

PROJECT: ARG/10/003

**“STRENGTHENING FISHERIES GOVERNANCE TO PROTECT FRESHWATER AND WETLAND
BIODIVERSITY ALONG THE PARANA AND PARAGUAY RIVERS, ARGENTINA”**

Final Evaluation

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APN	National Parks Administration
FA	GEF Focal Area
BD	Biodiversity
CABA	Buenos Aires City
CG	Coordinator-General
COFEMA	Federal Environment Council
CPCyA	Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CT/TC	Technical Coordinator
DNOAyCBD	National Directorate for Environmental Governance and Biodiversity Conservation
DP	Paraná Delta
DPCA	Directorate of Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture, SSPyA
EA	Ecosystem Approach
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GTAP	Working Group on Protected Areas, SArDS
GTRA	Working Group on Aquatic Resources, SArDS
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MaB	Man and the Biosphere Programme, UNESCO
MAGyP	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MREC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PIECAS	Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta
PIR	Project Implementation Review
POA	Annual Operations Plan
PNA	Argentine Coast Guard, Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PRODOC	Project Document
SArDS	Argentine Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SENASA	National Animal Health and Agro-Food Quality Service
SIFAP	Federal System of Protected Areas
SIFIPA	Federal IT System of Fisheries and Aquaculture Information
SO/OE	GEF Strategic Objective
SP/PE	GEF Strategic Programme
SSPyA	Under-Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture, MAGyP
SSPYPA	Under-Secretariat of Environmental Policy and Planning
TG/OT	Territorial Governance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
USD	US Dollar
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project Title	Strengthening Fisheries Governance to Protect Freshwater and Wetland Biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers, in Argentina			
PIMS	2106		<u>Upon project endorsement (USD)</u>	<u>Upon project completion (USD)</u>
Award ID in Atlas::	00059115	GEF Grant:	2,355,000	2,355,000
Country	Argentina	IA/EA Resources:		
Region:	LAC	Government:	2,321,263	2,321,263
Focal Area	Biodiversity	Others:	2,942,787	2,942,787
FA Objectives, (SO/SP):	SO2, SP4/5 (also benefiting SO1, SP3)	Total Co-funding	5,264,050	5,264,050
Executing Agency:	Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat (SAyDS)	Total Project Cost:	7,619,050	7,619,050
Other partners:	Under-Secretariat of Fisheries (MAGyP). Other partners: Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Formosa, Chaco, Misiones, Corrientes and Santa Fe Provinces	ProDoc signed on (Project Start-up Date):		4 June 2010
		Closing Date:	Proposed: June 2014	Real: December 2014

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. “Strengthening Fisheries Governance to Protect Freshwater and Wetland Biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers, in Argentina” is a project executed by the Government of Argentina, with the financial assistance of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). GEF considers it a “Full-sized” project, and has made a contribution of 2.35 million US dollars (USD); plus the co-funding of 5.26 million USD from different sources, which amounts to a total budget of USD 7.62 million. UNDP is the GEF implementing agency, and the project is executed under the National Execution (NEX) Modality, with the Environmental and Sustainable Development Secretariat (SAyDS) –Chief of Cabinet Ministry- and the Directorate of Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture (DPCyA), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, as executing partners at the national level.
2. The project encompasses a vast corridor of wetlands and floodplains within the freshwater ecosystem of the Paraguay-Parana Rivers, in the Lower Parana Eco-Region (WWF-TNC Eco-region 345). The Parana and Paraguay Rivers are “bio-geographic corridors”, that is to say, effective paths for the migration of tropical flora and fauna towards temperate areas, providing natural resources and essential services to riverside communities, in several towns and big urban centres distributed across the region. This waterway corridor offers a variety of habitats favouring the presence of a great biodiversity, adapted to flood and drought cycles. These

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wetlands house migratory fish of high biodiversity value, and commercially important ones, playing a vital role for migratory species in their different biological cycles (reproduction, reproductive migration, spawning and growth). Around 85% of freshwater fish catch in Argentina takes place along the Paraguay-Parana corridor. There are three types of fisheries: artisan/subsistence; medium-scale commercial; and sports/recreational. The area comprises seven provinces: Buenos Aires, Corrientes, Chaco, Entre Ríos, Formosa, Misiones and Santa Fe, with an area of almost 24 million hectares.

3. This region includes the most important freshwater biodiversity in Argentina –also of global importance- and has been experiencing a series of anthropic pressures affecting biological processes and endangering the current and potential income provided by these resources as regards fisheries, tourism, health and other areas of social and economic interest.
4. Based on the commitment of the Government of Argentina and its provinces to improve fisheries governance and reinforce inter-sectoral planning, and a significant activity baseline with a view to strengthening technical and administrative mechanisms for the sustainable use of fishery resources and the conservation of the basin's wetlands, the project aimed at addressing a series of barriers hindering the achievement of a long-term solution (*inter alia*, a deficient and inconsistent fisheries regulatory and policy framework among the provinces; a weak institutional framework for the integral management of freshwater fisheries and wetlands; insufficient knowledge and incentives to favour sustainable alternative practices in fisheries and wetlands, and flaws in inter-sectoral territory-based governance).
5. The project strategy was based on three pillars: (i) to reduce catch to sustainable levels and improve fisheries governance capacities; (ii) to improve capacities for managing wetlands, including a better management of wetland protected areas (as critical recruitment areas for fisheries); and (iii) to increase the efficiency of governance structures for the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands by developing a policy framework for fisheries and wetlands, coordinated between the provinces and the national government. The project was structured on four expected outcomes:
 - **Outcome 1:** *Policy and regulatory framework for freshwater fisheries, harmonized and based on an ecosystem approach;*
 - **Outcome 2:** *Institutional capacities for fisheries and wetland management, strengthened;*
 - **Outcome 3:** *Reducing impacts on biodiversity through pilot initiatives for fishing alternatives, and the optimization of fish resources; and*
 - **Outcome 4:** *Pilot spatial and inter-sectoral ecosystem-based planning programme, developed in the Parana Delta, and capable of being replicated elsewhere in the basin.*

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT – IN SHORT

CONCLUSIONS

6. Based on interviews and the review of documents, it can be concluded that the project was effectively and efficiently implemented, with a great capability to correct and adjust its course. The table below summarizes the ratings assigned to each of the project's key elements. More details are provided in the narrative part of the report.

CRITERION	RATING
PROJECT FORMULATION	
Conceptualization and design	Satisfactory
Stakeholder participation in design	Satisfactory
Relevance	Relevant
M&E	Moderately Satisfactory
IMPLEMENTATION	
Implementation approach and dynamics	Highly Satisfactory
Stakeholder participation in implementation	Highly Satisfactory
M&E	Moderately Satisfactory
Efficiency	Highly Satisfactory
PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES	
Objective	Satisfactory
Outcome 1	Highly Satisfactory
Outcome 2	Satisfactory
Outcome 3	Moderately Satisfactory
Outcome 4	Highly Satisfactory
EFFECTIVENESS	Satisfactory
CATALYST ROLE/REPLICABILITY	Highly Satisfactory
SUSTAINABILITY	Moderately Probable
Social-Political Sustainability	Moderately Probable
Institutional Sustainability	Moderately Probable
Financial Sustainability	Moderately Probable
Environmental Sustainability	Moderately Probable
IMPACT	
Progress in reducing pressure on biodiversity	Significant
OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING	SATISFACTORY

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The report proposes a series of recommendations aimed, on the one hand, at harnessing project achievements to continue moving forward towards accomplishing the long-term objective and, on the other hand, at improving the design, monitoring and evaluation of future GEF projects. Hereunder are general recommendations to move towards achieving the objective and impact:
8. Taking into account that the area served by the Project is part of a bigger region that goes beyond national boundaries (the River Plate basin), many of the pressures on biodiversity overall and particularly on fisheries originate upstream, in the upper basin. Therefore, the suggestion is to move forward in the search for coordinated actions with the region's countries to define trans-boundary intervention approaches and strategies. The specific suggestion is to coordinate

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with the [Comité Intergubernamental Coordinador de la Cuenca del Plata](#) (River Plate Basin Inter-governmental Coordination Committee) and its [Programa Marco para la Gestión Sostenible de los Recursos Hídricos de la Cuenca del Plata en Relación con los Efectos de la Variabilidad y el Cambio Climático](#) (Framework Programme for the Sustainable Management of Water Resources in the River Plate Basin with regard to the effects of Climate Change and Variability), Joint Argentine-Paraguayan Committee of the Parana River, Tri-national Committee for Developing the Pilcomayo River Basin, Bi-national Committee for Managing the Lower Pilcomayo River Basin, Yacyretá Bi-national Agency, River Plate Administration Committee, Joint Technical Committee for the Maritime Front, River Uruguay Administration Committee, Bi-national Committee for Developing the Upper Basin of River Bermejo and Rio Grande River in Tarija, and the Salto Grande Joint Technical Committee, among others.

- i. The project's geographic area shows complex problems involving the physical-biological environment, as well as that regarding production, technology, social organization, and the economy, which can be characterized as a "complex system". As such, developing an initiative that promotes an overarching solution addressing the threats to the system does not seem possible using co-funding resources, or during GEF project execution terms (up to 4-6 years). Nonetheless, a strategy aimed at addressing key issues (such as those dealt with by the project) can be the beginning of a path leading to a long-term, comprehensive solution, through the implementation of a series of "back-to-back" projects covering broader periods, and with ensured funding for 15 years or more. In this case, particularly relevant is the sustainability of outcomes and impacts of each of the projects (links or phases) as well as their follow-up.
- ii. Using GEF funds, the project was able to move forward in eliminating barriers and reducing pressure on biodiversity, providing a sound basis which must be more thoroughly addressed and expanded to achieve the long-term objective. It is thus necessary, on the one hand, to have the commitment of partners/beneficiaries in the implementation of instruments and agreements defined within the framework of project execution. On the other hand, in order to achieve the expected impact on global biodiversity values, it would be necessary to have additional GEF support through a new project to allow the consolidation of the outcomes achieved and expand them to the rest of the territory. Particularly, to delve deeper into matters of territorial governance, mainstreaming of biodiversity into other productive systems across the region (livestock and agriculture, where there could be better conditions for demonstrating the use of market instruments for conservation), and development of a specific strategy for consolidating a network of protected areas supplementing conservation and sustainable development actions within the productive matrix.
- iii. It is necessary to reach out to the local level (municipalities, villages) by developing Territorial Governance and environmental policy instruments, as well as by outlining and promoting conservation plans applicable to productive systems. The suggestion is to continue moving ahead with the drafting of good practices manuals for livestock, as well as searching for economic measures to promote these conservation practices, including the development of conservation incentives and the removal of *perverse* incentives. In this regard, the recommendation is to establish bonds with [Alianza del Pastizal](#) (Initiative for Natural Grazing Land Conservation in the Southern Cone of South America), which already

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has a programme in place called [*Programa de Calidad “Carne del Pastizal”*](#) (Grassland Beef Quality), developed within GEF Project “Grasslands and Savannas in the Southern Cone of South America: initiatives for their conservation in Argentina” co-executed by *Aves Argentinas* and WWF Argentina, with INTA and APN support.

- iv. Given the size of the vulnerable groups using and living on this freshwater corridor and the consequences CC could have on the economic activities of the region, the suggestion is for Territorial Governance strategies to bear in mind ecosystem management as an effective and efficient adaptation and mitigation measure.
- v. With regard to the replication of PIECAS, and in view of the suggestions of the CSO sector, the recommendation is for a case study to be carried out on the PIECAS experience as a forum of consensus-building, with lessons to be learnt and replicated.
- vi. The idea is for the national government to actively continue supporting the processes, expanding them to other environments and similar topics, but respecting the pertinent jurisdictions.
- vii. In order to follow up on the response to the recommendations set forth herein, it is suggested for UNDP and SAYDS to promote a high-level, “ex post” evaluation meeting in mid-2015, with the participation of PAC and the RTA.

LEASONS LEARNT

- i. Respecting the independence of each jurisdiction, the inter-jurisdictional role in a Federal state is essential for achieving outcomes and for the sustainability of achievements once the project has ended.
- ii. In multi-jurisdictional projects, a good practice to be replicated is the investment in staff for a relatively small central team, and the reinforcement of public sector teams, in coordination with key local stakeholders. A project leaving installed capacities in provincial and national institutions promotes greater levels of ownership by key actors, thus providing for greater possibilities of sustainability.
- iii. A strong leadership and sense of commitment of the project’s CG can catalyze positive changes beyond the project’s scope.
- iv. It is essential to promote the active participation of key stakeholders in all decision-making (from the design phase through to implementation), so as to increase the sense of ownership and minimize potential conflicts. Achieving a sense of ownership with regard to an idea, a notion and a unified strategy is fundamental vis-à-vis potential institutional changes, while also fostering sustainability beyond project duration.
- v. At the technical level, it is essential to involve decision-making political levels to ensure commitment for subsequent implementation of the actions defined by the technicians.
- vi. The design of complex projects, without clear indicators to measure performance, hinders implementation, follow-up and evaluation tasks. In order to achieve sound logical frameworks, it is essential to include M&E experts in the projects (as from the formulation stage), and train team members in results-oriented management and the design of SMART indicators, as a key tool for project follow-up and evaluation. For cost-effectiveness purposes, an M&E consultant could be shared among several projects.

