically endangered species, such as the hooded grebe, the austral rail and the torrent duck.

88. Actions led to generating knowledge, implementing management mechanisms and creating synergies among different institutions. The main achievements are summarized here:

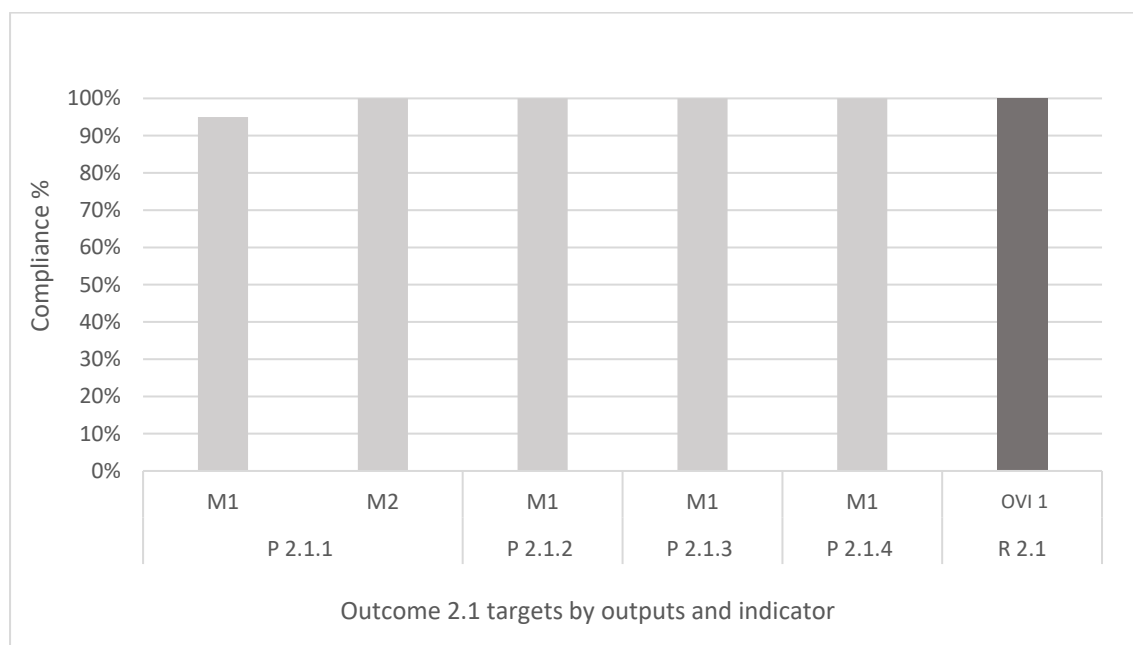
- i. Rainbow trout. Lessons were learned about salmonid eradication procedures and subsequent restoration on the Laguna Islet and smaller adjacent islands.
- ii. American mink. Initiatives led to learning about the effectiveness of different traps, experimenting with the search technique using trained dogs; preparing a survey and a management strategy; and coordinating and entering into agreements with the Administration of the National Parks, the Municipality of Chaltén, the Province of Santa Cruz and the Provincial Agrarian Council (Santa Cruz) to develop joint actions for controlling the American mink.
- iii. Wild boar. Research showed that the wild boar value chain is not viable under the current conditions. Management proposals were outlined and territories for their enforcement were determined, and the National Wild Boar Management Plan was prepared.

89. Key actors were consulted about the idea, which seemed more logical, of including these actions in Component 1 instead of Component 3 (pilot initiatives). They instead argued that these actions were specific support tests for initiatives that had already been underway.

4.2.1.2 Component 2. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms in support of NSIAS implementation

Finding 9. Project execution led to the design and adoption of legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as the identification of financing mechanisms for NSIAS. These outputs foster an enabling prescriptive institutional scenario for managing the effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

90. The Component 2 output indicators and 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 percent compliant, but very close to being compliant (97 percent). 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.

91. 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 NSIAS.
92. Different actions moved towards this objective. The following stand out: a study on legal issues that led to a complete systematization of existing regulations and a judicial precedent at the federal, provincial and international levels; and 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 at the different institutions and the varying scales of the study.
93. Furthermore, and as mentioned, capacities and awareness raising on IAS were developed within the judiciary. A proposed law on minimum standards was drafted but not yet passed.
94. Side-by-side and in coordination with this legal analysis, research was carried out on the costs of implementing the NSIAS. A detailed description was also made of the available mechanisms to ensure its financing and continuity over time.
95. This research, together with the achievement of implementing all components, brought about positive effects for the IAS institutional and regulatory scenarios. It has significantly supported and managed effective protection of biodiversity against the impacts of IAS.

96. The public policy instruments that were designed within the project framework and are anchored to Argentine institutions include:
- i. Resolution 211/2022, approval of the NSIAS and the related CPAS (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, n.d.);
 - ii. Resolution E 151/2017, the National Strategy on Biodiversity and Plan of Action 2016–2020 adopted, including the project’s strategy, as part of its action pillars (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2017b);
 - iii. Resolution 4/19, protocol for analysing the risks of terrestrial vertebrates and fish (imports) (Secretariat of Environmental Policy for Natural Resources, 2019a);
 - iv. Resolution 5/19, protocol for analysing the risk of alien plants (potential invasive species) (Secretariat of Environmental Policy for Natural Resources, 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 interinstitutional and interjurisdictional technical committee (Secretariat of Environmental Policy for Natural Resources, 2021);
 - viii. Resolution 109/2021, classification of species, control introduction and interjurisdictional movement, and list of species (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2021);
 - ix. Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) Resolution 38/2019, guidelines for preparing a plan to prevent, monitor, control and mitigate IAS (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, declared interest in interinstitutional and interjurisdictional public policies to face the challenge of biological invasions (Daireaux Town Council, 2018); and
 - 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 pesticides (Province of Buenos Aires Government, 2018).
97. Interviewees agreed that progress made in the regulatory field and the approval of the NSIAS and the CPAS are unprecedented in Argentina. Further, the significant volume of ratified instruments shows how highly efficient the project was and that these are highly relevant to IAS management in the country.
98. Once the aforementioned robust regulatory framework has been established, the challenge is to implement it at the federal and provincial levels. To that end, it will be essential to start with interinstitutional and interjurisdictional technical committee meetings. It will also be necessary to align plans and strategies with the NSIAS and seek mechanisms to ensure institutional capacity. Financial, human and technical resources are needed 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 in the NSIAS

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 and the quantifiable scope of their implementation. This also affects monitoring and the generation of evidence on the environmental, social, productive and economic benefits that adequate management of each IAS in the initiatives would have for the participating communities.

99. The Evaluation Team asserts that the pilot initiatives should fulfil 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, gather 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, and the promotion of and advocacy for public policies, instruments, and tools that allow for their autonomous replication and scalability in the countries in which they are implemented.
100. Of the two proposed functions, the latter has provided outstanding outcomes. The pilot initiatives were essential in testing protocols and IAS management techniques, producing and managing scientific knowledge and learning about processes. In particular, it was key in generating inputs for NSIAS preparation, its associated CPAS and the other regulatory instruments that had been designed.
101. Furthermore, execution of the pilot initiatives was essential in 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 and so on). Through communications, 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 had lacked them.
102. Each pilot initiative accomplished remarkable achievements and effects (see Table 7). The following are worth highlighting: the preparation of provincial strategies for IAS management in Mendoza and Jujuy (pilots for privet, didymo algae and tamarisk); the scalability of the pilot on early detection in ports and surrounding areas; autonomously replicating the project (four ports) at all sea and river ports across the country (14) through the Environmental Security and Dynamic Monitoring: Towards the Protection of Argentine Ports against Biological Invasions research initiative; the contribution made for the inclusion of the bullfrog and red-bellied tree squirrel on the official IAS list and their declaration as harmful species; and the generation and integration of lessons learned for mainstreaming the Indigenous Peoples' perspective in the NSIAS (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 on 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 Argentine Naval Prefecture, Border Patrol and Airport Security Police (PSA) • Design and implementation of collection and management protocols • Design of an early detection and warning system • Promoted resolution 417/2020 • Promoted inclusion on the official IAS list • Knowledge management: collaboration at an 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 • Georeferenced cadaster and situation of breeding grounds (71 in total) • Recommendations for management, minimum actions and biosecurity
Didymo algae	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical Information System-based (GIS) risk assessment related to expansion • Ten cleaning facilities • Mendoza adopted CPAS-NSIAS recommendations and is completing the 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: Argentine Naval Prefecture designed and adopted a research project to analyse maritime traffic and its linkage to the 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
Privet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of control action protocols • Building of nurseries (2 000 plants) • Lessons learned for mainstreaming Indigenous Peoples' perspective on the NSIAS • Promotion of value added options for privet waste: furniture and wood crafts • Based on the pilot projects, Jujuy is preparing an IAS management strategy

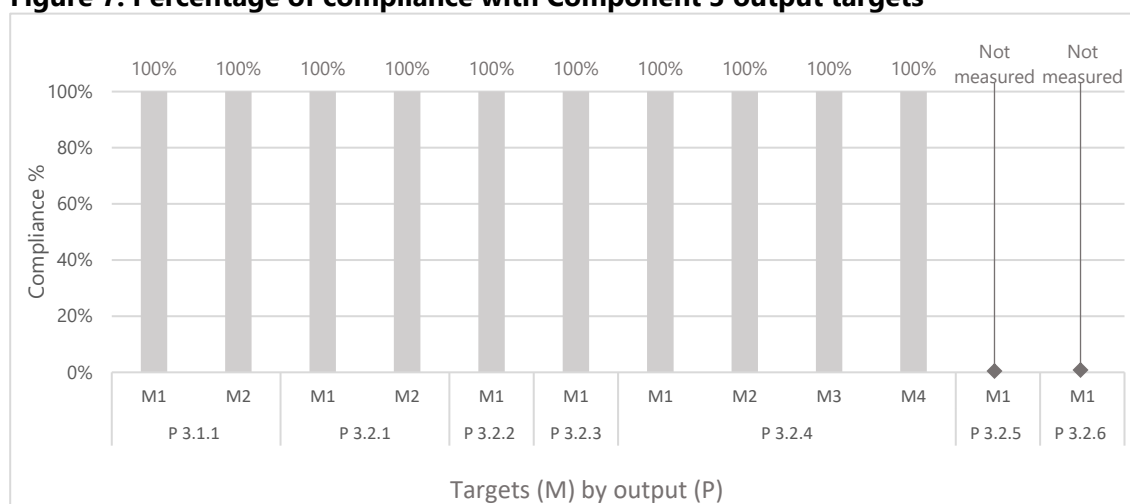


Communications, dissemination, awareness raising, capacity building and education cutting across all pilot initiatives

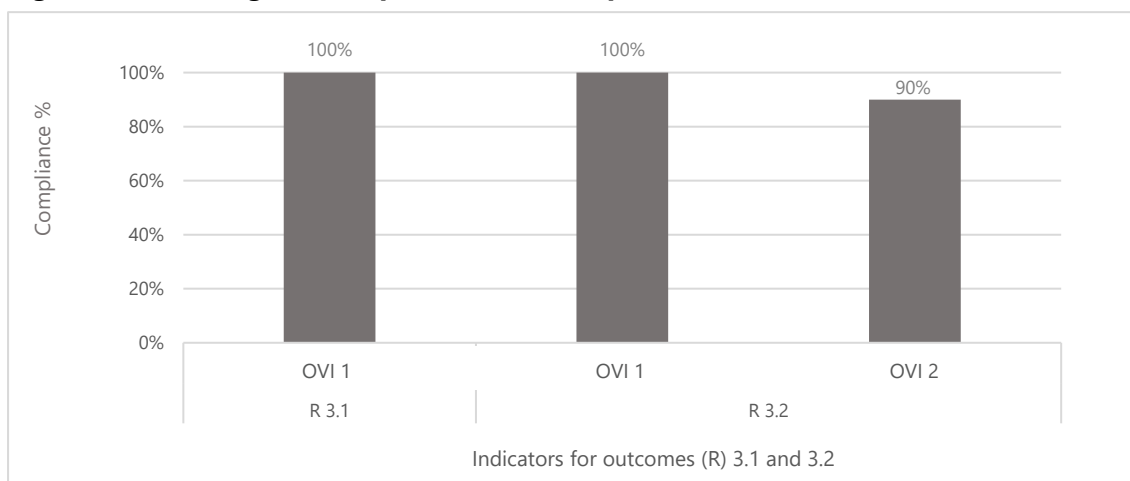
Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

103. The Evaluation Team considers that the output targets and outcome indicators were satisfactorily fulfilled. The outcome indicators reached a scope of 100 percent (2) and 90 percent (1) and 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 percent compared to the baseline to be established at pilot programme launch, via control, eradication and communication measures." Another exception is Target 1, Output 3.2.6: "At least 20 ha of privet under control, reducing at least 50 percent the density of privet, and assisted restoration by planting – with a community and gender participation approach – of at least 1 500 native plants."
104. Key stakeholders argued that there were design issues with the target rather than ineffective compliance. The Evaluation Team agrees and points to the need to identify and correct deficiencies in the design of targets and indicators in a timely manner (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.

105. 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 defining public policy instruments for the future.

4.2.1.4 Component 4. Developing a pilot programme to eradicate the North American beavers (*Castor canadensis*) from Tierra del Fuego

Finding 12. Following the implementation of eight pilot areas in the Province of Tierra del Fuego, enough knowledge was generated and the necessary lessons were grasped. This led to designing an evidence-based Provincial Plan for Reclaiming Environments Affected by Beavers for the effective control of beavers and the recovery of biodiversity.

106. Designing and implementing a Provincial Plan for Reclaiming Environments Affected by Beavers is the goal of both the Ministry of Production and Environment of Tierra del Fuego and the project.
107. Key informants affirm that the pilot initiative to eradicate the North 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.
108. The lessons are of a different kind and on different subject matters, summarized as follows:
- i. Possibility of eradication. The North American beaver can be eradicated. The practices implemented in the eight pilot areas rendered good results, managing to eradicate – temporarily – the presence of North 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 pilot implementation show a repopulation in 100 percent of the areas, and that eradication requires the establishment of permanent measures aimed to avoid reinvasions.

- iii. Efficacy of 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 percent.
- iv. Research. Different institutions and academicians have been carrying out research projects in coordination with the pilot initiative. These initiatives have contributed or will contribute to 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 at 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 North American beaver.
- v. The usefulness of having information registration protocols and management systems. Keeping a georeferenced, digital and standardized record of catches, plus monitoring and other actions, improves the quality and fidelity of data and 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. The economic damages generated by their presence is USD 60 000 000.
- viii. Coordination and governance. Regarding long-term management strategies – control or eradication – there is no consensus among the scientific community, civil society, state agencies and other stakeholders. The Evaluation Team believes that it is essential to reach agreements and support whichever decision is made. 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 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 were essential for implementing the pilot initiative.

Finding 13. Within the execution framework of GEF projects in Argentina and Chile, binational instances for reflection and sharing experiences were set up. This has given rise to specific agreements and led to joint work and the monitoring of instances.

109. The project's binational work coincided with the second implementation phase 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).
110. The simultaneous execution of GEF projects related to beaver management in both countries created an enabling context to roll out actions that had been envisaged.

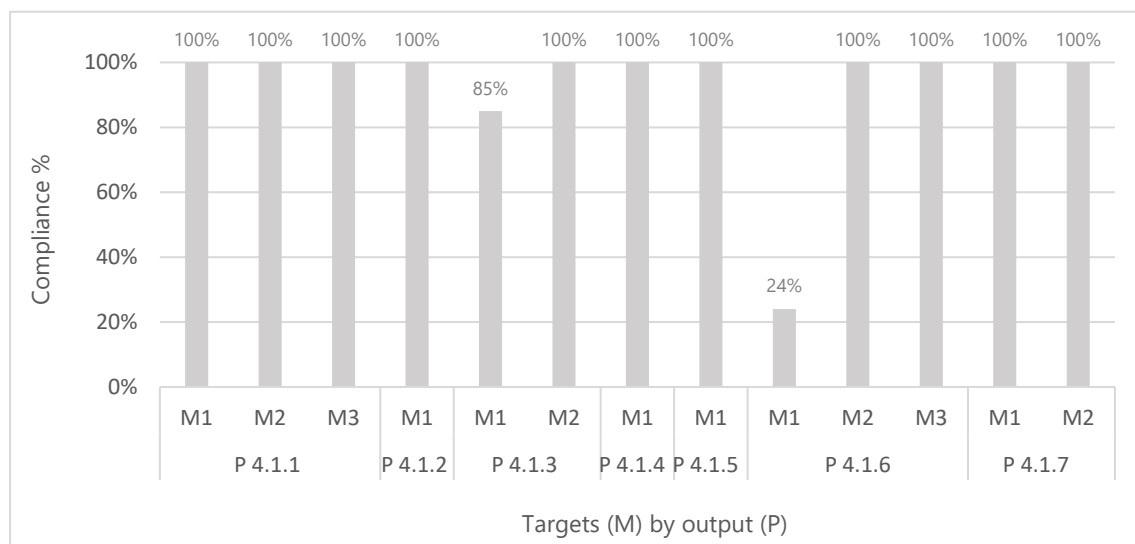
111. Within this context, four binational workshops were held. Progress was made in setting up four working groups on governance, information and experience, communications and information management. There were at least 14 meetings with 81 participants.
112. According to information collected from key stakeholders, participation in the binational workshops and the reviewed secondary information – as well as 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 binational levels.
113. It was concluded that: communications are essential for the success of management strategies; eradication is technically possible, economically viable and impossible in the short term; there is sufficient, quality and replicable information; and binational work is crucial for successful control and eradication strategies.
114. The following recommendations were put forth: design more agile management mechanisms; promote more active involvement among 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 develop teams specialized in IAS management.
115. Besides sharing each country's experience at the binational workshops, agreements were reached to set up a binational working and follow-up group. This would be comprised of the technical committee for the GEF project (Chile) and the interinstitutional committee for governance of the North American beaver eradication pilot programme (Argentina). It involves validating a protocol for recording information on beaver management based on removals, appointing national reference leaders, and developing a coordinated communications and education strategy between the two countries.
116. For key stakeholders from both countries, it is essential to continue binational coordination and materialize the design and implementation of a new binational plan or programme for beaver management (Indicator 1, Outcome 4.2). This includes lessons learned and knowledge arising from the implementation of GEF initiatives in Chile and Argentina.
117. In this regard, the project fulfilled its mission. However, formalizing a binational plan will require 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.

Finding 14. Although the beaver pilot initiative achieved all outputs that had been detailed in the PRODOC and contributed substantially to capacity building and the generation of knowledge, the fulfilment of outcome indicators was not entirely satisfactory.

118. Although the pilot initiative in Tierra del Fuego developed the envisaged outputs and its outcomes are considered satisfactory per the Evaluation Team, there are significant shortcomings in the fulfilment of outcome indicators and in an output target (Figures 9 and 10, see Appendix 4 for details).

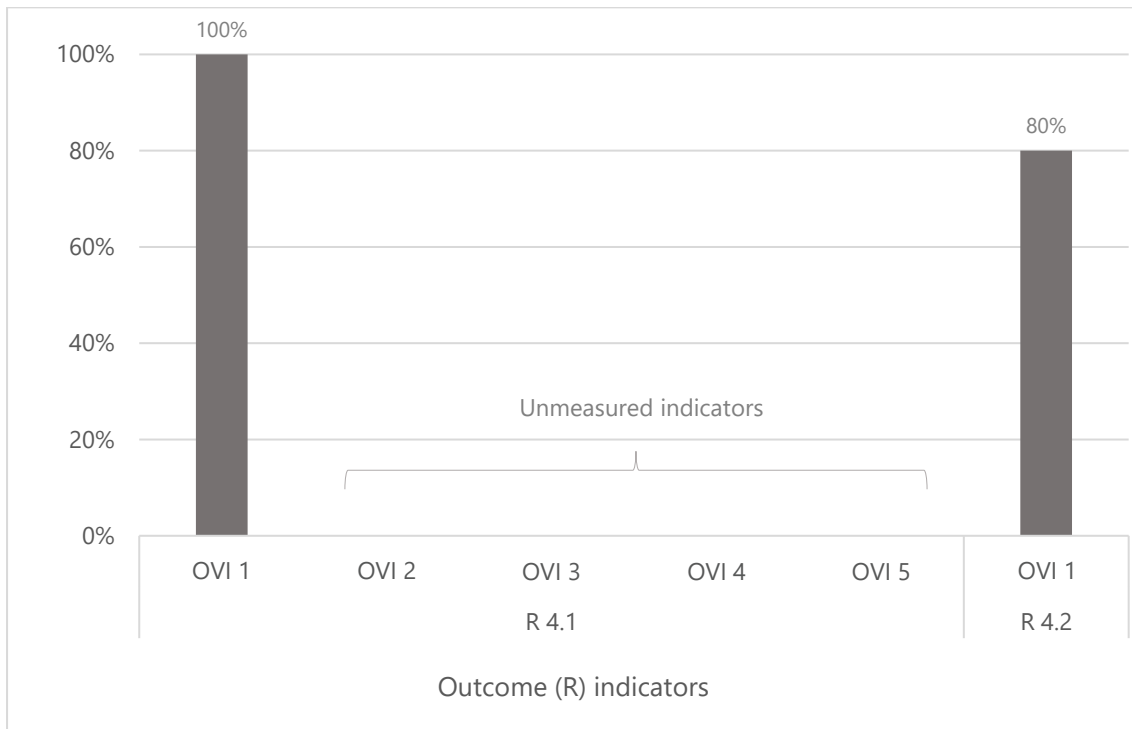
- 119. Outcome indicators, objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs). OVI 2. Benthic microhabitats in basin watercourses that were freed from beavers and recovered in similar conditions as those not affected by beavers; OVI 3. Less organic matter in the sediments of watercourse beds in basins freed from beavers; OVI 4. Streams in the Mimica River area and its surroundings recover their structure to once again become salmon spawning beds; and OVI 5. Assisted recovery of lenga trees (*Nothofagus pumilio*), Magellan’s beeches and Antarctic beeches (*Nothofagus Antarctica*) underway in areas affected but not overwhelmed by beavers – no compliance.
- 120. This does not mean that the environmental effects of beaver eradication are null and that these indicators have not been achieved. The problem was that these were not measured in the end due to logistical complications, delays in the procurement of equipment, supplies, and tools, and poor technical-financial planning.
- 121. For the Evaluation Team, the absence of 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

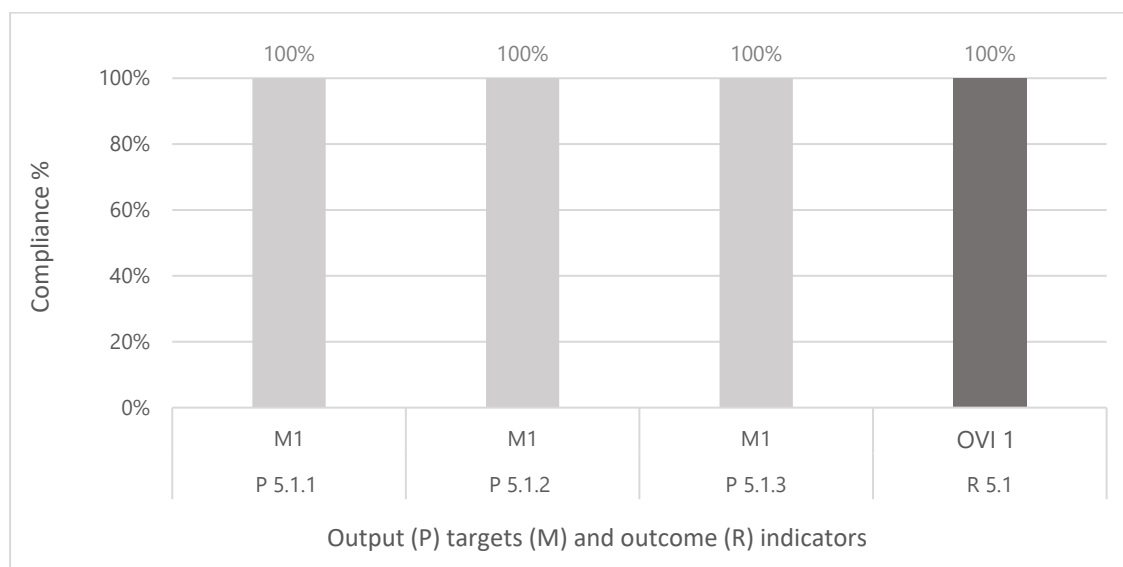


Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

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 M&E system.