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- vii. Along the same line, it is essential to have expertise in financial-administrative matters during project formulation so as to appropriately plan for periods covering four or more years.
- viii. Promoting fora for interaction among government, academic, non-governmental, productive and community actors allows a more efficient identification of key problems and their subsequent solution.
- ix. It is very useful to have field training and practical demonstrations as regards policies, laws and regulations. This promotes the exchange of knowledge and experiences, while contributing to set up partnerships and cooperation bonds between actors.
- x. During project implementation, it is important to ensure a timely re-direction of actions when implementation proves not feasible for different reasons, to thus optimize resources.
- xi. Integrity of the ecosystems and their services must be maintained across broad landscapes to preserve environmental services which operate on a large scale, facilitate connectivity between natural and semi-natural ecosystems, and ensure the notion of ecosystem services is mainstreamed into policies, strategies, production practices and the decisions of land and resource users.
- xii. Policies are a crucial governance element since they provide visions, strategies and plans for managing matters of common interest.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

1. Pursuant to the UNDP and GEF monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy, final evaluations are a mandatory practice for full-sized projects (FSP). In this regard, the Project on “Strengthening fisheries governance to protect freshwater and wetland biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay rivers in Argentina”, envisaged an independent final evaluation as one of its monitoring and evaluation activities. Consequently, the UNDP Argentina Country Office started the final evaluation process four months before project completion (foreseen for December 2014).
2. The purpose of final evaluations is to determine the importance, functioning and success of a project; seek samples to show the potential impact and sustainability of its outcomes, including the project’s contribution to capacity-building and the achievement of global environmental goals; identify and document lessons learnt and put forward recommendations to improve the design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects. Within this context, the purpose of the final evaluation of the project on “Strengthening fisheries governance to protect freshwater and wetland biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers in Argentina” is to analyze and document the outcomes accomplished through project implementation in the period 2010 - 2014 and determine the impact achieved, its sustainability and lessons learnt.
3. In order to carry out this task, and according to UNDP Rules and Procedures, an independent evaluation team was hired comprising an international consultant charged with submitting the final evaluation reports, and a national consultant who provided prior support in preparing the work plan, evaluation mission and drafting the final report.
4. According to the Terms of Reference, the final evaluation has specifically focused on the following:
 - Evaluate the achievement of project objectives, outcomes/impact and outputs, considering and evaluating changes throughout time in the project intervention strategy, and the logical frameworks as regards objectives, expected outcomes and execution modalities.
 - Evaluate effectiveness of the project strategy as regards stakeholder participation and consultation activities, assessing whether it was appropriate for project sustainability/continuity.
 - Evaluate Project achievements according to GEF Project Evaluation Criteria, including relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.
 - Identify problems or circumstances that could have affected the project’s implementation and impact.
 - Provide an opinion on the quality of the project from the standpoint of Fisheries Governance and Conservation of Freshwater and Wetland Biodiversity in the region covered by the Project.

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- Evaluate UNDP's role as regards intermediation with public and private institutional actors during the project's different development stages, as facilitator in support of Project outcome achievement.
 - Identify the main lessons learnt which can be disseminated among relevant GEF projects, and among regional and national authorities and project stakeholders who are planning follow-up actions.
 - Make specific recommendations to ensure the sustainability of Project outcomes and achievements, analyzing the necessary mechanisms to continue moving towards the global environmental objective.
5. Users of this final evaluation are the Argentine Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat (SAYDS), as project executing agency (including the project's team), the Argentine Under-Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SSPyA) as executing partner, authorities and technicians of the seven partner/beneficiary provinces, other Argentine governmental institutions, the UNDP Argentina Country Office and the GEF Evaluation Office. Should it be deemed relevant, the final evaluation report should be broadly disseminated among other actors to share lessons learnt and recommendations.

B. METHODOLOGY

6. The project was assessed under a methodology including the use of different information collection processes and following the proposal included in the Terms of Reference (Annex 7). The final evaluation process started in August 2014, four months before the project's completion date, and when 93% of the GEF resources had been delivered. The evaluation is based on evidence collected and analyzed for the period from project start-up (June 2010) until the end of October 2014. The following activities were carried out to this effect:
- **Definition of a Work Plan:** With the support of UNDP Argentina staff and the Project team, and based on the identification of key actors, a work agenda was defined for the evaluation process, including a schedule for the field mission:
 - **Preparation of an Evaluation Matrix and Criteria:** The starting point for collecting and analyzing information was the preparation of an Evaluation Matrix and Criteria, presented in Annex 3. Based on the UNDP-GEF project evaluation criteria¹ (i.e. relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcomes, sustainability), a set of questions was defined and for each of them, the main sources and methods for data collection were identified.
 - **Document analysis:** The wealth of documents produced by the project were reviewed including, *inter alia*, the project document, its operational manual, annual operations plans, progress reports, minutes of relevant activities, consulting reports, mid-term evaluation report, application of the METT tool, publications and other material produced by the project. Moreover, project-related web sites and Internet sources were reviewed. A full list of reference material reviewed during the final evaluation is provided in Annex 4.
 - **Interviews:** Contact was established with UNDP representatives (from the Argentina Country Office and the Regional UNDP-GEF Coordinating Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean), national and provincial government authorities and technicians, project team members,

¹ Source: UNDP 2012 "UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects"

the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), as well as civil society representatives, NGOs, academicians, and researchers. The Project team established prior contact with institutional leaders and other key actors, and set up an agenda of interviews. A semi-structured interview model was used, based on the set of questions of the above-mentioned Evaluation Matrix and Criteria. According to the interviewee and his/her role in the project, specific, pertinent questions were selected from said matrix. The list of interviewed persons appears in Annex 5.

- **Visits to project implementation sites:** In-person field work focused on Entre Ríos Province (Parana City and the National Pre-Delta Park), Santa Fe Province (cities of Santa Fe and Rosario), and on Formosa Province (city of Formosa and National Pilcomayo River Park), and took place from 15 to 26 September 2014. During these visits, direct contact was established with Project areas of action, as well as with staff from the sites and institutions involved, project partners and beneficiaries.
 - **Systematization and analysis:** The information collected, including documentary evidence, interviews and direct observations, was compiled and organized according to the evaluation questions and criteria, encompassing pertinence, efficacy, efficiency, outcomes and sustainability. The evaluation was carried out considering empirical information obtained during the above-mentioned stages seeking, insofar as possible, triangulation of the resulting key points.
7. All evaluations face time constraints and resource limitations to compile and analyze appropriate evidence. This is particularly relevant within the context of the project under consideration since, at the time of the evaluation, activities are still underway and the territory covered is broad, including seven provinces. In this regard, although the evaluation mission included visits to only three provinces, representatives of the remaining four provinces were interviewed by electronic means or personally (during their participation in the activities carried out by the mission in different places).

C. STRUCTURE OF THE FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

8. This final evaluation report includes an Executive Summary providing a general overview of the project and the conclusions of the final evaluation. The main document is structured into the following sections: (I) An introduction providing project background, discussing the purpose of the evaluation, and defining the scope of the evaluation and methodology; (II) A section on the Project and its Development Context, explaining the purpose of the project, its objectives and expected outcomes; (III) A section on the Final Evaluation Outcomes, including a detailed discussion on the project's level of success in achieving the expected results, measured against a series of defined criteria; (IV) the Conclusion, establishing the rating of the project's overall performance; (V) Recommendations that could be applied for improving future projects or carrying out initiatives that could supplement and reinforce project objectives; and (VI) Lessons Learnt from the project. A series of Annexes provides relevant additional information, mainly with regard to the evaluation mechanics (namely, terms of reference, list of persons interviewed, as well as matrices used as part of the analysis), as well as a series of linked outcomes, built on the basis of pressures, barriers and strategies defined by the project with a view to facilitating actions leading to sustainability of project achievements after its completion.

II. THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

A. PROJECT START-UP AND DURATION

9. In December 2008, GEF approved the Project Identification Form (PIF) on Fisheries Governance and Conservation of Freshwater and Wetland Biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers, Argentina, to carry out the Project Preparatory phase (PPG). Although in the PPG request, a period of 10 months was foreseen for the preparatory phase (April 2009 to February 2010), it eventually took place from 1 August 2009 to 31 January 2010 due to delays in fund allocation.
10. This initiative was headed by the National Directorate of Environmental Governance and Biodiversity Conservation, Under-Secretariat of Environmental Policy and Planning (Argentine Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat, SAYDS), in coordination with the Under-Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SSPyA), Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Argentine Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries).
11. Resources channeled during the Project Preparatory Stage allowed support to be provided to the development of a detailed analysis and series of consulting missions carried out with the purpose of completing a definition and cost estimate of priority actions for a final project formulation. The final version was submitted to GEF's approval on 31 January 2010.
12. Within the preparatory stage, two workshops were organized to interact with interlocutors and actors from the provinces of Formosa, Chaco, Misiones, Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe and Buenos Aires, the Argentine Coast Guard, Civil Society Organizations, Research and Academic Institutions, and other participants whose contribution was highly valued, and enriched the drafting of the Project Document (PRODOC). Furthermore, SAYDS consultants and professionals traveled to the seven provinces in which the project would be executed and held interviews with environment and fisheries authorities, to promote the commitment and active participation of all actors interested in the project's topics. As a result of these actions, a political decision was made in the fields of the environment and fisheries management at the national and provincial levels, by signing letters of endorsement and of Project co-funding.
13. Although the PRODOC was signed by the parties in June 2010, the Project Executing Unit was set up as such in August/September 2010, when the Coordinator-General was hired. The PEU was expanded by hiring a Fisheries Coordinator in October that year, and bringing in SAYDS and SSPyPA technicians as a counterpart contribution. The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was also set up in the month of October, so substantive GEF-funded activities were implemented as from November 2010. The Inception Workshop was held in December 2010 and attended by 110 participants, including national and provincial representatives as well as those from UNDP and CSO. Baseline update activities envisaged in the PRODOC started between April and May 2011.
14. Due to delays in Project start-up, the mid-term evaluation took place in the first half of 2013. That evaluation report was delivered in July 2013, for its review and correction, and the process was completed in August 2013 with the recommendations and the consideration of those that SAYDS considered pertinent. Recommendations adopted sought to improve progress during the second stage of project implementation, the end date of which had been foreseen for June 2014

and was then extended until 31 December 2014², to be able to complete the scheduled tasks and fully achieve project objectives.

B. PROBLEMS THE PROJECT INTENDED TO ADDRESS

15. As set forth in the project document, the vast corridor of wetlands and floodplains comprised in the freshwater ecosystem of the Paraguay-Parana Rivers has been experiencing a series of anthropic pressures affecting biological processes, and endangering the current and potential income provided by these resources as regards fisheries, tourism, health and other factors of social and economic interest³.
16. The following are among the main human activities exerting pressure on the region's biodiversity:
 - Unsustainable sports and commercial fishing systems.
 - Big energy infrastructure and transport works affect water flow and the hydrological regime.
 - Expansion and intensification of agriculture and livestock activities and the resulting pressure on land use, by applying intensive production models, without adapting them to the functional features of the Parana Delta⁴.
 - Uncontrolled use of fire to favour re-sprouting of pasture for livestock and clean land for agricultural purposes.
 - Expansion of the urban border into the Parana Delta islands.
 - Industrial development, including the greatest and most important industrial development of Argentina, located on the western bank of the Parana River, from Rosario and San Lorenzo down to La Plata.
 - Illegal use and poaching of natural resources (small fish to be used as live bait, reptiles, mammals for leather, birds as pets, timber to be used as firewood).
17. Furthermore, there are the potential effects of climate change as indicated by the predictive models for the region, including an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme climate phenomena, such as droughts and floods (which is already taking a toll on the territory), a change in mean minimum temperatures and changes in the levels of watercourses⁵.
18. Within this scenario of multiple threats, the project focused particularly on those related to fisheries (artisan, commercial and sports) affecting the main big species, particularly sabalo⁶ (*Prochilodus lineatus*), a key species for the system given their high biomass, their migratory and bottom-feeding habits (400 to 1500 km).

² PRODOC, Revision H, May 2014.

³ To obtain a detailed description of the impact of these activities on the region's ecosystems, we suggest reading the PRODOC as well as several documents prepared within the framework of the project, such as the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta Region" and the Reports "[Línea de Base Ambiental](#)" and "[Evaluación Ambiental Estratégica – PIECAS DP](#)"

⁴ Phenomenon known as "*pampeanización*" (Translator's Note: turning the area into something similar to the Pampa region)

⁵ Consequently, changes can be expected in biodiversity, the riverside land, and the hydrological regime, all of which is reflected in the vulnerability of the population and local production.

⁶ Through spawning (400,000 to 800,000 eggs) upstream, the sabalo populations "recycle" an important amount of energy which remains available as forage for several species, among them, surubies (*Pseudoplatystoma spp.*) and dorado (*Salminus maxillosus*) feeding on the sabalo eggs and larvae.

19. In order to face the above-mentioned pressures, the Argentine government has developed an important institutional and organizational baseline, including the following:
- Setting up of a Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CPCyA) as a synergetic forum of national and provincial fisheries authorities, to harmonize and integrate management policies for freshwater fishery resources.
 - An Agreement signed between the Argentine Republic and the Republic of Paraguay on Conservation and Development of Fish Resources along the borderline stretches of the Parana and Paraguay Rivers.
 - Agreement signed by the Governors of Buenos Aires, Entre Rios and Santa Fe provinces with SAYDS in September 2008, stating their decision to materialize a “Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta” (PIECAS), which showed a significant political commitment for moving forward in the environmental governance of an important part of the region’s wetlands.
 - The National Fire Management Plan, technically coordinated by SAYDS.
 - Progress made by the SAYDS Working Group on Aquatic Resources (GTRA, in the Spanish acronym), together with several institutions in the country, to analyze the situation of wetlands at the national level, and define a methodological tool to evaluate the condition of wetlands and the ecosystem goods and services they provide.
20. Nonetheless, there are a series of barriers hindering progress towards an effective, long-term solution, namely:
- A deficient regulatory and policy framework for fisheries, with inequalities among the provinces (which is more serious still because of the migratory nature of commercial fish species), as well as a low level of compliance with regulations and poor oversight.
 - Deficiencies in inter-sectoral, territorial governance and planning, including a lack of zoning and guidelines agreed upon by consensus on the use of the territory based on acknowledgement of the stocks and characteristics of the ecosystem as a wetlands area⁷.
 - Weak institutional capabilities for the overall management of freshwater fishing and wetlands.
 - Insufficient knowledge and incentives as regards sustainable practices in the use of natural resources.
 - Low level of awareness on the value of the region’s wetlands and the importance of biodiversity conservation for sustainable development.
 - Inappropriate, insufficient and spread out basic information for fisheries and wetlands planning and management.
 - Inadequate capabilities to effectively manage protected areas.
21. The project proposed to address the identified barriers, harnessing baseline opportunities and contributing to a long-term solution to allow fisheries governance to be implemented harmonically across the basin, backed by a territorial governance process to reduce threats on wetlands (give the vital link between wetlands and fish populations therein that find vital habitats in the wetlands for breeding and feeding, as well as sites for shelter and protection).

⁷ The lack of regulation and governance entails the risk of losing ecosystem goods and services, changing the hydrological and landscape regime, losing biodiversity, altering water quality, fires, and changes in the life styles of local inhabitants, among others.

C. PROJECT OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

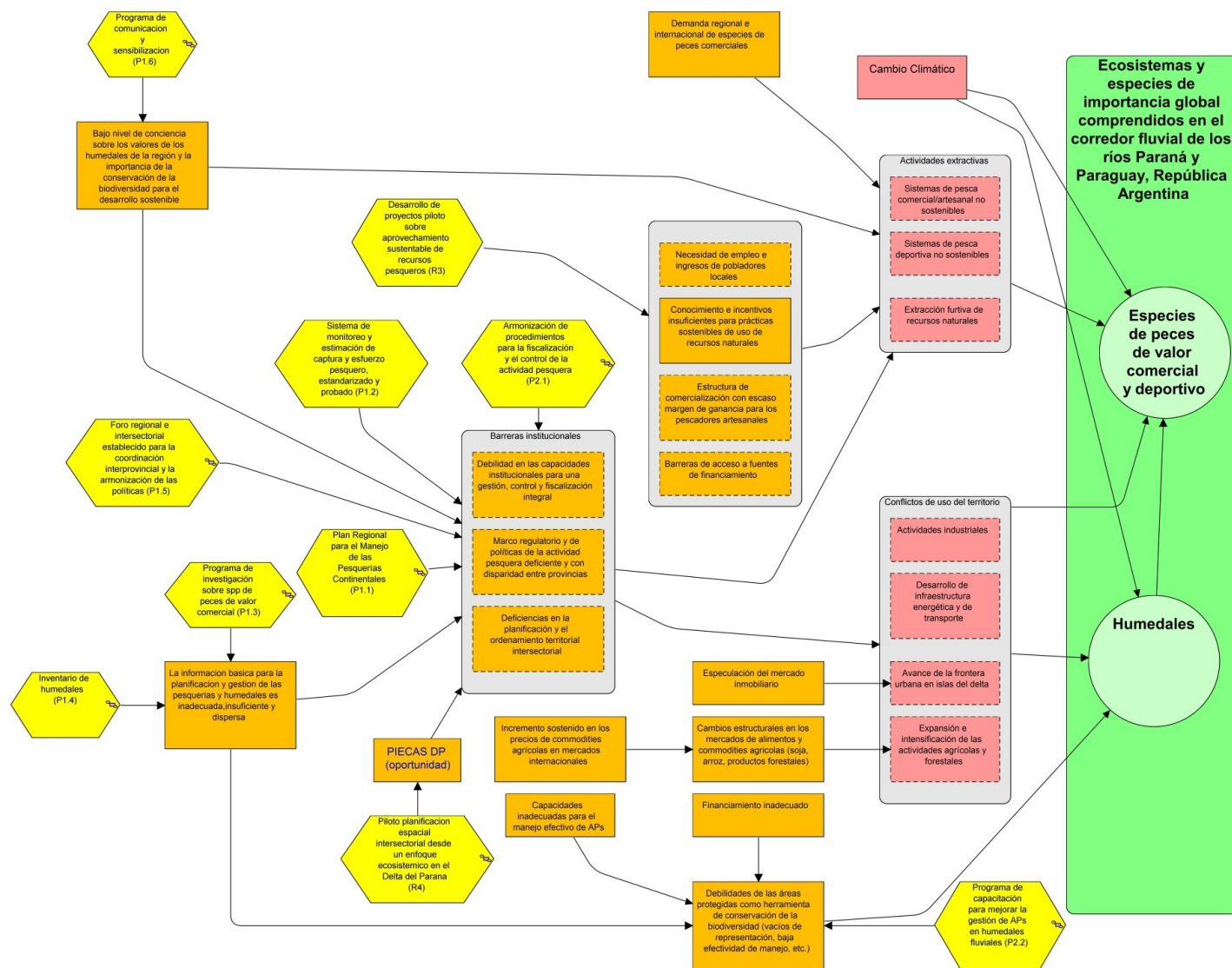
22. The project's long-term objective is to manage wetlands in the region, within a harmonized regulatory framework to provide sustainability to environmental management and fisheries, warranting –through an ecosystem-based approach- the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainability of fisheries resources to benefit the development of the area's inhabitants. In support of the achievement of this goal, the project proposed the general objective of: *"Developing a reinforced governance framework across the provinces to allow an effective protection of freshwater fisheries and wetland biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers in Argentina."*
23. Therefore, the Project strategy is based on three pillars: (i) to reduce the catch to sustainable levels and improve fisheries governance capabilities; (ii) to improve wetland management capacities, improving the management of wetland protected areas (as critical recruitment areas for fisheries); and (iii) to increase the efficacy of governance structures for conservation and the sustainable management of wetlands, by developing a policy framework for fisheries and wetlands, coordinated between the provinces and the national government. The Project was structured on the basis of four outcomes and a series of related outputs summarized in Table 1. On the following page, Figure 1 shows the link between sources of pressure, barriers, underlying causes and strategies proposed by the project.

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Table 1. Summary of Project Outcomes and Outputs

OUTCOMES	RELATED OUTPUTS
Outcome 1: Harmonized and ecosystem-based policy and regulatory framework for freshwater fisheries in place.	<p>1.1. Regional Fisheries Management Plan based on an ecosystem-based approach, agreed upon and adopted by the seven provinces and mainstreamed into a harmonized regulatory framework.</p> <p>1.2. System for catch monitoring and calculation of fishing effort standardized and tested</p> <p>1.3. Greater scientific knowledge of important fisheries species</p> <p>1.4. Inventory of wetlands for the project area, with an emphasis on important environments for the conservation of fish biodiversity</p> <p>1.5. Regional and inter-sectoral forum to support inter-provincial coordination and the harmonization of fisheries and wetland conservation policies</p> <p>1.6. Communication and Awareness-Raising Programme</p>
Outcome 2: Strengthening of institutional capacities for fisheries and wetland management	<p>2.1. System for fishery oversight and control harmonized and strengthened.</p> <p>2.2. Capacity building programme implemented to improve the management of Protected Areas in freshwater wetlands.</p>
Outcome 3: Pilot projects for the optimization and sustainable use of fish resources developed, to enhance fisheries governance	<p>3.1. Pilot programme to promote alternative sustainable ecotourism activities</p> <p>3.2. Pilot projects relating to added-value fisheries initiatives implemented through improved quality, processing and full exploitation of fish products.</p> <p>3.3. Fostering of responsible sports fishing.</p>
Outcome 4: Pilot spatial and inter-sectoral ecosystem-based planning process implemented in the Parana Delta, with a potential for replication across the basin.	<p>4.1. Environmental, socio-economic and political-institutional situation in the pilot Parana Delta region synthesized in order to identify the main existing uses and conflicts</p> <p>4.2. Formulation of the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Use and Conservation of the Parana Delta (PIECAS-DP).</p> <p>4.3. Increase in the proportion of wetlands under some form of conservation scheme and development of a protected areas management network for the Parana Delta</p> <p>4.4. Establishment of an Environmental Observatory in the PIECAS region to serve as a tool for regional planning and development and project monitoring.</p>

Figure 1: Conceptual Model: Link between pressure forces (pink), underlying causes and barriers (orange) and strategies (yellow)



III. FINAL EVALUATION OUTCOMES

A. PROJECT FORMULATION

1. *Conceptualization and design*

24. The project's strategy was overall appropriate for addressing problems faced by the target region, as well as the above-described underlying causes and barriers. Indeed, a long-term solution proposes fisheries governance harmonically implemented across the basin and backed by a territorial governance process reducing threats on vital habitats. Its design takes into account the differences in the kind of fishery activity prevailing in the different sections along this river corridor (for instance, sports fishing is more important in Corrientes and Chaco, while in the south, commercial fishing reaches its peak in Santa Fe and Entre Rios), as well as the migratory nature of species. Since Argentina is a federal country, this migratory nature led to working on a broad territorial stretch, and also to the need for intensively working on harmonizing interests among the different provinces, and with the national government.
25. One of the strengths of the project's design was to seize the opportunity of harnessing over 10 years' work and commitment of the Argentine government and its provinces, to improve the sustainable use of fisheries and conservation of freshwater wetlands and biodiversity across the basin of the Parana and Paraguay Rivers (for instance, [Law 25.048/98](#), [Convenio sobre Conservación y Desarrollo de los Recursos Icticos en los Tramos Limítrofes de los Ríos Paraná y Paraguay", 1996](#) (Agreement on the Conservation and Use of Fishing Resources along the country boundaries of the Parana and Paraguay Rivers), the [Carta de Intención del PIECAS-DP, 2008](#) (Letter of Intent of PIECAS-DP, 2008); [Comisión de Pesca Continental y Acuicultura, 2004](#) (Freshwater Fishing and Aquaculture Commission); Formalization of an agreement –reached in October 2009 within the framework of CPCyA –between the provinces of Entre Rios and Santa Fe, aimed at agreeing by consensus upon common actions for managing fisheries along the Parana River and its tributaries). This allowed the project formulation stage to have a sound baseline and a series of “opportunity windows” in processes already in place but needing a catalyst so as to address a series of barriers hindering the achievement of a long-term solution.
26. The choice of an ecosystem-based approach⁸, as a conceptual and methodological framework for promoting sustainable development, is consistent with the guidance of a series of conventions, agreements and international agencies that have adopted this ecosystem-based approach as a framework for management⁹. All interviewees recognize the adoption of this approach was essential for raising the interest and commitment of the different jurisdictions to work in a coordinated manner in the quest for solutions, in line with the needs of the different provinces.
27. Maybe in view of the project's intervention scale, and particularly the PIECAS-DP planning process, it would have been more accurate to talk about a *landscape approach or perspective*

⁸ The ecosystem-based approach is a strategy for managing land, water courses and live resources, promoting equitable sustainable use and conservation.

⁹ For instance, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, the FAO Committee on Fisheries, the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the UNESCO MAB Network.