122. As shown in Figure 11, Component 5 met 100 percent of its targets and indicators. The Evaluation Team deems that this situation does not account for a robust M&E system (Section 4.4, Factors affecting project performance, includes a more thorough analysis of the initiative’s M&E system).

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

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

4.3 Efficiency

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

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

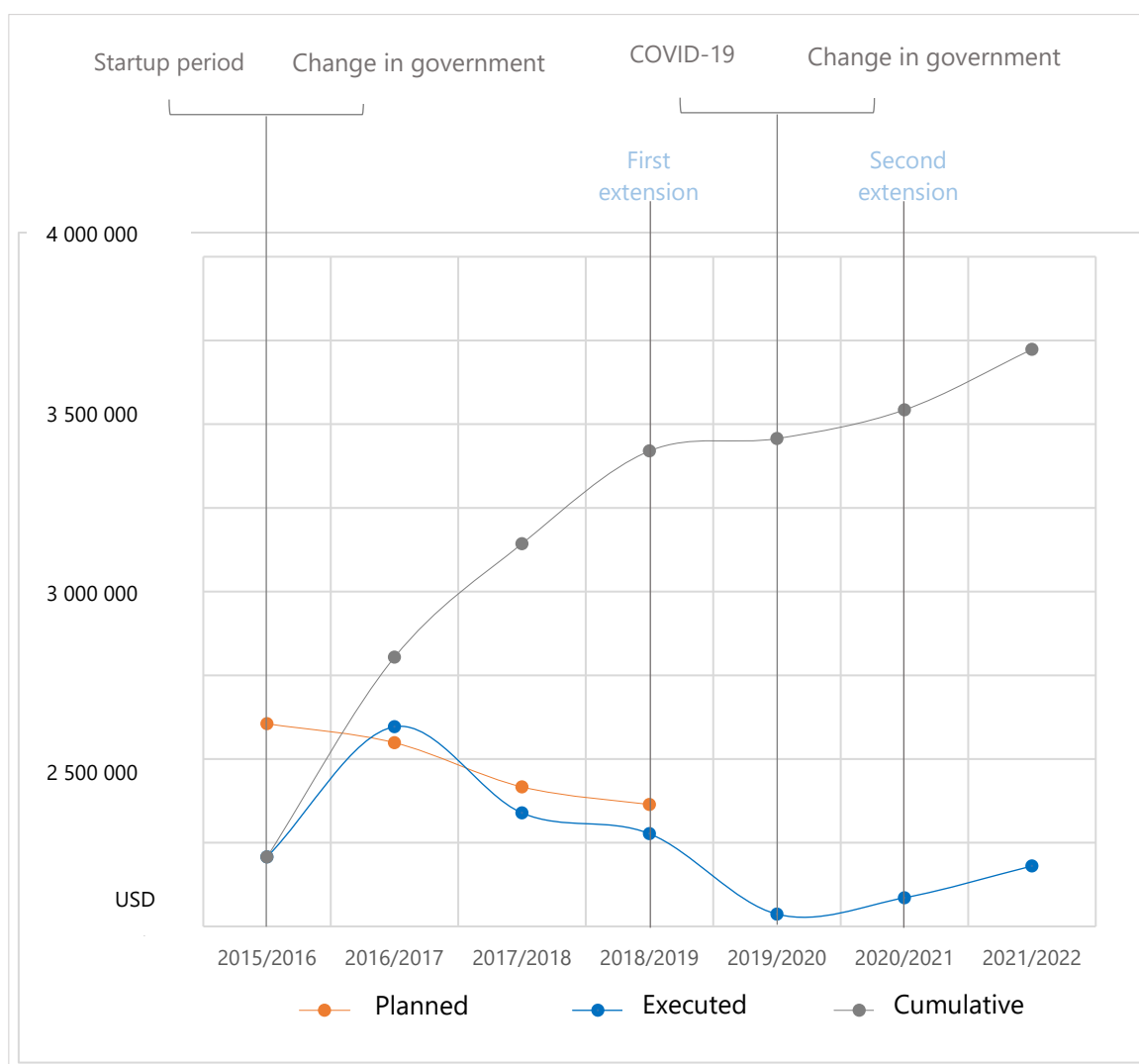
123. The project had sufficient financial resources to implement, with quality, the different strategies considered in its design. The GEF grant (USD 3 870 000) allowed for a team of high technical quality to be established. It could also ensure that the appropriate equipment and infrastructure was available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

Finding 17. The project's financial execution had experienced delays that resulted in two justified extensions due to a remaining budget (USD 1 030 003 and USD 634 407 in 2019 and 2021, respectively). The Evaluation Team deems that the budget execution levels were not met due to: initial adjustments; the exchange rate; risk management associated with governmental changes; and the health emergency caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

124. The project formally started in July 2015. The financial planning scheduled for June 2016 was USD 1.2 million. However, at that date, just approximately 30 percent of the budget had been disbursed, that is, USD 400 000 (Figure 12).

125. Two factors may account for the initial delay: first, the initial start phases of the technical teams; and second, the transition associated with the December 2015 governmental changes required time to renew the agreements and update the commitments with the executing partner (Figure 12).

126. In the 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 periods, the gap between the budgeted and executed amounts was reduced considerably. Differences in one way or another were approximately 10 percent.
127. In 2019, the year scheduled for project completion, more than USD 1 million was still waiting to be disbursed. Activities and certain outputs committed to, per the PRODOC, had yet to be implemented. Given this scenario, the first two-year extension was requested.
128. After seven months (from July 2019 to March 2020), a health emergency was declared in Argentina due to COVID-19. Strong restrictions on mobility limited the possibilities of the project to carry out activities in the field. This significantly reduced execution costs.
129. In December 2019, a newly elected national government took office. This would entail a new phase of organization with new government authorities in charge of administration.
130. The devaluation of the Argentine peso against the dollar compounded the situation. The exchange rate during the interval between project launch and completion had constantly and exponentially been on the rise since 2018. This situation certainly improved the "performance" of the dollar against the national currency, lowering all operation costs that had been calculated for the project.
131. As a result of these circumstances, the project was able to execute only 40 percent of the estimated amount (USD 400 000 approximately) during the first extension request. This led the team, FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development to propose a second and final extension to the GEF, which finally allowed the project to be completed with 99 percent of the executed budget.

Figure 12. Expenditure evolution throughout the project's history

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

Finding 18. Adaptation to changes in the political context required agility, which was absent. Situation changes caused a delay in the project's technical and financial implementation.

132. The project witnessed two election periods and three government administrations. As mentioned in Finding 16, the new government officials needed to be updated on the project and had to renew the commitments that had been taken on by the outgoing authorities. These actions were not agile enough and affected the planned time frames for the execution of activities.
133. Governmental changes 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 facts through a good identification of the risks inherent in state administration changes 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 project 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. Section 4.4 identifies the project's main weaknesses: M&E and technical-financial management. These deficiencies were partly and belatedly covered by the team's inclusion of a coordination position during the last year of implementation.
137. The Evaluation Team asserts that for a project with such a large budget, territorial dispersion and the number of activities as the one evaluated, it would have been appropriate to consider at least one full-time person in charge of M&E and one full-time administrative assistant from the start.
138. Finally, it is worth noting what was stated by a large majority of the key stakeholders: both the team and the government executors are of high technical quality. They have an outstanding and recognized track record in the professional, academic and government fields regarding issues addressed by the project. Further, they have demonstrated a high degree of commitment and motivation to fulfil 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. The Evaluation Team considers this to be an asset of the implementing agency.
140. This quality, however, translated into a bureaucratic practice that slowed down the project's technical execution. This is because the implementation of some activities (especially those related to the pilot initiatives) were intensive in terms of the procurement of goods and external services.
141. Potential delays due to administrative processes were not envisaged in the PRODOC, annual operating plans (AOPs) or the signed letters of agreement. This affected timeliness, and often led to the forced postponement or even suspension of planned activities.

4.4 Factors affecting project performance

Evaluation question 4: What are the main factors that currently influence or have influenced project performance (design, implementation, execution, M&E, stakeholder engagement, co-financing, and communications and knowledge management)?

4.4.1 Project design

Finding 21. The project 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 weaknesses 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. With the exception of Outcome 2.1, "National and provincial legal, regulatory and financing frameworks are harmonized and contribute to the effective implementation of the NSIAS", all outcomes had been formulated as if they were general or long-term impact objectives and not a direct project outcome. Good examples 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, "Effective control of the North American beaver in Tierra del Fuego native forest and bogland ecosystems, and recovery of affected or endangered biodiversity".
144. For the horizontal rationale (indicators, sources and assumptions), certain outcome indicators and output targets lacked specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound criteria. Among these, some are especially lacking, namely:
- i. Those that are not measurable or do not specify the source of the measurement instrument. For instance, Target 1, Output 3.2.5 "Density and distribution of snails reduced by at least 25 percent compared to the baseline – which should be established at pilot programme launch – by means of control, eradication and communication".
 - ii. Those that are outside the project's scope. For instance, Indicator 1, Outcome 4.2, "Binational mass beaver eradication programme to be implemented within two to five years after completion of pilot programmes in each country".
 - iii. Those that are not specific. For instance, Target 4, Outcome 4.1, "Assisted recovery of lenga trees (*Nothofagus pumilio*), Magellan's beeches and Antarctic beeches (*Nothofagus Antarctica*) in progress in areas affected but not overwhelmed by beavers" and Indicator 1, Outcome 3.2 "three to six containment, control or eradication protocols for IAS prove their effectiveness through ecosystem and biodiversity recovery indicators on xx ha".
145. These weaknesses did not substantially influence the project's effects and impacts. However, the fact that they were not detected in time affected management and accountability to stakeholders.

4.4.2 Implementation and execution

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

146. FAO's performance as both an implementing 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. Regarding weaknesses, inadequacies were noted in the project's administrative management and routine coordination. These shortcomings negatively impacted agility for the procurement of goods and services. Further, 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 affected the overall operation and led the office's interinstitutional links to be more complex.
- ii. Insufficient number of technical and administrative staff. Regarding administrative and financial work, FAO Argentina has two staff members who must serve all projects and cover different aspects related to the office's general operations. Further, a project team member was entrusted to support the financial aspects only during the last year. Human resources were insufficient to adequately meet the required implementation needs.
- iii. Internal red tape. The limited amount of administrative staff, compounded with FAO's internal bureaucracy, slowed down processes more than expected.
- iv. Lack of organized, accessible and traceable systems showing the project's technical and financial progress. Although the overall accounts were kept by the accounting sector at FAO Argentina, the project did not have an organized and traceable financial monitoring system. This hindered timely access to the project's track record of expenses.
- v. Governance. The governance mechanisms, the establishment of interinstitutional relations and decision-making linked to the project depended on personal will and ways of working. These 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 the 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 the GEF and those envisaged in the PRODOC.
151. Even though the ministry complied with the provisions, the encountered difficulties hindered the co-executing agency in optimally fulfilling its responsibilities. These include:
 - i. Changes in government. As underscored, 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. This affected the continuity of actions, ownership, interest and knowledge regarding 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. In some cases, this brought about an overlap of responsibilities, procedural disagreements and tensions between the different governance bodies.
 - iii. Internal communication. Decision-making mechanisms, coordination and interparty communication channels (partner, implementing agency and executing agency) were misaligned during part of the project cycle. These started to link with

one another as the initiative moved forward. Their best performance was achieved during the project's last extension (from 2021 to 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.

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 an M&E system was seen through the following: the absence of specialized staff; no standardized instruments for technical follow-up and the monitoring of effects (other than the Project Implementation Report [PIR] and the project progress report); the inexistence of a management structure; and no orderly virtual space for the storage and systematization of information and sources 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 and sources; inaccurate and duplicate amount of beneficiaries; and a disorganized and incomplete mapping of expenses associated with technical execution (this improved over the last months).
155. One last point to mention in this regard is the quality of the semi-annual and annual reports. In them, progress indicators are reported in a descriptive manner. Most of the time, they do not reflect the achievement of a given target. Rather, the table has been completed with information related to implemented actions.