(considering “landscape” as any part of the territory perceived by the population, whose nature results from the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors). Although the ecosystem-based approach *recognizes* human beings as an integral part of ecosystems, the landscape approach goes a step further by *integrating* human landscapes (economic and cultural), as well as institutions influencing the territory and planning as well. In this regard, the landscape scale is more appropriate for developing plans which seek to strike a balance between objectives aimed at biodiversity conservation, environmental quality, an increase in productivity and improvement of the population’s quality of life¹⁰. In practice, the approach adopted by the project seems to be more in line with the landscape approach, and thus we wish to point this out as a minor semantic issue.

28. Taking into account the size of the territory, the complexity of the problems the project intended to address and the proposed time horizon (four years), it could be said that the project was ambitious. However, as seen in Section III C, the project was successful in achieving most of the defined outcomes and outputs. Despite the above, certain design-related weaknesses should be pointed out, essentially with regard to certain Outcome 3 outputs and those related to protected areas.
29. Outcome 3 spoke to the development and application of market-based instruments to make the management of fisheries and other natural resources more economically attractive. The project specifically set forth the development and implementation of a pilot programme to promote sustainable alternatives in the way of ecotourism (Output 3.1) and the implementation of pilot projects regarding added-value fisheries initiatives, by improving the quality, processing and comprehensive use of fish products (Output 3.2). Although these outputs outlined appropriate strategies to face some of the region’s problems, a more thorough analysis was probably missing on the economic and commercial feasibility of this kind of initiatives. As regards the wording, it would have been more appropriate to use the word “supplementary” instead of “alternative” because in fact the purpose is not to *substitute* traditional activities but instead *supplement* them with others having the potential of generating income, to supplement revenue from the main activity (in this case, artisan fishing).
30. Protected Areas is another topic in which the project’s design seems to have been more ambitious than what can indeed be achieved. Taking into account the vital connection between wetlands and fish populations, the PRODOC includes actions targeted to improving the management of wetland protected areas (essentially as areas of feed and breeding) and states the project would bring about benefits as regards GEF SO1 (Catalyze sustainability of protected areas) and more specifically, SP3 (Reinforce land PA networks) and SP1 (Sustainable funding of protected areas). To achieve the above, the Project set forth two outputs: Output 2.2. Capacity-building programme for improving management of PAs in freshwater wetlands and Output 4.3 Greater promotion of wetlands for conservation and the development of a network of protected areas in the Parana Delta. Given the complexity of strengthening protected area networks (beyond project achievements in this topic, as can be seen in Section III. C), a specific Project would be needed to achieve the impact proposed in the PRODOC.

¹⁰ For further information, see *Nota de Estudio del CBD “Informe Sobre la Forma de Mejorar la Utilización Sostenible de la Diversidad Biológica En Una Perspectiva De Paisaje”*, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-15/official/sbstta-15-13-es.pdf>

2. National Ownership

31. The initiative for preparing the Project came out of the Working Group on Aquatic Resources (GTRA), a very sound and experienced technical team within SAYDS. Within a context of institutional demands within the different jurisdictions involved, the project catalyzed the start-up of institutional and political reforms. As one of the interviewees stated: *“The project’s cleverness was to address matters that had already been identified but needed funding, and reinforcement”*; for instance, the wetlands inventory, whose methodological foundations had been proposed over 10 years ago. Therefore, *“The project complied with all that had been proposed: working on the basis of consensus, agreed methodological basis, and the fact that it was necessary to have a management tool. The idea was based on real problems, on territory-based knowledge and knowing where to go”*.
32. At the national level, the project is aligned with the Argentine Government’s commitments to mainstream environmental matters in the strategic orientation of its policies, promoting the rational use of natural resources, as well as the adoption of more environmentally-friendly technologies and productive processes. Likewise, the project contributes to the fulfillment of country commitments within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention, and to the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and the strategic guidelines for wetlands conservation in the country.

3. Stakeholder participation in project design

33. The project’s design adopted a federal approach and, consequently, the contribution of the participating provinces was sought, as well as of other civil society organizations and institutions¹¹. During the preparatory phase, two workshops were held to interact with interlocutors and actors from the provinces, Civil Society Organizations, research and academic institutions, and other participants whose contributions were highly appreciated in preparing the PRODOC. Furthermore, SAYDS consultants and professionals travelled to the seven provinces in which the project would be implemented and held interviews with environment and fisheries authorities. As regards fisheries matters, from the institutional standpoint, the Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CPCyA) actions were considered the basis for harmonizing integrated management policies at the basin level, for the sustainable and responsible use of freshwater fisheries resources, coordinating the different interests of provincial administrations. As a result of such actions, support to the project was ensured through letters of endorsement and of co-funding.
34. Although within the framework of the evaluation mission, certain actors pointed out the scarce participation in the formulation stage, they all agreed on the fact that the Project appropriately enshrined the provinces’ needs. On the other hand, certain interviewees highlighted that during

¹¹ According to the Project’s Operation Manual, the following are among the agencies participating in project preparation: the SAYDS Under-Secretariat of Environmental Policy and Planning; the SSPyA Freshwater Fisheries Directorate; the Argentine Coast Guard Environmental Protection Division (PNA-DPMA); the Provincial Agency for Sustainable Development and the Fisheries Secretariat of Buenos Aires Province; the Under-Secretariat of Natural Resources, Chaco Province; the Under-Secretariat of Development and Production Planning, and the Environment Secretariat of Entre Rios Province; the Natural Resources Directorate of Corrientes Province; the Environment Secretariat and Ministry of Production, Santa Fe Province; Directorate for Registry, Control and Oversight and the Under-Secretariat of Natural Resources, Environmental Governance and Quality, Formosa Province; and the Under-Secretariat of Ecology, Misiones Province.

project preparation, a lot more progress could have been made through direct interaction with the provincial technical levels that could have provided more detailed information, and established pre-agreements to be implemented during the execution stage. Another fact pointed out was the under-representation in the PRODOC of the Upper Parana problems. Furthermore, the project's design envisaged the participation of several key actors in implementing its different components and outputs, ensuring cross-cutting interventions at the national, provincial and civil society levels.

B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. Implementation dynamics and approach

35. As pointed out in the Mid-Term Evaluation, implementation has been one of the project's strengths. Overall, implementation was effectively and efficiently carried out, with a great capacity to correct and adjust its course vis-à-vis the operational difficulties it faced, without moving away from the strategic lines established within the project document.
36. The project's implementation approach experienced two adaptations as to the technical team, the roles of each province and its technicians. The Project's general management was initially assigned to the National Directorate of Environmental Governance and Biodiversity Conservation but, as from February 2011, it was reassigned to a higher level within SAYDS: the Under-Secretariat of Environmental Policy and Planning. Although the PRODOC established implementation arrangements, the Project's Operational Manual (prepared jointly and formally adopted within the Project Advisory Committee or PAC) specified the roles of the Coordinator-General (CG), PEU and CAP, provincial representatives, PNA and UNDP in project execution and its activities. Furthermore, By-laws were formally drafted and adopted for the PAC, spelling out matters such as its composition, objectives, working mechanism, functioning, as well as the role of the PAC Secretariat. All the above allowed different actors to be very clear about the discussion fora for each specific topic, where to address any questions, suggestions or claims.
37. Although the implementation had its ups and downs –mainly due to external factors- wherever the project's work was affected in any way, the Project was efficient in its adaptation strategy and was able to overcome risks, and be implemented within the time-frame foreseen in the PRODOC, without significantly altering the quality of outcomes (although to a lesser extent in Outcome 3 outputs). For instance, it had to face four changes in SAYDS Secretaries, as well as currency devaluations and rate of exchange issues. Nonetheless, the project carried out agile PRODOC revisions which allowed a reallocation of budget lines.
38. Likewise, at all times, the project has been flexible. In this regard, and as stated by several provincial actors, one of the project's positive aspects was its adaptation capacity to incorporate new topics or problems and solve them, with a very efficient targeting of resources according to the needs and characteristics of each province.

2. Project-related technical capabilities

39. As expressed by most of the interviewees, the project's success was mostly due to the quality and commitment of PEU members: the Coordinator-General as well as the administrative support team and GTRA technicians assigned by SAYDS to the enlarged PEU. All interviewees

pointed out that the technical skills and personal virtues of the Coordinator-General were essential to the project's success, namely, her intelligence, efficiency, honesty, leadership as well as her federal and social vision. Also the SArDS officials participating in the project, who were interviewed, underscored her great technical capacity and knowledge. As regards the administrative support team, they highlighted her willingness, working capacity and efficiency (which was personally confirmed by these evaluators). Interviewees also praised the quality of the consultants hired throughout the project. Many of them have been absorbed by national and provincial government structures so once the project has been completed, these capacities will remain at SArDS, at SAPYA and in the environment and production sectors of the provincial governments.

40. The PEU and SArDS counterpart technical team were able to consolidate themselves as a true unit. As stated by one of the interviewees: *"All consultants worked tirelessly, passionately. No difference can be drawn between SArDS officials and those hired by PEU, they are all fully integrated and committed"*.
41. On the other hand, a few issues were faced when setting up the Project Executing Unit (PEU). Firstly, the lack of staff knowledgeable in accounting, hiring and procurement matters during most of the project's duration, brought about significant administrative difficulties, mainly delays in hiring and procurement. In May 2013 an expert was hired specializing in procurement, accounting and financial aspects, with proven experience in this kind of internationally funded projects.
42. Another difficulty faced by PEU was the lack of a Technical Coordinator as from January 2013, since the person in charge took office as GTRA Coordinator at SArDS. This brought about an overburden in the work of CG and other technicians at PEU since, although GTRA technicians are a part of the enlarged PEU, they must obviously address other SArDS priorities and requirements, and deal with tasks that are not necessarily related to the project. These were some of the reasons for the delay in the coordination and preparation of technical documents and administrative support tasks, such as the drafting of terms of reference for services or works to be hired.

3. Operational relationships between participating institutions and their incidence on the implementation and achievement of project objectives

43. Overall, evidence collected indicates that the relationship among participating institutions and the established partnerships has been excellent.
44. The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was formally set up in October 2010, as an advisor to the Argentine Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat (SAyDS), and its By-laws were also adopted on that occasion. The purpose of PAC was to support the implementation of project activities, favour effective participation of the different actors involved, and collaborate in the dissemination of activities and outcomes. At the request of PEU, the provinces appointed a representative of the fisheries area and one of the environmental area (related to biodiversity conservation) –whose salaries were paid by the provinces- with the purpose of coordinating project activities within each agency, and acting as interlocutor with PEU and other institutions participating in project implementation.
45. The project's National Directorate, within the framework of PAC, created a working space with other actors and allowed the participation of provincial representatives with decision-making power. Furthermore, interviewees pointed out SAyDS took over this space as a forum for coordinating national environment policies overall. PAC meetings were held two or three times a year.
46. With regard to PEU, all actors highlighted the openness to federalism as a positive aspect. According to the interviewees:
- *"Jurisdictions were always respected". It was federal by conviction, not by convenience".*
 - *"We feel part of the project, we feel important within the project".*
 - *"The project facilitated bonds with SAyDS at a high level".*

Another of the PEU traits underscored by interviewees was its leadership, providing clear guidance and support in the processes. Likewise, PEU's way of working favoured interaction, the establishment of partnerships and cooperation relationships among institutions, while providing tools to improve communication among actors. According to the interviewees, the project was able to ensure harmonic work among provinces, and between the provinces and the national government. The interviewees described it as follows:

- *"It was an unprecedented process, working on an ecosystem with the other provinces".*
 - *"An example of cooperation, of how to act jointly. An award-winning project"*
 - *"Without the project's contribution, it would have been very difficult to coordinate the provinces' work". "PEU is the heart of the project".*
47. They also highlighted the project came very close to the provinces and was able to harness their capabilities to benefit the project. For instance, as stated in the minutes, SAyDS technicians proposed that the provinces with trained human resources in planning, or with experience in formulating PA management plans, provide such resources to enrich the scheduled training process. Therefore, technicians from Misiones province participated as trainers in protected area topics in Formosa and Corrientes.
48. Interviewees also underscored other qualities in the implementation process:

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- The horizontal way of working (*"It was a bi-directional process as to financial, technical and equipment contributions and others"*)
- Strengthening bonds of trust (*"A framework of confidence was created, which was difficult to have before the project"*)
- Rapprochement and linkage with the different actors, including national government authorities, provincial reference officials, fishermen, CSOs, etc. (*"The project brought the provinces closer together"; "We were able to meet people, set up networks"; "The project allowed the transfer of capacities among provinces"; "It helped to build bonds between the provincial and municipal levels"*).
- High level of commitment of all participants.
- A motivating, enriching and gratifying process (*"Thanks to the project, discussions flowed, there was willingness to work, enthusiasm; we started having one same vision, speaking the same language"; "It was an exciting process"; "The energy changed at provincial offices. Now they are enthusiastic, happy at work"; "It has touched our souls"*).

49. Furthermore, the Project acted as a synergy catalyst and generated a series of positive externalities, including the reinforcement of inter-institutional and inter-jurisdictional environments and ensured continuous, systematic activities. Among them, the Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CPCyA), the Federal System of Protected Areas (SIFAP), the PIECAS-DP High-Level Inter-Jurisdictional Committee (formally recognized by SAyDS Resolution 675/2009), the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Argentina, the Coordination Unit of the MaB-UNESCO Programme. In this way, the project facilitated the enforcement of policies by the State. On the other hand, within the framework of the visits to Buenos Aires city to participate in different activities, several provinces obtained support for other initiatives not directly related to the project (for instance, industrial reconversion project in Misiones). According to the interviewees:

- *"The Project allowed CPCyA work to be carried out on a regular basis. Before the project we were making decisions blindly".*
- *"The Project was a motivational trigger for provincial decision-makers to change their vision as regards fisheries management. It injected energy to see things from a different perspective"* (For instance, the definition of mutual credentials for inspectors in Corrientes and Entre Ríos provinces, an agreement drafted and signed within the enlarged PAC).

50. As was well pointed out in the mid-term report, it is worth highlighting the huge value of the collateral goals achieved through project activities. For instance, bringing together fishermen from different provinces for their training in the building and repair of canoes (established objective) led them to meet one another and exchange job, cultural, daily life experiences and others (secondary goal). Another example illustrating this point are the fishermen collecting live bait in Formosa province who, with the support of the project, set up an association and, with the support of the Ministry of Production and the Environment, now have access to places with good quality bait on private farms.

51. The role of the CG was pointed out as one of the key factors for success and non-existence of conflicts *"where we expected to encounter them"* (sic). Likewise, leadership shown by CG allowed the re-incorporation of partners who had stepped away temporarily and resumed their

work and commitment with great enthusiasm¹². It is worth pointing out the CG had the full support of SAYDS authorities to represent the institution at different stages of the process. In this regard, there is concern about how a limited participation of authorities can affect the sustainability of actions once the project has been completed, and the CG no longer interacts and represents the interests of the institution. More so, if we consider the priority attached to SAYDS compared with other national government institutions (particularly those related to productive development).

4. Stakeholder participation

52. Taking into account the size of the territory and the institutional complexity, the project was very careful in facilitating the participation of all key actors. For instance, by rotating PAC meetings among the different provinces and Buenos Aires city, and providing financial support for participants' travel. Besides the meetings set forth in the PRODOC and Operations Manual, the project promoted other participation forums, such as Enlarged Project Advisory Committee meetings. The purpose of holding these annual meetings was to integrate and establish closer bonds among governmental, non-governmental, academic and sectoral institutions (for instance, fishermen's associations), related to project implementation as well as access to its benefits. Likewise, it became a mechanism for disseminating information first-hand. As stated by some of the interviewees, *"what makes the project different is that it generated outputs and information that are available and accessible"*.
53. As explained in the previous section, the project promoted the hiring of local technicians. For instance, each province selected technicians hired to work on the PIECAS-DP baseline. Several technicians hired by the project were then taken on by government institutions, which thus helped to strengthen and provide installed capacities in the provinces. Several interviewees highlighted this "reinforcement" benefit compared with other GEF projects. One of the interviewees said *"In other GEF projects knowledge comes and leaves with the consultants"*.
54. Besides the hiring of local technicians, the project also contributed to disseminating empirical and local knowledge. For instance, in the workshop on "Curing fish skin" held in Reconquista, Santa Fe Province, the trainer was a fisherman from Chaco who specializes in the comprehensive harnessing of fisheries products, including fish-skin products.
55. It is also worth underscoring the participation of CSO in the implementation of project activities, and as beneficiaries of training. The main NGOs related to the Parana Delta worked on the PIECAS process (among them, Fundación Humedales, Taller Ecologista de Rosario, M'Bigua, Fundación Oga, Fundación Proteger) and, as stated by representatives from these NGOs, *"it was a very pleasant experience to work with the government"*.
56. As regards *information production and dissemination*, the project stands out because of the wealth and quality of information it generated. All interviewees stated it was very valuable and an essential input for management. It is worth highlighting the baseline report and [Evaluación Ambiental Estratégica del PIECAS DP](#) (PIECAS-DP strategic environmental assessment), the

¹² For instance, the mid-term evaluation reported a decline in the political commitment of Formosa and Buenos Aires provinces with regard to the Project. During the consultants' visit to Formosa for the final evaluation, they were able to verify the high level of commitment and enthusiasm of all technical and political actors in the above province, including its Ministry of Production and the Environment.

[Inventario de Humedales de la Argentina](#) (Argentine Wetlands Inventory), the Operational Manual on Oversight and Control of Fisheries, the Federal IT System of Fisheries and Aquaculture Information (SIFIPA), including fisheries monitoring database and statistics, and uploading of traffic guides, among others. In preparing this material, the actors underscored the good link and integration of technical, academic and empirical knowledge.

57. Although interviewees pointed out certain deficiencies in “outgoing” communication, nowadays the project stands out because of its efforts to ensure the information generated is made available to different users. For instance, based on the wetlands inventory, a technical publication was drafted as well as a summarized version, more appropriate for widespread outreach, together with the full version on a CD. There is evidence that this initial weakness has been gradually overcome, and that the information generated is now spilling over to other sectors of society. For instance:
- With regard to PIECAS, the Environment Secretariat of Entre Ríos received letters from the Ombudspersons and NGOs asking for information on PIECAS, which shows there are already actors controlling compliance with PIECAS¹³.
 - The House of Representatives of Entre Ríos adopted a Resolution¹⁴ expressing its approval of the training of fishermen in ER for repairing and building canoes, to upgrade their safety while fishing, which shows the project was able to have key topics placed on the legislative agenda.
 - Within the teachers’ training sessions on “Environmental Education to favour Sustainability: Natural Goods in Entre Ríos”, certain project topics were addressed, and a copy of the book on *Sistemas de Paisajes de Humedales del Corredor Fluvial Paraná-Paraguay* (Wetland Landscape Systems of the Parana/Paraguay River Corridor) was given to each of the Municipal Libraries in the municipalities where the training took place¹⁵. The Programme reached out to 800 rural and urban school teachers in 2013 and to over 600 in 2014. The programme was headed by the General Directorate of Natural Resources, Ministry of Production, the Environment Secretariat, and the General Education Council of the Province, with the support of SAYDS.
58. Furthermore, most of the project’s information is uploaded to SAYDS web sites¹⁶ from where a diversity of documents can be accessed as well as news, activities, etc. Finally, the project contributes to the technical information generated by the [Observatorio Nacional de Biodiversidad](#) (National Biodiversity Observatory), and thus makes this information available to society at large.
59. Another noteworthy aspect of the Project with regard to the dissemination of information on its implementation is related to the detailed and careful recording of each of its activities. For instance, for each inter-institutional, participatory meeting (CPCyA, PIECAS, PAC, etc.) minutes were drafted, including the date and venue of the meeting, list of participants, topics addressed and agreements. The number of copies signed was in line with the number of participating

¹³http://www.lacapital.com.ar/ed_impresa/2013/12/edicion_1861/contenidos/noticia_5040.html#

¹⁴<http://www.ambiente.gov.ar/archivos/web/PUNDP10/file/Annexes%20a%20actividades/escanear0001.pdf>

¹⁵<http://www.entrerios.gov.ar/CGE/2010/blog/destacadas/fueron-capacitados-800-docentes-sobre-los-bienes-naturales-de-entre-rios/>

¹⁶<http://www.ambiente.gov.ar/?idseccion=299>, <http://www.ambiente.gov.ar/?idseccion=35>,
<http://www.ambiente.gov.ar/?idseccion=220>, <http://www.ambiente.gov.ar/?idseccion=153>

institutions. In this manner, these documents have become the project's institutional and collective memory.

60. One of the weaknesses to be pointed out from the standpoint of governance and the ecosystem-based approach (one of the principles stating that natural resource management should be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level) is that the project was not as effective in reaching out to the local level, namely, municipalities and villages. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the amendment of the Argentine Constitution in 1994 enshrined the autonomy of municipalities, which were thus empowered to establish their own forms of government by means of Municipal Organic Charters, in agreement with the scope spelt out by each province (that is to say, municipal jurisdictions are placed within each provincial structure, and are not a part of the federal relationship). Bringing actions down to the municipal level will, no doubt, be an issue to be addressed by the provinces so as to harness project achievements (for instance, each jurisdiction should outline its territorial and environmental governance regulations within the framework of PIECAS).
61. Besides the above, it is worth pointing out certain progress at municipal level, mainly related to protected areas. For instance, the representatives of an Environmental NGO A Ñangarecò Nderejhé, in charge of the protected area *Islote Municipal Curupí*, said that after the Project started up, they were able to raise the interest of the Parana Municipality, with which there was an agreement in place but did not participate in the area's management. Other actors stated the project had helped to rebuild bonds between the provincial and municipal levels.
62. In brief, as regards participation, the Project made a significant contribution to reinforcing institutional and technical capabilities, in raising awareness on the region's problems, mobilizing resources and disseminating and exchanging information, apart from helping to set up partnerships and cooperation links among actors.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

63. The PRODOC set forth an M&E Plan based on UNDP-GEF monitoring and evaluation procedures, and in line with the rules and regulations defined for their projects. The plan outlines the different components which will then be used for following up on project implementation and assessing project performance, *inter alia*, the inception workshop report, the Project Implementation Review and Annual Progress Reports (PIR and APR), Quarterly Progress Reports (QPR), PAC meetings, audit reports, mid-term and final independent external evaluations. Part XIII of the PRODOC includes the budget, responsible entities and timelines for the different M&E stages.

Reports and self-assessment

64. Review of Project implementation reports discloses a systematic process for producing, in due time and format, all progress and financial reports (APR/PIR, quarterly reports/QPR, reports to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, executive summaries, etc.). The annual plans and budgets were prepared in great detail and with the participation of the representatives from partner/beneficiary institutions. PAC met two to three times a year, to review and update the activity schedule of POAs. The minutes of these meetings, as well as of those of the Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission, documented the rescheduled or reformulated activities to move towards achievement of the project's objectives. As explained in Section 4, PEU did a

great job as regards the recording of PAC, CPCyA, workshop and other project activities, going well beyond the requirements for this kind of report.

65. The monitoring and control of financial management was effective, as evidenced in the positive reports on funding and co-funding and results-based expenditure. With regard to co-funding, the partners annually reported their contributions for the period January-December. Furthermore, two audits a year were carried out by the Audit Unit, Chief of Cabinet Ministry, and by the audit firm selected by UNDP.

Indicators

66. The key element of the M&E system in all results-oriented projects (as in the case of UNDP-GEF projects) is the project logical framework (or strategic results matrix), with indicators, a baseline and objectives. In order to meet the minimum M&E standards for UNDP-GEF projects, indicators must meet SMART criteria, that is to say, they must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based. This can become a challenge for projects like this one, with a strategy focused on harmonizing a regulatory and policy framework and on capacity-building, in which real impacts on biodiversity conservation can be accomplished in the medium or long-run.
67. PPG envisaged the hiring of an M&E expert who, working together with government counterparts and expert consultants, would prepare a project monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate the adoption of adaptive management strategies during the phases of project implementation and final evaluation, and to provide a foundation for a future integrated monitoring system for fisheries and biodiversity conservation. The expert was also expected to help define a set of indicators to measure the impact of project outcomes, and provide general guidance for the team in charge of preparing the project with regard to the GEF rationale. However, this expert was not hired during the preparatory phase but instead during project implementation. Even so, the project's logical framework proposes indicators as regards the objective and each of the outcomes.
68. As stated in the minutes, during the second PAC meeting (December 2010), and to support the drafting of the Project's Operations Manual (MOP), the PRODOC goals, objectives and indicators were reviewed. Later, among the tasks commissioned to the M&E consultant hired in 2011¹⁷ was that of establishing values for the indicators defined in the MOP, stating in detail the impact of the project at a regional and global level, as well as throughout time. In the analysis carried out, the proposed indicators were reviewed, establishing for each of them a description, definition and/or measurement unit, goal, means of verification and form of data calculation/collection, classifying them as *indicators of process, outcome, structure, decrease of stress and political will*. Nonetheless, the mid-term evaluation accounted for the fact that the inclusion of these indicators within the strategic results framework and operations manual was still pending, for their application in the evaluation of outcomes, processes and impact; and the recommendation was to start applying them within an M&E framework, for a given purpose. It was also pointed out that, overall, indicators were valid, although in many cases they were difficult to measure, and some outcomes could only be measured in the long-term (beyond the life of the project). In fact, in the first PIR report it was stated that in the case of Outcome 3 pilot

¹⁷ See report of consultant Marcelo Morandi, 2011.

experiences, very little progress had been made because of the great efforts needed for completing the indicator baseline.