4.4.5 Stakeholder engagement

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

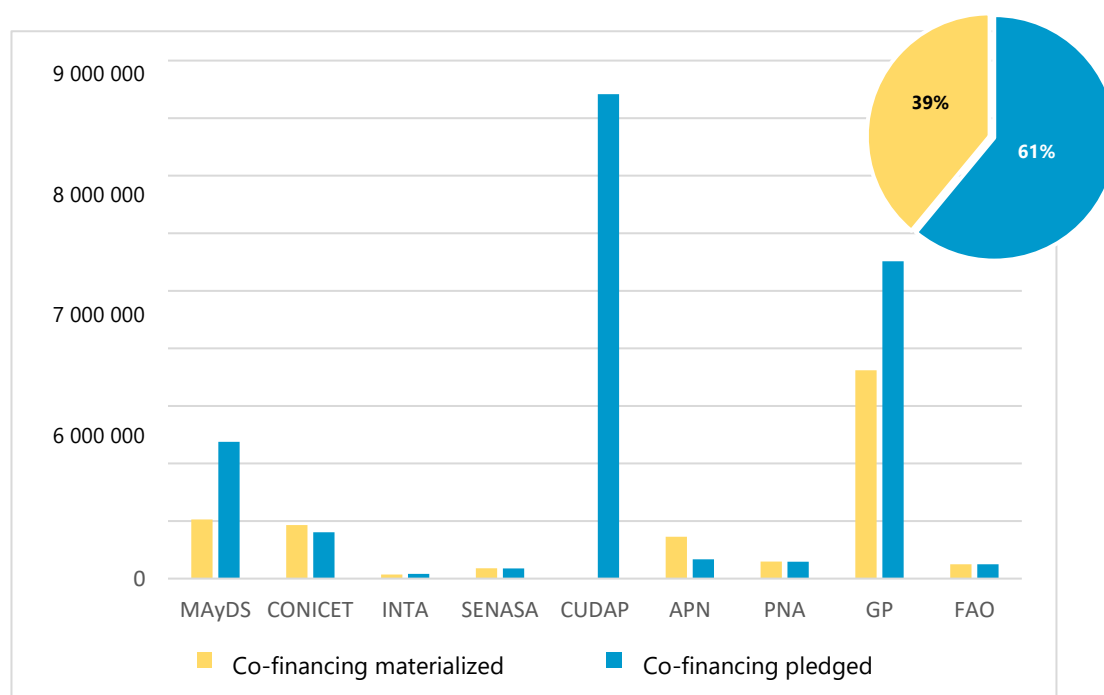
Finding 26. The degree of stakeholder involvement varied depending on the player, organization or institution. Overall, the procedures recommended by the GEF stakeholder engagement policy were respected.

156. Stakeholders were consulted. They were able to freely express their views and were actively involved in the project's identification, formulation and implementation, as well as the NSIAS design process.
157. The procedures and standards recommended by the GEF in its *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement* (GEF, 2017b) were mostly followed. 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 NSIAS) was shared and discussed with 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 fluid systems for stakeholders to request information from the project. This involved 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 issues).

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

159. At the time of the evaluation (May 2022), the reported co-financing was equivalent to 39 percent – USD 7 098 398 – of the amount pledged at project launch, that is, USD 18 247 901 (Figure 13 and Appendix 7. Table on co-financing). Note that the co-financing was higher once the institutional contributions had been reported near project completion in July 2022.
160. Undermaterialization 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). This amount was intended to support communications outputs. *Vis-à-vis* the above, the project successfully covered the deficit. This was supported mainly by the use of digital media which, at the time of formulation, were not as widespread as they are today.
161. Other institutions with gaps between the pledged and materialized co-financing are the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and the regional governments. Key institutional stakeholders stated that the financial contribution deficit was due to two factors: the exchange rate that had devalued the Argentine peso and the impossibility of executing actions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Evaluation Team concludes that these are plausible justifications.

Figure 13. Co-financing materialized and pledged

Note: MAyDS = Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development; CONICET = National Council for Scientific and Technical Research; INTA = National Institute of Agricultural Technology; CUDAP = Public Communications Secretariat; APN = National Parks Administration; PNA = Argentine Naval Prefecture; GP = provincial government, all by their Spanish acronyms.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team.

4.4.6 Communications and knowledge management

Finding 28. Communications and knowledge management were addressed and implemented successfully to meet project demands.

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 under the *Universidad Nacional del Sur* domain (Universidad Nacional del Sur, 2021); training workshops, coordination meetings and spaces for reflection with different stakeholders; and the preparation and distribution of brochures, posters, booklets, and other written material, audiovisual materials, and radio products.
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, 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's closing workshop, at least two speakers gave examples of how generated knowledge 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 issues

Evaluation question 5a: To what extent have gender considerations been taken into account in project design and implementation?

Finding 29. Although the PRODOC states that the gender approach will be mainstreamed in different components and outputs, no specific plan for this was designed.

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

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, 2021) does not seem to be the most appropriate and fairest approach since these instruments were outlined in 2017 and 2019, respectively, after project launch.
167. However, FAO's first global policy on gender equality (FAO, 2013), although not binding for GEF projects, is considered a guide to promote the mainstreaming of this approach in FAO offices, projects and across intervention territories. In FAO's policy, "minimum standards for gender mainstreaming" is attributed to these essential actions (FAO, 2013, p. 10). Out of the 13 established in the instrument, at least 4 are related to project cycle management. These are, in brief: a. use of data disaggregated by gender; b. building capacity in gender mainstreaming for teams and partners; c. gender analysis included in the formulation of all programmes and field projects; and d. programme evaluations and reviews fully integrate a gender analysis.\
168. Although these parameters had been established during the initiative's design phase and were not fully internalized at the institutional level upon project launch, the formulation document does refer to the traversal mainstreaming of the gender approach in different activities, outputs, outcomes and components. The way in which mainstreaming had been proposed was insufficient. It was descriptive, general and did not provide guidelines that would allow for planning an effective mainstreaming of the approach during the implementation cycle.
169. Since no gender-responsive strategy had been developed, no follow-up could be carried out on differentiated effects and the narrowing of gaps brought about by project execution. However, the Evaluation Team highlights the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in two of the most important project outputs: the NSIAS and the CPAS.

Evaluation 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. Initially, the project faced difficulties in ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making. This shortcoming was satisfactorily solved during implementation.

170. The GEF, FAO and Argentina have regulations and policies to ensure 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

<p>Argentina regulations on Indigenous community safeguards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law No. 24 071 – Ratification of Convention 169 of the International Labour 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) (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 on administrative procedures related to the preservation and protection of the environment, having a general or particular impact, and of general scope” (Article 19) (Argentine Republic, 2002b) • Law No. 23 302: Ensures the rights to land, education, health and the participation of Indigenous communities (Argentine Republic, 1985) <p>FAO policies on Indigenous Peoples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free, prior and informed consent: a right of Indigenous Peoples and a good practice for local communities (FAO, 2016) • FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (FAO, 2010b) <p>GEF regulations on Indigenous Peoples' safeguards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 project 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 2012 workshop, the evaluated project included a pilot initiative for managing the privet in a territory where the Ocloya Indigenous Peoples live. The request itself was insufficient to start executing the pilot initiative.
173. It took four years from the request to launch the project. No formal contact occurred with the communities during this period. The communities were once again approached to start the intervention in 2016.
174. According to secondary sources, this situation caused discomfort among the Ocloya leaders – due not only to years that had elapsed but also the fact that they were not consulted during the pilot’s design process. Moreover, they were not formally informed of their inclusion in the project.
175. After several attempts to get closer to the communities and coordinate with them, an informed and free internal deliberation was held. This proposed the inclusion of specific actions. Participation in the initiative was agreed upon, and the communities ultimately became active, lead players.
176. The Evaluation Team and consulted key stakeholders assert that these setbacks were lessons learned for future interventions. In this regard, they all learned about: the need to maintain bonds during formulation; establish formal mechanisms for participation and prior consultation; consider time frames, pace and cultural forms for decision-making; keep the community informed regarding the time that can lapse between an idea and project

implementation; and envisage the use of guidelines and directives outlined and provided by the different institutions.

Evaluation question 5c: Environmental safeguards. To what extent have environmental and social safeguards been taken into account in project 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 habitats in its intervention areas.

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 habitats in its intervention areas. Further, it could avoid violating applicable international treaties or agreements on the environment. It did not encourage the introduction of potential IAS.

4.6 Sustainability

Evaluation 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 NSIAS beyond the life of the project be ensured? What are the risks that may affect sustainability of the project's achievements and effects?

Finding 33. The main project outcomes, particularly those related to institutional strengthening, remained anchored to Argentina.

178. The NSIAS and CPAS regulations adopted by Argentina during and due to project implementation are a framework in support of a formal institutional mandate and a guide for managing IAS in the country. Most likely, these instruments will remain in place over time since they are formally anchored to institutions.

179. At the time of evaluation, the developed information system 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 over time.

Finding 34. Ensuring everlasting effects and managing the NSIAS upon project completion will remain in the hands of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Its success will be influenced by the allocation of resources, regular technical committee meetings and diversity, as well as the social and political validation of the decisions it makes.

180. Monitoring the project's achieved effects, implementing the NSIAS and the CPAS, and 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 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 NSIAS technical committee on governance should harness the favourable political and institutional time frames and look to increase its self-sustaining chances. Hence, it should promptly begin its regular operation, 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 officials. Having trained human resources is an important step forward for sustainability purposes. These institutions will then be ready to implement any funded action plan.

Finding 36. Sustainability of the pilot initiatives, in particular, and of initiatives at the provincial level, overall, is brought about by federal contribution and support, 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's closing workshop, the NSIAS 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 NSIAS 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 communications materials and support, insofar as possible, the preparation of provincial and interjurisdictional strategies and operational plans for managing IAS. This way, 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 project sustainability: changes in authorities and their priorities; access to financing; and the impact 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. 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, and 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. Indeed, within a context of global economic contraction, funds will be constantly more scarce – at least in the medium term.
- iii. 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 for facing the threats that IAS represent for biodiversity conservation.

5. Conclusions

186. The following are 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, the policies and laws of Argentina, and the beneficiaries of the initiative. Such high relevance led to better support for the actions rolled out, the interest and motivation to participate in the process, and 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 Argentina to face the challenge of IAS management. This 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 pilot initiatives; the design and institutional anchoring of public policy instruments, especially the NSIAS and the CPAS; 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 concludes that efficient project execution was moderately satisfactory. The reasons 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 percent 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 and assumptions), certain outcome indicators and output targets were identified that had lacked specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound 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 the GEF requirements, it could have done better if the definition of roles and responsibilities of both the implementing and executing agency would have been clearer for the parties. Also, it would have been beneficial if the staff devoted to administrative tasks had been duly reinforced and if the governmental changes had been better managed.
- iii. It is concluded that the lack of an M&E system (neither designed nor implemented) substantially affected technical and financial monitoring, as well as the availability of sources and other materials produced by the project.
- iv. The Evaluation Team stated that communications and knowledge management were a success factor. This aspect allowed for good dissemination of activities and awareness

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

- v. It is concluded that the undermaterialization 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 institutional stakeholder involvement helped in taking ownership of the initiative. This was also decisive for the approval of norms and strategies designed within the project framework.

Conclusion 5. Cross-cutting issues, gender: despite the fact that no gender-responsive strategy had been developed for monitoring the differentiated effects, the Evaluation Team highlights the mainstreaming of gender and Indigenous Peoples' perspectives in two of the most important project outputs: the NSIAS and the CPAS. This ensures, at least in the field of institutional planning, the considerations for these fields when designing and executing IAS management.

Conclusion 6. Participation of Indigenous Peoples, social safeguards: the Evaluation Team concludes that, although late, measures were satisfactorily adopted to safeguard the participation of Indigenous Peoples. This ensured that the communities could hold free and informed discussions, propose the inclusion of specific actions and agree to participate in the initiative. Ultimately, they became active, lead players.

Conclusion 7. Environmental safeguards: the Evaluation Team was able to confirm that the project had adopted the necessary measures to avoid harmful impact on the habitats in which it intervened. It did not go against applicable international environmental treaties or agreements, and did not promote the introduction of potential IAS.

Conclusion 8. Sustainability: three main factors ensure sustainability. They involve the institutional anchoring of public policy instruments and information systems; capacity building among institutions and state officials; and the establishment of a governance structure. All of these were achieved during project implementation.

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

6. Lessons learned

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

Lesson learned 1. If human resources availability and FAO's institutional procurement procedures do not offer an agile and satisfactory solution for providing the goods and services necessary to mitigate any potential risks concerning effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the technical implementation, then timely decisions should be made to overcome this difficulty (include these time frames in the AOPs and hire more personnel).

Lesson learned 2. The economic and institutional sustainability of the NSIAS and the management of IAS at the provincial level will be subject to and require the establishment of multistakeholder agreements. These will 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 binational strategic plan is necessary for the effective control of cross-border IAS. The establishment of high-level political dialogue and binational interinstitutional technical coordination are key.

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, eventually, risks at the judicial level. Given this reality, communications, academic and 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, having an expert on 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. This is needed 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 the GEF (2017) – called for staff with developed capacities, the preparation of a diagnostic analysis, and a specific plan to be implemented throughout the project cycle.

Lesson learned 8. Part of the project's success is at stake when dealing with interinstitutional relationships and the proper functioning of the established governance bodies and mechanisms. The latter must be outlined explicitly, reviewed and updated if necessary. 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 advance the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. To FAO on strengthening M&E systems. It is highly recommended that projects design and implement robust M&E systems at the start of their execution. These should align with institutional M&E systems and have, at a minimum, the following: an organizational structure; instruments for technical-financial follow up (activities, outputs and indicators) and the 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 arranged by component, outcomes, outputs and activities.

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

191. Suggestion: have a person in charge of M&E at FAO Argentina to provide services and support to all projects in their design and execution. This would enable financing the position by more than one project. The post would then 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 interinstitutional coordination and management for future initiatives, it would be advisable that, at project launch and during execution, the governance mechanisms be reviewed – and eventually updated or renewed – together with stakeholders. This 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 issues. The mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues throughout the entire project cycle is mandatory for initiatives implemented by FAO and financed by the GEF. To improve the response to this demand, it would be highly advisable to systematically and periodically build capacities on the project teams and in country offices, actively disseminate the set of institutional tools for the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, 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. The quality assurance, permanent updating and sustainability of the SNIEEI mechanism should have a formal cooperation agreement with the *Universidad Nacional del Sur*. This should include, *inter alia*: mechanisms to systematically and bidirectionally share data and analyses so that the university can 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 interjurisdictional plans for managing IAS. Given that a large part of the control or eradication of IAS takes place through provincial and interjurisdictional 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, the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development should harness the project's momentum to implement mechanisms for disseminating the NSIAS and the CPAS. This would manage the knowledge generated by the project in all provinces and support 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 and cultural) that effective control of IAS entails. This should be 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 communications strategies for managing IAS. The project has managed to develop a high quality communications strategy. It has an innovative approach to a complex communications agenda, such as the one on IAS. Therefore, it is highly recommended that continuity be provided to the communications challenge. Further, the impact of the communications pieces, messages and social perception of the IAS agenda should be constantly monitored.

Recommendation 9. To the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development in charge of presiding over the interinstitutional technical committee. Part of the sustainability of the project's efforts and achievements focuses on the creation and implementation of the committee. Given 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 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 operate and ensure the participation of all institutions involved.

Recommendation 10. To FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development on the scalability and sustainability of interventions. To maximize project sustainability and scalability, FAO and the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development should consider the development of advocacy strategies for institutional anchoring and the establishment of agreements between public and private stakeholders. This should be in the sustainability plan framework and the project design, and then implemented at an early stage.

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Appendix 1. List of key stakeholders consulted

	Surname	Name	Title/institution
Project team			
1	Cuevas	Yannina	Project assistant technician/biologist
2	Galarza	Cesar	FAO-NSIAS project coordinator (2021–2022)
3	Gobet	Victoria	Project coordination assistant
4	Morandi	Marcelo	FAO-NSIAS former project coordinator (2015–2020)
5	Nowak	Carla	FAO-NSIAS project communications manager
6	Sanhueza	Cristina	Project assistant technician/biologist
7	Zalba	Sergio	IAS expert, FAO-NSIAS project
FAO Argentina			
8	Cabello	María Julia	Assistant to the environment programme officer
9	Huykman	Natalia	Environment and natural resources programme officer
10	Morel	Francisco	Administrative assistant
11	Petersen	Carlos	Administrative officer
12	Yofre	Francisco	Results-based payments project/programme coordinator, representing officer during project design and most of implementation (until 2020)
Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development			
13	Domingorena	Beatriz	National secretary of environmental policy for natural resources
14	Duarte	Dolores Pereira	Communications
15	Kasulin	Ines	National project coordinator
16	Moreno	Diego	Former secretary of environmental policy at the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development
17	Prado	Walter	Fauna directorate, technician
18	Seresi	Rosana	National biodiversity director, regulatory technician
Consultants			
19	Belfer	Laura	Former FAO-NSIAS consultant
20	Curto	Erio	FAO-NSIAS consultant, beaver sector
21	Ibáñez	Hernán	Former FAO-NSIAS consultant
22	Natale	Evangelina	Former FAO-NSIAS consultant
23	Schiavini	Adrian	Former FAO-NSIAS consultant
24	Zilio	Mariana	Former FAO-NSIAS consultant, economics expert
FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean			
25	Campos	Lorenzo	Liaison officer, financial resources
26	Casaza	Jessica	Lead technical consultant of the project
Provinces			
27	Alvarez	Eugenia	Secretary of environment, Tierra del Fuego

	Surname	Name	Title/institution
28	Benítez	Alan	Undersecretary of biodiversity, Ministry of Ecology, Misiones
29	Carranza	María Luisa	Provincial system of natural protected areas, Tierra del Fuego
30	Diaz Pacheco	Jessica	Director of biodiversity, Ministry of Ecology, Misiones
31	Hollman	Federico	Former environment secretary, Rio Negro
Other institutions			
32	Abelando	Mariana	Argentine Naval Prefecture, Environmental Protection Directorate
33	de Gracia	Mario	Plant health directorate, SENASA
34	Gavier	Gregorio	Focal point, National Institute of Agricultural Technology
35	Guerra	Felipe	GEF project coordinator, FAO Chile
36	Malmierca	Laura	Natural protected areas, Tierra del Fuego
37	Marinero	José Alberto	Secretariat of Environment, San Juan
38	Medero	Silvana	Communications, National Institute of Agricultural Technology
39	Menvielle	Maria Fernanda	Focal point, natural protected areas, NPA
40	Montero	Germán	<i>Asociación Ambiente Sur</i> , Santa Cruz
41	Orellana	Jorge	Plant health directorate, SENASA
42	Outi	Yanina	Plant health directorate, SENASA
Wild boar pilot, El Palmar National Park			
43	Amaranta	Aristobulo	NPA, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
44	Beltrane	José	NPA, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
45	Duran	Liliana	NPA, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
46	Gonzalez	Claudio	NPA, board member
47	Guzmán	Monica	NPA, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
48	Sanguinetti	Javier	NPA, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
49	Treboux	Guillermo	NPA, El Palmar National Park, Entre Ríos
50		Ariel	Hunter/hunting club for the conservation of El Palmar National Park
51		Hunter	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/dissidents group, hunters at 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		Oscar	Hunter/hunting club for the conservation of El Palmar National Park

Appendix 2. Table of GEF evaluation criteria ratings

GEF criterion/subcriterion	Rating	Summarized comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	Project design and implementation are consistent with the priorities and interest of the stakeholders.
A1.1 Consistency with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	Project is 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 are consistent with Argentina's priorities and the needs of beneficiary groups.
A1.3 Complimentarity with existing interventions	HS	The project's coordinated actions with IAS management initiatives are underway.
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall evaluation of project outcomes	S	The outcomes contributed to strengthening Argentina's management of IAS.
B1.1. Fulfilment of project outcomes	S	The project achieved the planned outcomes.
B1.2. Progress towards achieving project outcomes and objectives	S	The achieved outputs and outcomes decisively contributed 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 communications strategy was rolled out, generating lessons learned to design an NSIAS strategy.
Outcome 2.1	HS	Over 12 legal and regulatory frameworks were adopted and financing mechanisms for NSIAS were identified.
Outcome 3.1	HS	The pilot project for early detection at ports and surrounding areas was scaled up. Four ports were replicated independently at all sea and river ports in the country (14).
Outcome 3.2	S	The pilot projects tested management practices, methodologies and protocols; generated knowledge; placed the issue on the public agenda; built capacities; and raised awareness among 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	Binational fora were set up to reflect on and share experiences, leading to specific agreements, joint work and follow-up activities.
Outcome 5.1	MS	Although indicators were met, the project's monitoring and accountability system did not meet the required quality standards.

GEF criterion/subcriterion	Rating	Summarized comments
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 to Argentine institutions and capacities were built, setting the foundations for achieving medium- and long-term results.
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency	MS	The project had a three-year delay in its completion, and its administrative procedures were not the best.
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Global probability of sustainability-related risks	ML	Certain risks could materialize.
D1.1. Financial risks	L	Despite political will, financial resources – when assessed – are not ensured for project continuity.
D1.2. Social and political risks	ML	Pressure groups against the control of IAS could influence decision-makers.
D1.3 Institutional and governance risks	ML	Although the project designed a governance group, it has not yet started meeting, has no regulations and has no funding.
D1.4 Environmental risks	MU	No environmental risks that could threaten project sustainability have been noted.
D2. Enhancement and replication	L	The political and institutional scenario favours the project's replication and scalability.
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
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.
E2.2 Project oversight (project steering committee, Project Task Force, etc.)	MS	The governance structure did not work as stated in the PRODOC. However, coordination mechanisms and governance bodies were established pursuant to the project's implementation and execution needs, especially during the last stage.
E3. Project execution quality	S	The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development had faced complex situations that affected its role and responsibilities inherent in the executing agency. Nonetheless, it performed its duties according to the requirements and to the institutional arrangements required by the GEF.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MS	Co-financing as of May 2022 stood at 39 percent of the committed amount. This did not substantially affect output quality and achievement. However, the evaluation mission was informed that co-financing had reached 78 percent at project completion (two months after the evaluation took place).

GEF criterion/subcriterion	Rating	Summarized comments
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	S	Both the project design and NSIAS formulation were participatory processes.
E6. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge outputs	AS	Communications and knowledge management were successfully addressed and implemented.
E7. Overall quality of M&E	U	The project neither designed nor launched a monitoring system to follow up on its technical-financial execution, make timely decisions or facilitate access to means of verification.
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 project design and implementation.
F. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	No specific plan was designed to address the gender perspective. Nonetheless, the project envisaged this in two of its main outcomes: the NSIAS and CPAS.
F2. Human rights/Indigenous Peoples' issues	S	Initially, the project had faced difficulties in including Indigenous Peoples in decision-making. These shortcomings were satisfactorily resolved during project implementation.
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	S	Measures were taken to protect the environment and ensure that those who had been 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)	Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings.
Satisfactory (S)	Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings.
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

Project Implementation and Execution

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of implementation or execution.
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation or execution.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings, and the quality of M&E design and implementation surpasses expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were 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 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 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)	The available information does not allow for a quality assessment of M&E design/implementation.