69. When analyzing the follow-up reports -PIRs and annual reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-, a great difficulty was noted in reporting indicator-based progress in project outcomes (progress is not measured on the basis of units and with regard to goals defined for the indicators but instead they reflect a percentage or estimated degree of progress, in a narrative manner). One of the potential causes of the above is the weakness of some of the indicators defined in the PRODOC to reflect progress in the processes and outputs throughout the project's implementation. Some seem to be too ambitious (for instance, *"increase the size of wetlands protected areas with management plans underway"*), others difficult to measure (for instance, *"% of income from new products"*, *% of livestock managed as per best practices promoted within PIECAS*), others inappropriate or irrelevant (for instance, it is believed that the *"% of decline in fisheries irregularities"* is not a good indicator to measure progress in control and oversight; conversely, an increase in the number of violations can be expected as a result of better oversight actions). Even though there were good indicators, a lack of resources was detected to carry out the necessary M&E tasks as per GEF policies in this matter.
70. Many of the matters were pointed out in the MTR but as noted in the document on "Measures for Managing Mid-Term Review Recommendations" as regards Monitoring and Evaluation, no "Management Measures" or "Key Actions" were defined since they were not envisaged in the PRODOC or estimated in its budget.

6. Financial planning and management

71. The Project has a planned financing of USD 7,619,052, including a GEF donation of USD 2,355,000 in cash, and in-kind contributions by the national government, provincial governments, NGOs and UNDP (see Table 2). Disbursements made as at 14 November 2014 amount to USD 2,294,872.07, accounting for 99.98 % of the amount disbursed on that date by GEF/UNDP, and 97.45% of the total grant of USD 2,355,000, with a balance of USD 59,731 (See Table 3 and Annex 1.1). To the extent spending can be used as a way to measure project efficiency and progress, it depicts an overall rate of efficiency in expenditure and progress. By the end of 2014, the project expects to have delivered 100% of the grant.
72. GEF funds expenditure had a good start in 2010, when the funds were delivered under the "UNDP direct payment" modality, but was quite slow in 2011 and 2012, with low annual spending rates of 37% and 24% respectively, compared to the budget foreseen in the PRODOC at project start-up. This low rate of use reflects delays, a slow project start-up and long processes for opening special accounts and hiring consultants. The project started operating at a good pace as from 2013, with a sudden increase in spending, reaching a rate of over 100% of the initially foreseen budget
73. Despite the above, and with regard to the initial PRODOC Budget (Revision A), the project was able to adjust its status through agile budget revisions, thus achieving a satisfactory delivery of funds (see Annex 1.2), with a maximum variation of +/- 12% in the budgets adjusted through budgetary revisions (Revisions B, C, D, E, F, G and H).
74. Annex 1.3 also shows that the GEF grant funds have been appropriately allocated according to the outcomes of activities and tasks, and of the Project Executing Unit (PEU). This Table also

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reflects adjustments made in financial balances year after year, without harming the essence of outcomes, and only changing the amounts for the activities and tasks within the outputs.

75. The GEF budgeted amount was USD 2,355,000, while co-funding envisaged in the PRODOC amounted to USD 5,264,052. As reported by PEU, and according to the last Executive Summary, updated as at 19 November 2014, the current co-funding amounts are 218% higher than the amount originally committed to and included in the PRODOC (See Annex 1.4).

Table 2. Project Co-Funding Sources

Co-funding (Type/Source)	IA Funding (USD)		Gobierno (USD)		Others* (USD)		Total (USD)		Total Disbursements (USD)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual**	Planned	Actual**
Grants	2,355,000	2,355,000	0	0	0	0	2,355,000	2,295,269	2,355,000	2,295,269
In-kind support	100,000	100,000	4,829,000	16,127,940	334,815	537,136	5,264,000	16,765,076	5,264,000	16,765,076
Others (*)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2,455,000	2,455,000	4,829,000	16,127,940	334,815	537,136	7,619,000	19,060,345	7,619,000	19,060,345

*"Others" refers to contributions mobilized for the Project by other multilateral agencies, bilateral cooperation for development agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and beneficiaries. ** As at 14 November 2014

Table 3. Annual disbursements of the initial grant of USD 2,355,000 in GEF funds

Year	Foreseen Budget USD (Rev. A)	Delivered Budget (USD)	Delivered/Foreseen (%)
2010*	45,355	45,449	0,21%
2011	867,686	550,917	-36,51%
2012	925,857	700,417	-24,35%
2013	311,338	631,499	102,83%
2014**	204,764	366,987	79,22%
TOTAL	2,355,000	2,295,269	-2,54%

*As from September 2010, **up to 14 November 2014

7. Performance of GEF implementing agency

76. UNDP's competitive edge for GEF lies in its global network of offices located in the different countries, and in its experience in comprehensive policy development, human resources development, institutional strengthening and community and NGO participation. UNDP helps countries promote, design and carry out activities aligned with the GEF mandate, as well as with national sustainable development plans¹⁸.
77. In the project under consideration, all key actors highlighted UNDP's support to Project management, and its strengths as a GEF implementing agency, such as:
- The Agreement signed between the Argentine Republic and the United Nations Office for Project Services¹⁹, and the rules and procedures manual linked to such agreement make the process for agile processes. For instance, other agencies require an Executive Order to approve grants.
 - It is the only agency that has officials devoted to GEF projects. The presence in the country of those in charge of monitoring the projects (unlike the World Bank, for instance, where those managing the projects are not in-country): *"Closeness makes us feel at ease"*
 - All UNDP project officials are highly trained in environmental matters; other agencies only manage the projects but have no specific expertise in environmental matters.
 - From a financial standpoint, UNDP stands out for shielding grant funds, since these remain within UNDP and are not subject to the country's financial fluctuations (devaluations). This would not have been the case should the funds have been deposited directly in government agencies.
 - Project start-up faced difficulties due to a lack of an independent administrative-financial system at SAYDS, since everything had to go through the Chief of Cabinet Ministry (once this issue was solved when national authorities changed, project implementation became more fluent). Anyhow, the mechanisms available at UNDP for direct payment allowed project start-up.
78. Several of the interviewees pointed out UNDP is aligned with country priorities, and highlighted that UNDP provided assistance in close communication with the Project's National Coordination and Management, including its participation on the Project Advisory Committee.

8. Other aspects

79. Another couple of aspects that could have hindered Project implementation were the premises assigned to PEU at SAYDS and the honoraria of the Project's national consultants. The premises are located in a refurbished underground floor at 555 Reconquista street, Buenos Aires City, which does not seem to meet health and safety conditions for a full-time job as required by this kind of project.
80. Honoraria for national consultants and administrative assistants in internationally funded projects are considered low as currently established by Decree 1254/2014[1] (Decrees No. 577/2003 and No. 2345/2008, amendments), with regard to local market offers for similar

¹⁸ "Resumen del Documento GEF/C.31/5 – Ventajas Comparativas de los Organismos del FMAM".

¹⁹ <https://www.unops.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Information-disclosure/HCA/Argentina-HCA-2007.pdf>

precarious contracts, in which tax and social security obligations must be borne by the hired party/incumbent. Thus the CG hired by UNDP can earn a maximum of USD 2,700, doing very complex work and with accounting, technical and financial responsibilities.

81. Despite the above, under the leadership and motivation of the CG, the project was able to face these two challenges, apparently without significantly resenting project implementation. Therefore we consider such high implementation efficiency and effectiveness were possible thanks to the project's most important value –its human capital- promoted and contained by the CG, both in the good and bad times.

C. OUTCOMES

1. *Progress towards achieving Outcomes and Objectives*²⁰

Progress made towards achieving the objective

82. According to UNDP-GEF policies for final evaluations, this analysis must be carried out on the basis of specific project indicators for each outcome and objective. In view of the weaknesses of the strategic results framework and its indicators (as explained in Section III.B.5), it is very difficult to objectively assess project progress with regard to achievement of the objective and outcomes.
83. Taking into account progress made in most of the strategies proposed by the Project, we share the comments of RTA in the last project PIR, and consider progress towards achieving the objective has been **Satisfactory**. As can be seen in the following section, most of the implementation difficulties are linked to Outcome 3, where the potential of the pilot experiences to bring about an impact on conservation is not yet clear.

Progress made towards achieving outcomes and outputs

84. The project aimed at eliminating the barriers described in Section II B, through a strategy targeted to strengthening governance structures for the sustainable management and conservation of wetlands and their biodiversity, by developing a coordinated framework of policies for fisheries and wetland management in all the basin's provinces, based on the four outcomes assessed below.

OUTCOME 1. HARMONIZED ECOSYSTEM-BASED POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR FRESHWATER FISHERIES

85. The project was successful in coordinating fisheries policies among the different jurisdictions, including the start-up of a series of harmonized tools agreed upon with the provinces, for instance, the definition of catch quotas (defined by the provinces) and export quotas (defined by

²⁰ Categories: Highly Satisfactory (HS): The project has no flaws in achieving its objectives as to their relevance, effectiveness or efficiency. Satisfactory (S): The Project has minor deficiencies in achieving its objectives as to their relevance, effectiveness or efficiency. Moderately Satisfactory (MS): The project is experiencing moderate deficiencies in achieving its objectives, in terms of their relevance, effectiveness or efficiency. Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): The Project is experiencing significant deficiencies in achieving its objectives, in terms of their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Unsatisfactory (I): The project is experiencing major deficiencies in achieving its objectives in terms of their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Highly unsatisfactory (AI): The project is facing serious deficiencies in achieving its objectives, in terms of their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

the national government). Likewise, it was able to consolidate aspects related to catch monitoring and fishing efforts, and a single format was agreed upon for the inter-jurisdictional *Guía de Tránsito* (Traffic Guide) for fisheries and aquaculture products, implemented through SIFIPA.

86. The project provided the necessary equipment to carry out monitoring in all provinces, and promoted the development and coordination of mechanisms for collecting, harmonizing and standardizing fisheries information, integrated into the *Federal IT System of Fisheries and Aquaculture Information* (SIFIPA). Its importance lies in the integration of fisheries and aquaculture information from all provinces, and leads to having fisheries statistics at the regional level. This information is of great importance to make decisions for the orderly and responsible management of freshwater fisheries and can be found on-line, which facilitates supervision and oversight.
87. At the time of this evaluation, the *Regional Plan for Managing Fisheries in the Argentine Basin of the River Plate* is being completed. Its purpose is to contribute to an orderly, integrated and ecosystem-based management of fisheries in the River Plate Basin to warrant sustainability. This document sets forth a series of specific objectives and activities that will lead to the sustainability of project outcomes (for instance, continue with the harmonization of freshwater fisheries, optimize and keep SIFIPA operational, continue encouraging value to be added to the production chain, and continue promoting good practices in sports fishing).
88. Several of the interviewees pointed out a series of collateral goals achieved by the Project, namely:
- Reactivation of the work of CPCyA, promoting continuity and systematization of activities.
 - This was a motivational trigger for provincial decision-makers to change their vision as regards fisheries management “*It injected energy to view things differently, from an ecosystem-based vision*”. For instance, mutual credentials were defined among inspectors in Corrientes and Entre Ríos provinces, through an agreement set up and signed within the enlarged PAC. Neighbouring provinces’ regulations were harmonized (“mirror standards” with regard to sports fishing, shared closed seasons, fishing arts, gauge sizes of nets, etc.). For instance, based on discussions within the project, the closed fishing seasons are now also defined by law in Santa Fe, and common criteria were established between Santa Fe and Entre Ríos to hold a census of commercial fishermen.
89. Another project output was set forth within the framework of Outcome 1 “*Wetlands Inventory along the Parana-Paraguay Freshwater Corridor*”. The inventory was addressed at a wetlands landscape level, thus providing a reference framework for carrying out more detailed studies on the region’s wetland ecosystems. As a result thereof, 21 wetlands landscapes were identified and for each of them, available information was collected and synthesized, including the description of ecosystem-based goods and services, as well as important species, environments and landscapes for conservation. Furthermore, under this outcome, data on the region’s fish fauna was collected, setting the foundations for determining areas of special importance as fish habitats. In this manner, the inventory becomes an essential tool for designing and implementing sound policies and regulatory frameworks for the conservation of the region’s wetlands and their related biodiversity, to identify loopholes and priority areas of research, establish protocols and monitoring strategies and plan their use.

90. All this work was compiled in two publications, a technical one and another summarized version, which is more appropriate for widespread dissemination, and includes a CD with the technical publication in its full version for those wishing to enhance the information contained therein. The project and participating institutions made a great effort for disseminating these publications in all provinces.