Sustainability

Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk to sustainability.
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks to sustainability.
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks to sustainability.
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks to sustainability.
Unable to Assess (UA)	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Appendix 4. Results matrix

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent 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 percent of requests for introducing IAS will have been duly analysed by the system	100 percent	Risk analysis mechanisms established, adopted and institutionalized.
	b) Early detection and immediate action systems implemented in at least 25 percent of the national parks, in five provincial protected areas across the country, and at ports on the Atlantic coastline	100 percent	33 park administrations developed early detection and immediate action systems based on training workshops.
	c) IAS management strategies included in the AOPs of at least 25 percent of the country's park administrations	70 percent	Not possible to access the AOPs of the park administrations, but, based on a survey, it is estimated that at least 70 percent had them.
	d) Score of 11/15 obtained through the GEF tracking tool (part VI on IAS, questions 1, 2, 4 and 5)	100 percent	Score of 11/15 obtained according to the last PIR.
Output 1.1.1 SNIEEI 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; and IAS management projects in Argentina.	a) 150 scientists, technicians and naturalists registered and active as information providers in seven Consejo Federal de Medio Ambiente (COFEMA) regions	+100 percent	280 experts/naturalists trained in the use of SNIEEI.
	b) 9 300 occurrence sites registered	97 percent	776 taxa and 9 024 occurrence sites in the database.
	c) 240 registered specialists	+100 percent	591 scientists/naturalists included in the database.
	d) 120 registered projects	+100 percent	121 registered projects.
	e) No less than 1 400 annual visits consulting the database at the end of the project	+100 percent	Over 25 727 visits to the webpage since project launch (1 August 2017) for an average of 5 200 visits per year.
Output 1.1.2 Defined official list of IAS present across the country, organized into categories.	An official IAS list signed by the Government of Argentina, the provincial governments participating in Component 3 and four pilot initiatives, and by representatives from the six regions of the Federal Environment Council	100 percent	Official list adopted and interinstitutional technical committee for follow up established. Resolutions of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development 109/21 and 13/21
Output 1.1.3. NSIAS – a guiding document to coordinate actions on communications and education, prevention, early detection and rapid response, priority setting,	NSIAS signed by the Government of Argentina and provincial governments participating in the pilot programmes under Components 3 and 4, and by representatives from the six	100 percent	Resolution adopting NSIAS.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
and control and eradication.	regions of the Federal Environment Council		
Output 1.1.3.a Strategy for preventing the introduction of IAS in Argentina (suboutput of NSIAS).	a) List classifying the main vectors for IAS introduction and dispersal pathways in the country	100 percent	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 Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development technicians trained in their use	100 percent	Adjusted and validated risk analysis systems for plants, terrestrial vertebrates and fish. Eight technicians from the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development trained for application. Representatives from 12 provinces, plus the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, the NPA and SENASA.
	c) 30 technicians trained in border control of IAS introduction (SENASA, border patrol, customs, airport security police and the Argentine Naval Prefecture)	100 percent	More than 20 Argentine Naval Prefecture 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 percent	Resolution 109/21 of the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development approving the official IAS and potentially invasive species list.
	e) Two voluntary codes of conduct (for botanical gardens under the Argentine Network of Botanical Gardens, and vets and pet shops)	100 percent	Voluntary codes of conduct for botanical gardens signed by 16 representatives.
Output 1.1.3.b Systems and protocols for early detection and rapid response developed and implemented for national and provincial protected areas.	a) At least 15 park administrations have early detection and rapid response systems and protocols in place and operational	+100 percent	Based on training workshops, 33 park administrations developed early detection and rapid response systems and protocols.
	b) At least 80 conservation stakeholders, including park rangers, trained in early detection, rapid response, control and eradication techniques	+100 percent	249 trained park rangers and conservation stakeholders.
Output 1.1.3.c Prioritization, control and eradication systems for national and provincial park administrations developed and implemented.	a) At least 15 protected areas have prioritization, control and eradication systems in place and operational	+100 percent	Based on training workshops, 33 park administrations developed prioritization, control and eradication systems.
	b) At least 80 conservation stakeholders, including park rangers, trained in prioritization, control and/or eradication techniques for IAS linked to ecosystem restoration, composition and resilience	+100 percent	249 trained park rangers and conservation stakeholders.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
Output 1.1.4 Knowledge and perception on IAS and NSIAS increased by project closure through the implementation of CPAS, particularly supporting the six pilot programmes, Outputs 3.2.1–6.	Communications strategy, such as the CPAS, implemented through communications measures focused on: a) government agencies b) the public at large c) children and youth	100 percent	Resolution for adopting and implementing CPAS.
Outcome 2.1: National and provincial legal, regulatory, and financial frameworks harmonized and supporting the effective implementation of NSIAS.	Score of 3/6 based on the GEF tracking tool	100 percent	Score based on 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 percent	Over 13 regulatory frameworks including different sectors were outlined and adopted.
	b) 150 judiciary and public ministry staff trained in IAS regulations	100 percent pending confirmation	100 percent reported but the Evaluation Team found no sources to check this information.
Output 2.1.2 Financing mechanisms for NSIAS developed.	At least one mechanism agreed upon and developed (Payment of Ecosystem Services Fund, environmental risk insurance or charge for IAS, inclusion of good prevention practices for IAS in Forest Stewardship Council [FSC] certifications, organic fish farming and environmentally friendly tourism).	100 percent	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 percent	Bill on minimum standards designed and ready to be discussed.
Output 2.1.4 MERCOSUR agenda for the environment includes IAS.	IAS included on the agenda	100 percent	Ministers for the Environment of MERCOSUR, Subgroup 6, included IAS on their agenda.
Outcome 3.1: Coastal and marine ecosystems protected against IAS through early detection and rapid response measures.	Score of 3/5 obtained based on the GEF tracking tool	100 percent	Score of 4 according to the last PIR.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 3.2: Ecosystem recovery in progress, biodiversity highly or potentially affected by six IAS, and risks for health and the forestry/farming sector mitigated by applying containment and eradication protocols.	A) 3/6 containment, control or eradication protocols for IAS prove their effectiveness through ecosystem and biodiversity recovery indicators on xx ha	100 percent pending confirmation	The Evaluation Team has been unable to confirm that ecosystem and biodiversity recovery indicators have been constructed and measured. Further, the indicator does not specify the number of hectares to be measured.
	b) Score of 24/48 obtained based on the GEF tracking tool (part IV, question 6)	90 percent	Score of 22 based on the last PIR.
	c) Adjustment of the NSIAS and its implementation based on six reports on lessons learned from pilot IAS control programmes	100 percent	NSIAS included lessons learned from the implementation of pilot initiatives.
Output 3.2.1 Red-bellied tree squirrel pilot initiative.	a) 70 percent of the competent authorities and inhabitants of the site/rural surroundings selected via a perception survey ("the site") are aware of the negative impact of squirrels and support their control	100 percent	86.6 percent of key stakeholders influenced.
	b) One resolution by the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development and three provincial resolutions adopted, declaring the red-bellied tree squirrel a harmful species	100 percent	The red-bellied tree squirrel included on the national IAS list and declared a harmful species in the Province of Buenos Aires.
Output 3.2.2 Stopped the invasion of the didymo algae in areas of high conservation value in the provinces of Rio Negro, Neuquén and Chubut.	Risk of didymo algae invasion in at least ten areas of high conservation value mitigated through the voluntary cleaning of fishing gear in 20 municipalities of the affected area, and dissemination activities	100 percent	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 (Convention on Wetlands sites at the Guanacache, Desaguadero and Bebedero lagoons and at the Llancañelo lagoon) of high conservation value in the Cuyo region.	Control of tamarisks and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services on 180 ha (90 ha at the Llancañelo lagoon and 90 ha at the Guanacache, Desaguadero and Bebedero lagoons)	100 percent	The target of 180 ha freed from tamarisks was achieved and resilience processes were assessed.
Output 3.2.4 Diversity of amphibians in Argentina's wetlands protected against the invasion of bullfrogs by implementing a national	a) 100 percent of active and inactive farms and distribution of bullfrogs across the country surveyed	100 percent	A georeferenced cadaster on the situation of bullfrog farms was carried out (71).
	b) A proposal on supplementing the regulations governing bullfrog farms	100 percent	The Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development adopted

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
strategy for managing bullfrogs.			Resolution No. 283/2020 declaring the bullfrog an IAS.
	c) Control protocols validated	100 percent	Control and monitoring actions were implemented in areas invaded by the species.
	d) Communications strategy coordinated with the CPAS of the NSIAS (Output 1.1.4)	100 percent	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 percent compared to the baseline established at pilot programme launch through control, eradication and communications	-	Indicator not measured by the project.
Output 3.2.6 Recovery of the native vegetation species of the Argentine Northwest forest, including the traditional livelihood of the Ocloya Indigenous community, by reducing density and range of invasive privet.	At least 20 ha of privet under control, reducing at least 50 percent the density of privet, and assisted restoration by planting – with a community and gender participation approach – of at least 1 500 native plants	-	Indicator not measured by the project; with regard to the target, the creation of nurseries with 2 000 plants is reported. Key stakeholders declared that the target was probably not achieved.
Outcome 4.1: Native forest and peat bog ecosystems under effective control against North American beavers in Tierra del Fuego; recovery of the affected or endangered biodiversity underway.	a) 121 280 ha free from beavers	100 percent	75 000 ha and over 600 km of watercourses were freed from beavers during project implementation.
	b) Benthic microhabitats in basin watercourses freed from beavers recovered to similar conditions as watercourses not affected by beavers	-	Indicator not measured by project.
	c) Less organic matter in the sediments of watercourse beds in basins freed from beavers	-	Indicator not measured by project.
	d) Streams in the Mimica River area and its surroundings recover their structure to once again become salmon spawning beds	-	Indicator not measured by project.
	e) Assisted recovery of lenga trees (<i>Nothofagus pumilio</i>), Magellan's beeches and Antarctic beeches (<i>Nothofagus Antarctica</i>) underway in affected areas but not overwhelmed by beavers	-	Indicator not measured by project.
Outcome 4.2: Binational beaver eradication programme in implementation (at least in the Argentine territory of Tierra del Fuego).	Binational mass beaver eradication programme implemented within two to five years after completion of pilot projects in each country	80 percent	Both projects have not ended. There is an agreement to implement a second phase of the beaver eradication programme, but the final decision will be political.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
Output 4.1.1 Governance and management structure for the beaver control and eradication programme, developed and operational.	a) An interinstitutional 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 percent	A decree issued by the Government of Tierra del Fuego created the interinstitutional committee. Three meetings were held in a year.
	b) Team for managing the programme established and operational	100 percent	The team responsible for project implementation was established and worked as planned.
	c) Social participation group in place and operating	100 percent	A social participation group was established by the Provincial Environment Council among provinces, municipalities, universities and non-governmental organizations.
Output 4.1.2 Operational plans and eradication protocols for each of the demonstration units.	Seven operational plans and eradication protocols for demonstration units including: a) interinstitutional agreements and accordance with other key stakeholders for implementation of the plan; b) a baseline on beaver population density in demonstration units and level of degradation of the ecosystem; and c) biodiversity recovery indicators (forest, physical structure of riverbeds and grassland recovery) for monitoring the effectiveness of implementation of the plans.	100 percent	Baseline established on sites affected by beavers. Operational plan outlined and implemented. Indicator monitoring plan prepared and implemented by the Southern Center for Scientific Research of the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research, and the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Secretariat, Tierra del Fuego.
Output 4.1.3 Capacities strengthened for managing and eradicating beavers, including human resources and instruments for planning and monitoring.	a) 150 people from among provincial institutions, the authorities and private landowners, as well as forestry, oil and livestock sectors trained to support the implementation of operational plans and the eradication protocols (trainees must obtain an average score of 75 percent on the final test)	85 percent pending confirmation	85 percent compliance with the indicator was reported, but the Evaluation Team did not find the linked source.
	b) Geographic Information System and beaver population density maps for Tierra del Fuego developed, particularly for the demonstration units	100 percent	Geographic Information System prepared by Space Sur.
Output 4.1.4 Trappers, hunters and supervisors have the appropriate capacities for the effective	150–300 trappers, hunters and supervisors trained in protocol application (trainees should obtain an average score of 75 percent on the final test)	100 percent pending confirmation	In the last monitoring report, it was confirmed that 24 people were trained, but 100 percent compliance with the indicator is reported.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
application of eradication protocols.			
Output 4.1.5 Operational plans and eradication protocols implemented in demonstration units.	Seven operational plans and eradication protocols implemented in demonstration units	100 percent	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 reinvasion) including: a biosecurity plan; the systematic monitoring of ecosystem recovery indicators (see Outcome 4.1); and sustainable funding.	a) At least 160 persons trained in biosecurity and monitoring of reinvasion	24 percent	The target was not achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions and the lack of interested parties.
	b) Database on actions of the biosecurity plan for the entire pilot programme	100 percent	Database generated.
	c) 121 280 ha in seven demonstration units under permanent control, monitoring and prevention of reinvasion, keeping beaver population at a level that prevents adverse impacts on the native forest and peat bog ecosystems	100 percent pending confirmation	75 000 ha and over 600 km of watercourses freed from beavers during project implementation. The project reported 100 percent compliance. However, the Evaluation Team confirmed that the freed hectares are not "under permanent control, monitoring and prevention of reinvasion, keeping beaver population at a level that prevents adverse impacts on the native forest and peat bog ecosystems".
Output 4.1.7 Implementation of a communications strategy provides the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego with greater knowledge and understanding of the beaver invasion and related control measures upon project closure.	a) Brochures and webpage on the eradication pilot programme prepared	100 percent	Brochures and project webpage available.
	b) Lessons learned and outcomes of the beaver pilot programme systematized and published	100 percent	Study conducted on lessons learned.
Output 4.2.1 Chile and Argentina share experiences and coordinate the learning process on the control and eradication pilot programmes, which also inform the NSIAS.	a) Three binational workshops to share experiences and coordinate the pilot learning process	100 percent	Workshops held.
	b) One national workshop for providing feedback to the NSIAS	100 percent	Workshop held.
Output 4.2.2 Governance framework and binational beaver eradication programme agreed upon.	At least two binational workshops will have led to an agreement on the governance framework and binational programme	100 percent	Binational workshops held and preparatory agreements reached for a binational programme, even though its approval is beyond the scope of the project.