91. In brief, progress achieved with regard to Outcome 1 is considered **Highly Satisfactory**.

OUTCOME 2. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENED FOR MANAGING FISHERIES AND WETLANDS

92. With regard to Strengthening of Institutional Capacities for fisheries oversight and control (Output 2.1), inspection and oversight dynamics were harmonized and an *ad-hoc* procedures manual was drafted, the *Operational Manual on Fisheries Oversight and Control*. Project interventions were able to diminish catch and fishing efforts and, therefore, reduce the impact to preserve the wetlands as a fisheries service provider. Furthermore, the *Operational and Legal Baseline for Fisheries Violations* was addressed and agreed upon by consensus, as was the typology of violation tickets, while control missions were carried out with PNA support. Within this process, all inspectors were trained and were able to meet one another and exchange knowledge, experiences, customs and habits. In turn, PNA used the Manual to train its staff in the region (a representative from each branch office was trained to then convey the knowledge to junior officers). Furthermore, the *Inter-jurisdictional Oversight Group* was established and approved by CPCyA, and the Regional Plan envisages at least one annual oversight meeting funded by CPCyA members. Moreover, the Freshwater Fisheries Directorate (SSPyA - MAGyP) was directly reinforced by bringing into the agency the fisheries and IT experts who worked on the preparation of SIFIPA.

93. Beyond the foreseen outcomes, collateral outcomes were obtained by addressing topics allowing the generation of policies, for instance, with regard to ornamental fish, endemic species and the export of genetic material²¹. Furthermore, port monitoring upon fish unloading was a trigger to show the size of the business and the control and oversight problems.

94. With regard to Capacity Building to Improve the Management of Protected Areas in Freshwater Wetlands (Output 2.2), management capacities seem to have improved, overall. The application of METT at the last training workshop shows an increase in management effectiveness in 76.9% of the areas compared with the baseline (October 2011), while effectiveness declined in 15.3% of the areas. Also, upon completing the training programme in the planning of protected areas, 86% of the participants indicated they could put into practice the topics addressed therein.

95. The Training Programme was based on workshops to address the guidelines for the preparation of the Management Plans (MP), within the theoretical framework of strategic, adaptive and participatory planning. Six workshops were held all told, with the participation of a political and a technical leader from each area. Out of the 35 PA designated by the provinces, SAyDS and APN

²¹ Ornamental fish in Misiones: the Uruguay River has 350 tributaries but information is only available on two, showing a very high percentage of taxa (approximately 60% of the fish species in Argentina) and a high degree of endemism. Thanks to interactions with the project, a technician in charge of issuing export permits has identified, together with his team, certain recurrence in the export of ornamental fish species, and discovered Misiones had a great potential for exporting ornamental fish. They thus suspended the issuance of export permits until a list could be generated on the exportable species. A Ministerial resolution will be issued on what species can be exported and, moreover, the fisheries plan for the River Plate Basin that is currently being drafted, will include an item on ornamental fish.

to participate in the programme, 22 participated actively and completed the full process²². Nine of them have MPs which were reviewed and some updated; another seven were able to prepare an advanced draft document and the project is still working with some of them; four PAs completed the preparation of their MPs and some were presented to the pertinent provincial or municipal authorities and, finally, two National Parks that completed the whole process were able to harness the experience to prepare POAs, although they do not yet have Management Plans in place.

96. The training sessions specifically addressed the topic of wetlands, fish and fisheries. Fisheries management criteria from an ecosystem-based approach are particularly reflected in the MPs descriptive component (characterization and diagnosis) and in the territorial component (zoning, uses, guidelines and restrictions). Most of the drafted MP proposals envisage the above-mentioned management criteria, and fishing appears as one of the uses to be regulated according to the area's zoning. Once the cycle had been completed, the project worked on developing and editing a publication which summarizes the material generated throughout the training programme: the Manual on *“Planificación en Áreas Protegidas de Humedales: Herramientas para pensar el Plan de Manejo”*, (Planning in Wetlands Protected Areas: Tools for thinking about the Management Plan), outlined and designed as a practical tool for thinking about and addressing the preparation of management plans.
97. The Programme was devised under a diverse scenario, with very dissimilar realities among the different protected areas, and focused mainly on setting up fora to reflect on, discuss and spell out the role of planning in the management of protected areas. All interviewed actors agreed that the project's training approach took into account this reality. The training sessions were able to bring together the same people throughout two years, to exchange experiences and thus *help to install the network criterion, among provincial decision makers and those responsible for PAs*²³. Furthermore, by including political representatives in the training process, there is the commitment to continue working on the matter. In this manner, the project made an essential contribution to move forward in line with the National Biological Diversity Strategy which states one of the essential aspects to improve protected area management is coordination among different jurisdictions.
98. Furthermore, the Project met a series of demands with regard to specific topics the participants wished to reinforce, among them, participation, funding and stocks²⁴. The training process also helped to achieving other collateral goals:
- The preparation of a proposal for a new Inter-Jurisdictional Ramsar Site (something unprecedented in the Argentine Republic) encompassing 238,430 hectares, including the National Pre-Delta Park in Entre Rios Province, and the National Island Park Santa Fe, Santa Fe Province. Furthermore, official approval was given to SAyDS Resolution 776/2014 which

²² Certain areas outside the Parana-Paraguay basin were also included; they belong to the River Plate basin and, overall, are relevant for the fish resources conservation.

²³ It is also worth highlighting the creation of a Google Group set up by GTRA, based on a proposal arising from workshop participants, to share information and experiences among PA managers who participated in the Training Programme.

²⁴ For instance, in May 2013, the project organized activities to meet the requirements of the Misiones provincial government: a “Workshop on Tools for Assessing the Effectiveness of Managing Protected Areas in Misiones Province”, with the purpose of developing the basis of an evaluation tool adjusted to the province's PAs, and a “Workshop on Training in Participatory Environmental Processes and Participation in Natural Protected Area Management Plans”.

defines the procedure to be met for asking a site to be included on the List of Wetlands of International Importance as defined by the Ramsar Convention.

- In Misiones the adapted METT (which includes questions to measure the social function of PAs and its benefits for local communities) was adopted as a management practice for all PAs in the Provincial System (which encompasses 1,394,000 hectares under a given category of environmental protection)²⁵.
- In Entre Ríos three new wetland PAs along the Parana River were incorporated, as well as others along the Uruguay River. Among them, 19,100 privately-owned hectares, 5,700 of which are fenced and practically unaffected by anthropic activities. In Buenos Aires province, support was rendered to the still ongoing process for creating a private PA (Santos Vega Island); meetings were promoted and organized among owners, the provincial enforcement authority, NGOs and the municipality to promote the designation of this area.
- In Formosa, where the wetlands inventory was carried out on a greater scale of resolution, there is interest in establishing a wetlands corridor. Furthermore, work is being carried out on a PA Bill. It is worth pointing out that Formosa currently has 15 PAs covering over 7% of the province's territory.
- The process helped to rebuild bonds between the provincial and municipal levels, through the interaction of actors in workshops, and the First Meeting of Municipal Protected Areas of the Parana Delta.

99. In view of the above, progress in Output 2.1 is believed to be Highly Satisfactory. With regard to Output 2.2, the weakness of indicators (too ambitious and not sensitive enough to measure impacts in such a short time) makes it difficult to objectively evaluate progress achieved. Nonetheless, since this output was put forward as a supplementary strategy (and not as the main focus of the project), and taking into account individual capacity building achieved, as well as the many collateral goals, it is concluded that the overall classification of **Outcome 2** is **Satisfactory**.

OUTCOME 3. DEVELOPMENT OF PILOT PROJECTS FOR THE OPTIMIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF FISH RESOURCES

100. In order to help reduce catch to sustainable levels, and supplement institutional capacity strengthening, the project proposed the development of a series of pilot experiences for market-based mechanisms to make fisheries and natural resource management economically attractive (Outputs 3.1 and 3.2), as well as to foster responsible sports fishing (Output 3.3).

101. With regard to fostering responsible sports fishing, progress was made in defining best practices for catch-and-release sports fishing, including the design and testing of a fish cradle to avoid or minimize the potential death of the caught species²⁶. Progress is being made in the preparation of a Good Practices Manual for Responsible Sports Fishing" (*Manual de Buenas Prácticas para la Pesca Deportiva Responsable*) which, together with an instruction video, will be used for training and extension activities for sports fishermen in general, and particularly for fishing guides. With the project's support, in Corrientes (the reference province for sports fishing

²⁵ <http://www.ecologia.misiones.gov.ar/ecoweb/index.php/anp-descgen>

²⁶ http://obio.ambiente.gob.ar/pesca-con-devolucion_p459

in the country and region, with the greatest number of fishing guides) progress was made with regard to a bill for creating the *School of Fishery Guides of Corrientes Province*, which was already passed by the Senate, and has among its objectives the training of professional fishery guides as well as the preservation, conservation and protection of fish fauna in the province. Furthermore, an *extended closed season* was implemented along Parana River sections shared by Chaco and Corrientes, which includes the prohibition to fish on Saturdays and Sundays by commercial fishermen and on Tuesdays and Wednesdays by sports fishermen. On the other hand, institutional representatives made trips to Brazil to interact with NGOs, academic institutions and experts in the production of live bait in captivity. In coordination with GTRA and CPCyA – SSPyA, progress was made in formulating a *Management Plan for Fish Species used as Live Bait*. Furthermore, in Formosa, and with the Project's support, several live bait fishermen set up an Association and, with the support of the Ministry of Production and the Environment of the province, they now have access to sites with a better quality of bait on privately-owned farms. A tripartite agreement was signed between the Association, the provincial government and the project to advance more sustainable management measures (extraction methods, fishing arts, trading). As part of the agreement, existing nets were swapped for others provided by the project that would have the capacity of reducing mortality rates from 40% to 10%. Although it is not feasible to accomplish the goal established in the PRODOC for the indicator linked to this output ("50% or more sports fishing guides/lodge keepers (*cabañeros*) in Corrientes province applying the Best Environmental Practices Manual for Sports Fishing whose procedures lead to environmental certification"), progress achieved led to assigning a rating of ***Moderately Satisfactory*** to ***Output 3.3***.

102. As regards the experiences of outputs 3.1 and 3.2, the main achievements refer to training in the different practices of adding value to fish products (curing of fish skin, regional fish-based gastronomy), tourism, building and repair of canoes, best practices for manipulating catch, and disposal of waste, among others. Experiences and knowledge were exchanged among the different artisan fishermen communities in the region. Furthermore, fishermen became aware of their role as key actors in the field and in the quest for solutions. As expressed by one of the interviewees: "*Before fishermen were persecuted. Nowadays they have a different status*". A practical guide was drafted on the preparation of food products. It was handed out at training workshops and other activities held in the provinces.
103. Despite the great efforts made within these experiences by the Project team and its partners/beneficiaries, these experiences are still far from achieving the objectives set forth in the PRODOC and the indicator goals, particularly for generating significant economic income to diminish pressure on fisheries resources. The evaluation team believes that, in the design as well as the implementation of these two outputs, the project did not have the necessary expertise for carrying out this kind of experience, mainly as regards business. Consequently, a weakness was identified in the design, particularly, the lack of an appropriate analysis of the economic feasibility, including market studies as well as the comparison of different potential income levels stemming from activities related to the use of resources. Although according to the POAs, a national consultant or consulting firm would be hired to carry out Output 3.2 activities, no consultant was hired and instead –as stated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports- the expert in procurement, accounting and financial aspects of PEU provided a comprehensive outlook on this output. Consequently, the role of supplementary activities to

fishing in generating income and their impact on catch levels is not yet clear. To make a contribution in this regard, Annex 2 includes a results chain showing the alleged and intermediate outcomes necessary for furthering this objective.

104. In view of the above, it is believed that progress in achieving **Outputs 3.1 and 3.2** is **Moderately Unsatisfactory**. This leads the global rating for **Outcome 3** (despite the better performance of Output 3.3) to be **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

OUTCOME 4. SPATIAL AND INTER-SECTORAL ECOSYSTEM-BASED PLANNING IN THE PARANÁ DELTA

105. This Outcome aimed at implementing a spatial and inter-sectoral ecosystem-based planning process in the Parana Delta, as a pilot region, for the sustainable use and conservation of the ecosystems through ecological, economic, cultural and social factors which are relevant within a geographical framework primarily defined by using the ecological boundaries of the Parana Delta.
106. The role of the project was essential for catalyzing the work institutions were carrying out, promoting the adoption of the ecosystem-based approach, the preparation of a [*Línea de Base Ambiental de la Región DP*](#) (Environmental Baseline of the Parana Delta Region) and the use of [*Evaluación Ambiental Estratégica*](#) (Strategic Environmental Assessments - SEA), as a management instrument to integrate the environmental dimension in the different phases to define and outline plans, policies and programmes. Furthermore, the Project promoted working spaces to coordinate technical levels with political ones, such as the Coordination Group for SEA, which acted as a link between these two levels, and then became an Inter-jurisdictional Coordination Group (GCI in the Spanish acronym), recognized by the High-Level Inter-jurisdictional Committee of the Parana Delta (CIAN). This Committee is the federal consensus-building forum for policies related to territory-based environmental management, which was reinforced by the Project's activities and outputs. According to the interviewees: *"The Project created a feasible working environment in the Parana Delta ecosystem as a sustainable one, over and above the different jurisdictions"; "Thanks to the project, the technicians of the institutions started to consider one another partners"*.
107. These efforts resulted in a *Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta Region* (PIECAS-DP), a document built on the basis of inter-jurisdictional agreements arising from different management experiences, supported by scientific, technical and expert knowledge for guiding interventions and regulating territory-based activities. Agreements include the coordination of jurisdictions, harmonization of rules, and oversight and control systems to achieve conservation objectives for the many environmental services rendered by the Delta wetlands. Moreover, a common cartographic base was developed, and is compatible for geo-referencing existing information generated as a result of geospatial technology training, benefiting technicians from all four jurisdictions (a mini-GIS, including a database on roads, cities, departments, protected areas, etc.). Partner agencies were reinforced in the PIECAS – DP territory, by providing them with equipment, software licenses and accessories, as well as training to optimize the use of and improve existing information networks.