Intervention rationale	Indicators or targets	Percent achieved	Description and comments
Outcome 5.1 Project implementation according to results-based management, and outcomes and lessons learned applied to future operations.	Project outcomes achieved and sustained	100 percent	All outputs were developed and there are good sustainability prospects.
Output 5.1.1 Project monitoring system operational, providing systematic information on progress in achieving project outcomes and outputs.	Eight semi-annual project progress reports issued	100 percent	Eight project progress reports delivered.
Output 5.1.2 Mid-term and final evaluations.	Two evaluations: mid-term and final	100 percent	Evaluations conducted.
Output 5.1.3 Best practices and lessons learned disseminated.	Best practices and lessons learned from the project disseminated	100 percent	<p>An exercise on lessons learned from the MTR was carried out.</p> <p>The 2022 binational workshop focused on lessons from the beaver pilot programme.</p> <p>Lessons learned included in the NSIAS.</p> <p>The closing workshop focused on sharing experiences.</p>

Appendix 5. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
Criterion: Strategic relevance			
<i>Evaluation question 1:</i> Were the project's design and outcomes aligned – and continue to align – with the FAO Strategic Framework, the GEF-5 strategies and Argentina's national priorities? Has the project been relevant in meeting the needs of the beneficiary groups?			
<i>Evaluation subquestion 1.1:</i> Was the project's design and ambition appropriate to deliver the expected outcomes, given the political context, institutional capacities and GEF objectives?	<i>Indicators:</i> <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. <i>Judgement criteria:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Justification in the project's design that refers to Argentina's priorities and 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 Argentina on IAS. ● Perception of the key stakeholders regarding the evaluation. 	Document review Interviews	<i>Secondary sources:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PRODOC ● Technical documents ● PIR/project progress report (PPR)/MTR ● Government and Argentina's institutional, strategic and legal framework <i>Primary sources:</i> <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

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 1.2:</i> 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 Programming Framework and beneficiaries' needs?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></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 an analysis that accounts for the priorities of the beneficiary communities. • Assessment of project staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders on addressing FAO, GEF and beneficiary group priorities. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Technical documents • PIR/PPR/MTR • FAO strategic framework • FAO Argentina programme framework • FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean regional strategies • GEF-5 strategy • Initial diagnostic studies • Others <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Beneficiaries
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 1.3:</i> Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design (new national/provincial policies, plans or programmes that affects the relevance of the project's objectives)?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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 situation. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project's adaptation and response capacity to any potential changes. • 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><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Technical documents • PIR/PPR/MTR • Government and Argentina's institutional, strategic and legal framework <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
Criterion: Effectiveness and progress made in achieving the intended effects			
<i>Evaluation 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?</i>			
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 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?</i></p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution level of activities and compliance with outcome and goal indicators. • Contribution to the project's objective of implementing the four programmatic components. • Capacities built, 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><i>Secondary sources:</i></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><i>Primary sources:</i></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><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.2: 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?</i></p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution level of activities and compliance with indicators for project Outcome 1.1, its four activities and three subactivities. • Quality, functionality of the coordination instances and governance mechanisms of the national information system, the NSIAS and its associated components. • Quality and timeliness of internal and external communication and related outputs. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Logical framework matrix, updated • External services reports (information systems, training and others) • PIR/PPR/MTR • Workplans and reports of the different coordination instances • NSIAS • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems • Others

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility and usefulness of the information system and its content. • 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><i>Primary sources:</i></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
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.3:</i> Component 2. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and funding mechanisms in support of the implementation of NSIAS: What achievements and outcomes have been accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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 NSIAS. • Degree of contribution of such strengthening to the effective implementation of NSIAS. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution level 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) of the effects arising from the strengthening of regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></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><i>Primary sources:</i></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
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.4:</i> 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</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project's contribution to the implementation and validation of protocols to manage IAS at pilot sites. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution level of activities and compliance with indicators for project Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 and the one/six related activities, respectively. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports • Protocols prepared • Prioritization, control and eradication systems • Pilot project systematization • Studies carried out

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
<p>accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 at pilot sites. Drivers, opportunities and barriers to achieving Component 3 outcomes. Positive or negative perception of the project's key stakeholders regarding the effects of the awareness raising strategies generated by the project. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTR/PIR/PPR <p><i>Primary sources:</i></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><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.5:</i> Component 4. Development of the pilot programme for eradication of the North American beaver (<i>Castor canadensis</i>) in Tierra del Fuego based on IAS governance: What achievements and outcomes have been accomplished within each component? What opportunities and challenges contributed/limited outcome achievement?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of implementation of the pilot programme to eradicate the North American beaver (<i>Castor canadensis</i>) in Tierra del Fuego. Degree of progress of the binational programme to eradicate the North American beaver from Tierra del Fuego (Argentine side of the island). <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execution and fulfilment of indicators for project Outcomes 4.1 and 4.2 and its seven/two related activities, respectively. Evidence of effective North American beaver management resulting from the implementation of actions and the achievement of outputs envisaged by the pilot initiative. Quality and ownership of national, provincial and binational governance mechanisms. Positive or negative perception of the project's key stakeholders 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><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC Protocols prepared Prioritization, control and eradication systems Pilot project systematization Studies carried out MTR/PIR/PPR <p><i>Primary sources:</i></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><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.6:</i> What outcomes have been achieved as a result of capacity building?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project effects (both qualitative and quantitative) on government officials and institutions, resulting from capacity building and knowledge generated by the initiative. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></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. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC External services reports (training, monitoring system, practice manual and others) MTR/PIR/PPR <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment (positive or negative) of the project's key stakeholders regarding the effects generated as a result of capacity building. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External services (consultants and others) State officials Partner organizations and other stakeholders
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.7: To what extent can outcome achievement be attributed to this project?</i></p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project's level of contribution to achieving the environmental outcomes and objectives and the development objective. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes promoted and catalysed 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. Capacity built 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><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC External services reports Protocols prepared Prioritization, control and eradication systems Regulatory frameworks Financing mechanisms Pilot project systematization Studies carried out MTR/PIR/PPR Others <p><i>Primary sources:</i></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
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.8: To what extent can progress towards achieving the impact be attributed to the project?</i></p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to its objective of the implementation of the four project programme components. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC PIR/PPR/MTR NSIAS Laws drafted and adopted Financing mechanisms Protocols prepared Prioritization, control and eradication systems

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities built, 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><i>Primary sources:</i></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><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.9: Was there evidence of less environmental stress and a change in environmental status, or any change in the policy/legal/regulatory framework?</i></p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of project's contribution to lessening environmental stress and bringing about changes in regulations. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></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><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports • PIR/PPR/MTR • Laws drafted and adopted • Studies carried out <p><i>Primary sources:</i></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><i>Evaluation subquestion 2.10: Are there any barriers or risks that can affect future progress towards achieving the project's impact?</i></p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of risks that can affect the project's impact in the future. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></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>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • External services reports • PIR/PPR/MTR • Laws drafted and adopted • Studies carried out <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • External services (consultants and others) • State officials and authorities (national, regional and local)

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Beneficiaries • Other stakeholders
Criterion: Efficiency			
<i>Evaluation question 3:</i> Have the implementation modalities, the institutional structure, the available financial, technical, programmatic and operational resources and procedures contributed to or hindered the achievement of the project's outcomes and objectives?			
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 3.1:</i> Were the institutional structure, resources and financial, technical, and operational procedures available in a timely manner?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and level of ownership of the implemented procedures by project staff. • 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 and organizational structure regarding the achievement of outcomes and budget delivery. • Suitability of the mechanisms, institutional arrangements, processes, and technical and operational procedures established. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reallocations of budget items and their justification. • Technical execution of activities and budget delivery. • Suitability of the implemented institutional and organizational architecture. • Existence, usefulness and monitoring of a project organization chart. • Existence and usefulness of protocols for stakeholder coordination. • Quality and 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 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • PIR/PPR/MTR • Financial reports • AOPs • Budget • Other internal documents <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Partner organizations

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
	available resources, project management and usefulness of the designed structure.		
<i>Evaluation subquestion 3.2:</i> Has the project management been able to adjust to changing conditions (governmental policies and COVID-19) to ensure efficient project implementation?	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the response capacity vis-à-vis these conditions. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes and innovations due to the political and health context. • Project execution options designed within the context of mobility restrictions due to COVID-19 and the results achieved. • Quality and timeliness of the support provided by the FAO national, regional and global offices to adjust the project execution modalities. • Budgetary and programmatic adjustments made with 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. 	Document review Interviews	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIR/PPR/MTR • Letters of agreement • Agreements • Other internal documents <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions • Other stakeholders
Criterion: Factors affecting project performance			
<i>Evaluation question 4:</i> What are the main factors that currently influence or have influenced project performance (design, implementation, execution, M&E, stakeholder engagement, co-financing, and communications and knowledge management)?			
<i>Evaluation subquestion 4.1:</i> 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><i>Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and timeliness of FAO's technical, programmatic, administrative and operational support. <p><i>Judgement criteria</i></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 FAO's technical and operational support. • Risk identification, management and mitigation. • Ability to adapt to expected and unforeseen changes. • 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. 	Document review Interviews	<p><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR <p><i>Primary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 4.2:</i> To what extent did the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development effectively carry out its role and responsibilities related to project execution?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of fulfilment of the executing agency's responsibilities and performance. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of challenges, deficiencies and strengths 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 governance instances. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Strategic documents, project reports and progress reports <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 4.3:</i> To what extent did the M&E plan/design contribute to the project's outcomes? Was the budget allocated for the M&E system sufficient to implement all of the planned tasks?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence, quality and financing of a monitoring, follow-up and evaluation system. <p><i>Judgement criteria</i></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, as well as 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><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • M&E system • Others <p><i>Primary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 4.4:</i> 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</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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><i>Judgement criteria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of staff responsible for the design and implementation of the M&E system. • Availability of virtual storage space and organization of information. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • M&E system • Others <p><i>Primary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO team

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
execution, achieve outcomes and ensure sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<i>Evaluation subquestion 4.5:</i> 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><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-financing committed and materialized. • Number of additional resources contributed and leveraged by the project. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></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><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • M&E system • Financial reports • Others <p><i>Primary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO officials • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
<i>Evaluation subquestion 4.6:</i> Stakeholders, such as civil society, Indigenous Peoples or the private sector, were involved in project design and implementation. What was the effect on project outcomes?	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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 analysis, planning or design, and implementation. • Level of and opportunity for the participation of government institutions, civil society organizations, companies, local communities and Indigenous groups. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></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 stakeholders and beneficiaries regarding participation in the different project cycle stages. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR <p><i>Primary sources</i></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
<i>Evaluation subquestion 4.7:</i> How is the project evaluating, documenting and sharing its outcomes, lessons learned and experiences? To what	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of communications and knowledge management strategies designed. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • MTR/PIR/PPR • Strategy and communications materials

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
extent can the communications outputs and activities support the sustainability and scaling up of the project's outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a communications strategy. • Quality, relevance and timeliness of communications outputs and media used. • Evidence of educational campaigns, awareness raising plans and actions in the press and on social media. • Existence and quality of strategies and IT tools to ensure timely and quality management of 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"> • M&E system • Others <p><i>Primary sources</i></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) • Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development and partner institutions
Criterion: Cross-cutting issues			
<i>Evaluation question 5a: Gender:</i> To what extent have gender considerations been taken into account in project design and implementation?			
<i>Evaluation question 5b: Participation of Indigenous Peoples (social safeguards):</i> To what extent have the rights of Indigenous Peoples been respected and promoted in the project's design, decision-making and implementation?			
<i>Evaluation question 5c: Environmental safeguards :</i> To what extent have environmental and social safeguards been taken into account in project design and implementation?			
<i>Evaluation subquestion 5a.1:</i> To what extent have gender considerations been 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><i>Indicators:</i></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 project design and implementation. • Mainstreaming of the gender perspective in project 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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for the effective participation of women in project activities. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></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><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO-GEF personnel • Project team • Project beneficiaries • National officials • Provincial officials

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the project's stakeholders regarding gender mainstreaming. • Opinion of beneficiaries regarding mainstreaming of a gender approach in the project's design and implementation. 		
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 5b.1:</i> To what extent have the rights of Indigenous Peoples been respected and promoted in the project's design, decision-making and implementation?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation of Indigenous Peoples 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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for addressing cultural and social issues during project implementation. • Degree of relationship with the national safeguard system. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></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><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO team • Project beneficiaries • National state officials • Provincial state officials • Partner organizations
<p><i>Evaluation subquestion 5c.1:</i> To what extent have environmental and social safeguards been taken into account in project design and implementation?</p>	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for addressing environmental and social issues during project implementation. • Degree of relationship with the national safeguards system. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRODOC • Project reports • MTR <p><i>Primary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team • FAO team • Project beneficiaries • National state officials • Provincial state officials • Partner organizations

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
Criterion: Sustainability			
<i>Evaluation question 6:</i> How sustainable are the outcomes achieved at the environmental, social, institutional and financial levels? How can the sustainability of the implementation of the NSIAS beyond the life of the project be ensured? What are the risks that may affect sustainability of the project's achievements and effects?			
<i>Evaluation subquestion 6.1:</i> How sustainable are the outcomes achieved at the environmental, social, institutional and financial levels? How is the sustainability of NSIAS implementation beyond the life of the project ensured?	<p><i>Indicators:</i></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 NSIAS. ● Degree of likelihood that the provincial states will continue with the implementation of public policies related to the NSIAS 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><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Factors that show the continuity of country level efforts for the continuity of NSIAS implementation. ● Provinces that have shown interest in the continuity of NSIAS implementation. ● Assessments by key stakeholders 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>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PIR/PPR/MTR ● Regulatory frameworks ● Letters of agreement ● Agreements ● Other internal documents <p><i>Primary sources:</i></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
<i>Evaluation subquestion 6.2:</i> What are the risks that may affect the sustainability of the project's achievements and effects?	<p><i>Indicators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● External factors that could affect NSIAS sustainability, achievements and effects. ● Institutional factors at the national government level that could affect NSIAS sustainability, achievements and effects. 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p><i>Secondary sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PRODOC ● FAO-GEF reports ● National sustainability strategy ● Provincial sustainability strategy

Evaluation subquestion	Indicators/judgement criteria	Methods	Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Institutional factors at the provincial government level that could affect NSIAS sustainability, achievements and effects. ● Sectoral factors that could affect NSIAS sustainability, achievements and effects. <p><i>Judgement criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk mitigation measures for sustainability. ● Assessment by key stakeholders of risk mitigation actions aimed at ensuring sustainability. ● Stakeholders' perceptions and assessments. ● Degree of turnover of state officials. 		<p><i>Primary sources:</i></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 of governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species	
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: In order to hold a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of questions will be adapted to the profile of the key stakeholders interviewed.	
<p>Questions to the key stakeholder</p> <p>Not all questions will apply to all key stakeholders. Some will be selected from this list based on responsibilities, thematic areas and the information managed by the interviewee.</p>	
Introductory questions	
<p>What is your name?</p> <p>What is your position and responsibility within the project?</p>	
Criterion: Strategic relevance	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking into account the national context and the strategic and political priorities of Argentina 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. Has any change affected the relevance of the project since its formulation? If so, what changes? 5. Do you think that the project satisfactorily meets the needs of the beneficiary groups? 6. Did COVID-19 influence normal project execution? In what way? Were adjustments made and/or innovations implemented in response to this context? 	
Criterion: Effectiveness	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. In your opinion, what have been the main outcomes and effects stemming from project execution? 8. How has the project contributed to strengthening governance for the effective protection of biodiversity against the impact of IAS? 9. What aspects of the pilot projects 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 launch of the national information system; b. the establishment of coordination and governance mechanisms for the system; and 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 NSIAS? 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?
15. Component 4. What has been the project's contribution to the implementation of the pilot programme for the eradication of North American beavers in the Province of Tierra del Fuego? What are the main lessons learned from this programme?
16. Component 4. What is the level of progress achieved by the binational beaver eradication programme in Tierra del Fuego? What barriers and enabling factors can you identify?
17. In your opinion, and taking into account your experience in executing the project, what have been the strengths and weaknesses that have allowed (or not allowed) the proposed indicators and outputs to be achieved?
18. Have unplanned outcomes occurred? Could you describe and rate them?

Criterion: Efficiency

1. Were the financial resources provided for the project sufficient to achieve the planned outcomes with good quality?
2. Were synergies and complementarities generated with other initiatives and institutions (national, regional and local)? What were the effects of the partnerships that had been established?
3. Were there budget adjustments? Which ones? Why?
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?
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?
6. Were there delays in financial and technical execution? What were the causes for these delays? Was there an ability to resolve any potential inconveniences?
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?
8. What factors can you identify that influenced the implementation costs?

Criterion: Environmental and social safeguards

9. In your opinion, did the project take environmental and social safeguards into account in its design and implementation?
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?
11. As far as you know, has the project included the provisions of the national safeguards system into its actions?

Criterion: Cross-cutting issues
<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 the GEF's gender objectives? (List the objectives)</p> <p>14. Was there a strategy to ensure the inclusion of the gender dimension during 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, and income increase)</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, and 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> <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)</p> <p>18. Have appropriate mechanisms and procedures been established for the effective participation of beneficiary Indigenous communities? Did the design and implementation of training materials and methodologies take into account any potential cultural differences of the Indigenous communities?</p> <p>19. Has the project had specific effects on the Indigenous Peoples involved? Which ones?</p>
Criterion: Sustainability
<p>20. Have actions been taken to ensure the initiative's sustainability? If so, which ones?</p> <p>21. What activities and effects generated by the project will be kept in place once the project's support comes to an end?</p> <p>22. What activities and effects generated by the project will NOT be kept in place once support comes to an end? Why?</p> <p>23. Have risks that could jeopardize the initiative's sustainability been identified? How have the identified risks and mitigation measures been managed?</p> <p>24. Have the local stakeholders/beneficiaries taken ownership of the good practices learned during the project?</p> <p>25. Do you consider that there are institutional conditions in the state to continue with the processes promoted by the project?</p> <p>26. Does the state (national, regional and local) have the institutional capacity to replicate the capacities and practices developed through the project elsewhere? How likely is it for the project to be replicated within other national contexts?</p> <p>27. Have resources been identified to replicate the project in other national or international contexts?</p> <p>28. Has the project used existing FAO networks to ensure it is replicated within other contexts?</p>
Criterion: Factors affecting project performance
<p>Project implementation</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Project execution</p>

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 centres, civil society or the private sector been involved in the project's design and/or implementation?

Communications, 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 ones would you highlight? What could have been done better in the field of communications and knowledge management?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS PROTOCOL – STATE OFFICIALS

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

Target group of the instrument: Argentina 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: In order to hold a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of the questions will be adapted to the key stakeholder(s) interviewed.

Questions to the key stakeholder

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

Introductory questions

<p>What is your name?</p> <p>What is your position, responsibility and link in relation to the project?</p>
<p>Criterion: Relevance</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking into account the national context and the strategic and political priorities of Argentina concerning biodiversity conservation and IAS management, do you think that the project's objectives and strategies were pertinent? 2. Has any change affected the relevance of the project since its formulation? If so, what changes? 3. Did COVID-19 influence normal project execution? In what way? Were adjustments made and/or innovations implemented in response to this context?
<p>Criterion: Effectiveness</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. In your opinion, what have been the main outcomes and effects stemming from the project's execution? 5. How has the project 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 launch of the national information system; b. the establishment of coordination and governance mechanisms for the system; and 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 NSIAS? 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? 11. Component 4. What has been the project's contribution to the implementation of the pilot programme for the eradication of North American beavers in the Province of Tierra del Fuego? What are the main lessons learned from this programme? 12. Component 4. What is the level of progress achieved by the binational beaver eradication programme in Tierra del Fuego? What barriers and enabling factors can you identify? 13. In your opinion, and taking into account your experience in executing the project, what have been the strengths and weaknesses that have allowed (or not) proposed indicators and outputs to be achieved? 14. Have unplanned outcomes occurred? Could you describe and rate them?

Criterion: Environmental and social safeguards
<p>15. In your opinion, did the project take environmental and social safeguards 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 the provisions of the country's national safeguards system into its actions?</p>
Criterion: Cross-cutting issues
<p>18. How did the project ensure parity in participation and representation of women in planning and implementation? (Focus on generating conditions, incentives to make decisions in design or execution purposes, type of decisions made, and income increase)</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, and 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 materials and methodologies take into account any potential cultural differences of the Indigenous communities, and were they understood by them?</p>
Criterion: Sustainability
<p>21. Have actions been taken at the state level to ensure the initiative's sustainability? If so, which ones?</p> <p>22. What activities and effects will be kept in place once the project's support comes to an end?</p> <p>23. Do you consider that there are institutional conditions 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. Does the state have the will and capacity to replicate the project in other contexts?</p> <p>25. Are there risks that could jeopardize the initiative's sustainability? How could they have been mitigated?</p>
Criterion: Factors affecting project performance
<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 levels?</p> <p>Co-financing</p> <p>Has the committed co-financing materialized as planned? What difficulties can you identify?</p> <p>Communications, knowledge management and outputs</p> <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 ones would you highlight? What could have been done better in the field of communications and knowledge management?</p>

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – BENEFICIARIES

Project: Strengthening of governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species	
Target group of the instrument: social stakeholders who are the direct beneficiaries of the implemented pilot projects	
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: In order to hold a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of the questions will be adapted to the key stakeholder(s) interviewed.	
Questions to the key stakeholder Not all questions will apply to all key stakeholders. 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	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think that the project satisfactorily meets your needs and those of your community? 2. Did COVID-19 influence the project's normal execution? In what way? Were any adjustments and/or innovations implemented in response to this context? 	
Criterion: Effectiveness	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What 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 communications strategies would you highlight? Which ones were missing or should have been strengthened? 6. Has the project affected your community? 7. In your opinion, and taking into account your experience in executing the project, what have been the strengths and weaknesses that have allowed (or not allowed) for improvements in managing IAS? 	
Criterion: Environmental and social safeguards	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. In your opinion, did the project take environmental and social safeguards 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? 	

<p>Criterion: cross-cutting issues</p>
<p>Gender</p> <p>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, daycare centres, etc.) to facilitate the participation of women in the project's actions?</p> <p>11. How did the project support women in taking leadership roles and 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 materials 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 Indigenous Peoples present across the intervention territory?</p> <p>16. Have the training materials and methodologies been easy for you to understand? 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 standalone 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 ones would you highlight? What can be improved in this area?</p> <p>26. What could have been done better in terms of communication?</p>

BENEFICIARIES FOCUS GROUP

Project: Strengthening of governance for the protection of biodiversity through the formulation and implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species	
Target group of the instrument: project beneficiaries	
Purpose of the interview: evaluate and compare qualitative information related to the project's criteria and evaluation	
Moderators: Germán Luebert and Gabriela Sbarra	
Duration: 45 minutes	Number of participants: four to six
Observation: In order to hold a fluent dialogue, the language used in the formulation of the questions will be adapted to the participating key stakeholder(s).	
Introduction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome participants. Thank them for being there and for their willingness to participate. • Introduce the 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. All ideas are interesting, important and valid. • Participants introduce themselves (name and organization). • Request consent to record and/or take notes. 	
Guiding questions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has your participation been in the project's planning, training and implementation processes? 2. What new techniques, skills and/or knowledge have you developed within the framework of the project? How has this 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 noticeable changes – tangible and intangible – do you most value based on your participation in the project? 5. What has the participation and representation of women been like in the project's 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 table

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

Note: Co-financing reported as of May 2022. After this evaluation was finalized, it was reported that co-financing had reached 78 percent upon project completion (July 2022).

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