108. To supplement CIAN, a Bill on the Minimum Standards²⁷ for Environmental Protection and sustainable development of the Parana Delta was approved, and will become a key instrument for ensuring continuity of the inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation process, warranting conservation and sustainable use of the Parana Delta Region. The bill is backed by a resolution of the Federal Environment Council (COFEMA) expressing its commitment in support of the formalities, enactment and passing of the bill ([Resolution 284 /2014](#)). Furthermore, basic documents on which the plan was built are also available: [Línea de Base Ambiental de la Región DP](#) (Environmental Baseline for the DP Region) and [“Evaluación Ambiental Estratégica – PIECAS DP”](#) (Strategic Environmental Assessment – PIECAS-DP).
109. The PIECAS process has managed to adapt the region to the current situation, and install a working methodology which could be applied to other topics. In fact, Santa Fe province has adopted the SEA methodology for other processes in the province. Institutional representatives from provinces not included in PIECAS-DP have expressed their interest in replicating the experience across the territory covered by the project. This pilot experience has provided direct benefits to the Delta biodiversity, as well as clear guidance on how to develop governance frameworks encompassing the many factors of different sectors, which require coordination within the spatial planning of wetlands. According to one of the interviewees: *“The PIECAS process is the most important item on the region’s environmental agenda, a turning point for future development”*. In view of the above, progress in this Outcome is believed to be **Highly Satisfactory**.

2. Efficiency

110. In order to evaluate the project’s efficiency, a series of factors were taken into consideration, including the use of human and financial resources, establishment of strategic partnerships, fulfillment of established deadlines, risk management, adaptive management, among others. Overall, it can be concluded that the project has been very efficient in its implementation, fulfilling in due time and format most of the scheduled activities, within the agreed time-frame, and having overcome a series of obstacles which have been explained in other sections of this document (including delays in implementation start-up, changes in authorities, devaluations, lack of a Technical Coordinator, among others). This is an exceptional situation for a Project with a relatively limited budget and meant to serve such a vast territory, with a great diversity of social and institutional actors, and problems whose solution is multi-faceted and calls for different strategies. Bearing in mind all the above, the project’s cost-effectiveness ratio in terms of “resources invested and outcomes achieved” has been outstanding. Therefore, as regards **Efficiency** it should be rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.

3. Catalyst Role / Replicability

111. GEF expects all their projects to play a catalyst and multiplier role, either by replicating positive experiences and lessons, as well as by extending and harnessing the tested approaches.

²⁷ The minimum standard enshrined in Article 41 of the National Constitution is any standard providing for uniform or common environmental protection for the whole of the national territory, and has the purpose of imposing the necessary conditions to ensure such environmental protection. Its contents should foresee the necessary conditions to guarantee the dynamics of the ecological systems, maintain their stocks and, overall, ensure environmental preservation and sustainable development.

In this regard, the Project implementation approach and design presents a series of outcomes of a significant replication potential, either at the national, regional or international level.

112. PIECAS is a clear example of how the project catalyzed the beginning of a process of institutional and political reform. Although the PIECAS Coordinating Group had existed since 2008, the project was able to invigorate this structure and subsequent processes, and establish a working methodology that could be applied to other topics, contexts and territories. In this regard, the interviewees of the NGO sector in the Delta region talked about their interest in having a case study carried out on the PIECAS experience as a forum for consensus-building, lessons learnt and replication.
113. A catalyst role is also envisaged for the Project by integrating the valuable information generated (such as the environmental baseline, the wetlands inventory, SEA) into the future formulation of territorial plans and development strategies. Furthermore, work with research institutions allowed the identification and approach to lines of research to provide an answer to specific problems in the region (for instance, the Regional Geo-spatial Technology Centre – CEREGeo-, *Universidad Abierta de Entre Rios*, carrying out a new technology transfer project for the region).
114. On the other hand, the harmonization of the regulatory framework and management instruments developed by the fisheries sector are very useful tools to be replicated in other freshwater fisheries areas in the country. This also evidences the catalytic role of the project; for instance, one of the provincial reference officials stated that now that the fisheries sector had been organized from an ecosystem-based and inter-jurisdictional approach, other topics were being addressed by the provinces, namely, tourism. Furthermore, it is the intention of SSPyPA to extend the work of the Operational Oversight and Control Manual to other SAYDS managed areas, such as fauna and forests.
115. Other examples of the project's catalytic role are policy generation with regard to the export of ornamental fish²⁸ (taking into account they are a genetic resource), the adoption of an adapted METT as a management practice in all of the Provincial PA System of Misiones, the creation of new PAs in Entre Ríos, the proposal of a Inter-Jurisdictional Ramsar Site, and the replication of training sessions in other localities, other than those selected by the pilot experiences, on adding value to fisheries.
116. In view of the above, the rating for the section of ***Catalytic Role / Replicability*** is ***Highly Satisfactory***.

4. Sustainability

117. A series of aspects have been included in the project's design to promote the long-term sustainability of outcomes, including capacity-building, reinforcement of the institutional coordination mechanisms, creation of a harmonized regulatory framework, awareness-raising, and dissemination of project outcomes, among others. Within GEF projects, *Sustainability* is considered the probability of its benefits to continue beyond the project's life cycle.

²⁸ For instance, the plan for fisheries in the River Plate Basin which is being formulated includes an item on ornamental fish

Consequently, the evaluation of sustainability²⁹ must bear in mind financial, socio-economic, institutional and environmental risks which can affect the continuity of Project outcomes.

Social and political sustainability

118. Given the characteristics of the Government of Argentina (federal, with autonomous provinces), most of the interviewees pointed out the probability of experiencing political-institutional risks vis-à-vis certain changes in the administration. However, all agreed on stating that the project facilitated interaction, the setting up of partnerships and cooperation relationships among institutions, and led to harmonious work among the provinces, and between the provinces and the national government. In this manner it achieved a great degree of empowerment at the territorial level, which together with the strong leadership of the provinces, would contribute to reducing risks. According to the institutional actors: *“It is not easy to dismantle this momentum”*; *“The way we build is part of the outcome and how it will keep in place throughout time”*; *“What the project generated, we have consolidated as a permanent State policy”*.
119. With regard to PIECAS-DP, institutional partners carried out a series of activities to disseminate the Plan, processes and related documents at municipal level, within the Parana Delta, as well as among different provincial agencies.
120. On the other hand, there is evidence that most of the topics addressed by the Project are placed on the legislative agenda. For instance, the Law on Minimum Standards for the Conservation, Protection and Rational and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Argentina, which was passed by the Senate and was presented by Entre Ríos and Santa Fe legislators. Furthermore, COFEMA endorsed the Bill on Minimum Standards for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta Region (PIECAS), for it to be dealt with by the Argentine Congress. This led SSPyA-SAyDS to open File No. 32274/2014 so that after going through the established procedures, the Argentine Executive Branch can formally submit the proposal to the Argentine Legislative Branch. The idea is for the bill to be discussed, enacted and turned into a law during 2015. PIECAS provinces undertook the commitment to support the initiative through its national legislators. It is worth pointing out that an [agreement](#) was signed between the House of Representatives and COFEMA to improve communication and facilitate treatment of environmental laws.
121. With regard to other social actors, knowledge about project achievements varies but overall local repercussion is positive thanks to the dissemination activities promoted by the project and its institutional partners. Proof of the above is that certain actors are already acting as comptrollers to ensure respect for PIECAS (as for instance, National Ombudspersons and NGOs). Dissemination efforts of the project and partner institutions, by publicizing and ensuring access to the information generated, help towards the social and political sustainability of its achievements. According to one of the interviewees: *“Whatever is discussed, does not disappear, whatever is made public does not disappear.”*

²⁹ These four dimensions must be rated according to the following categories: Probable (P): No risks affecting this sustainability dimension. Moderately probable (MP): Moderate risks affecting this sustainability dimension. Moderately Improbable (MI): Significant risks affecting this sustainability dimension. Improbable (I): Severe risks affecting this sustainability dimension.

122. On the other hand, the Regional Plan for Fisheries Management envisages the definition of appropriate procedures to facilitate consultation and effective participation of industry, fisheries workers, environmental organizations and any other group considered to have a “legitimate interest”, in decision-making with regard to the drafting of rules and policies related to fisheries governance and conservation of biodiversity and wetlands.
123. Although pilot experiences on fisheries added value must still be reinforced, the Project has helped to strengthen the capacities of artisan fishermen in the region, including their capacity to come together and create networks, thus making their participation efforts in biodiversity conservation in the region more effective, significant and informed. Taking into account the role in the artisan fishing value chain of the subsector of activities following catch (gatherers, middlemen), as well as power inequalities which still exist in some cases, it will be essential to coordinate with this sector and its agents, in order to be successful in strategies for improving the sustainability (environmental, economic and social) of artisan fishing.
124. In view of the above, and since there seem to be moderate social and political risks, the *social and political sustainability* of the project’s outcomes are considered to be ***Moderately Probable***.

Institutional sustainability

125. One of the Project areas that achieved better outcomes is the reinforcement of capacities at national and provincial institutions holding responsibility for environmental, fisheries and protected area policies. The Project was a great catalyst for developing and/or consolidating in four years what had not been achieved in the last 20 years in freshwater fisheries; among others, a Regional Plan for managing fisheries, an oversight and control system at the provincial and national levels, institutionalized within the Inter-Jurisdictional Oversight Group, fisheries statistics at the provincial and national levels, sports fishing development and governance, fish bait development and governance (which was an informal, unregulated practice), an effective exchange and discussion forum at the federal level. All these built capacities are critical for managing fisheries resources.
126. The project reinforced the commitment of the region’s institutions for managing the ecosystem, and their capacity to support throughout time whatever the Project helped to develop. For instance, since the beginning of 2014, Formosa province, through its Ministry of Production and the Environment, created the Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Climate Change Programme, for which young biologists were hired and have become actively involved in project activities. They will continue working with GTRA and GTAP after the project has been completed. The project also ensured the ongoing existence of inter-institutional coordination fora such as CPCyA, providing continuity and systematization to its activities. Likewise, SAyDS has undertaken the commitment to continue working along the priority lines of action through the Directorate for Environmental Governance of the Territory, GTRA and GTAP, and through the participation of their technicians in CPCyA.
127. As pointed out in the mid-term evaluation, the creation and organization of a permanent, inter-sectoral forum comprising relevant fisheries and environment authorities, to support the coordination of measures for creating a regulatory and policy framework for managing fisheries resources and wetlands in the basin, is a trait of future sustainability. Likewise, the

establishment of a harmonized regulatory framework based on sound scientific knowledge, which will remain after project completion, will be a key factor to ensure sustainability of the project's achievements and improve the governance of fisheries and wetlands.

128. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that thanks to Project interventions, through training as well as through participation and interaction, knowledge and skills of the provincial technical levels have been reinforced, and qualitative changes have been brought about as reflected, for instance, in CPCyA technical discussions. Many of the consultants hired by the project have been and are still being absorbed by government structures and, once the project has been completed, these capacities will remain installed. Somehow this promotes a project exit strategy.
129. Beyond these important achievements, there are still certain risks that can affect institutional sustainability:
- Although the project leaves important installed capacities, some of the interviewees believe it would be necessary to have *capacities of excellence* to ensure continuity of the actions.
 - There are still inconsistencies in fishing oversight among certain provinces.
 - Although PIECAS has been effective in curbing undertakings that go against conservation and sustainable use of the Parana Delta region, it is necessary to have a law passed for establishing the minimum standards based on which each jurisdiction can legislate but always based on such standards adopted by law.
130. Taking into account the above, although very significant progress has been achieved in reinforcing the institutional framework for the sustainable management of wetlands and fisheries, there are still certain risks and, therefore, ***Institutional Sustainability*** can be rated as ***Moderately Probable***.

Financial Sustainability

131. Although all institutional actors have expressed their commitment to continue working in a coordinated manner, and to continue deepening the processes to achieve territorial management of the region's wetlands within a harmonized, ecosystem-based regulatory framework, there are certain financial risks which could compromise sustainability of the project's achievements. Particularly bearing in mind the size of the project's territory, there are considerable costs regarding travel of participants from the different provinces (borne by the project during these four years), and some have voiced their concern about not having the necessary resources available after project completion.
132. Anyhow, there are certain promissory data to address this issue. For instance, the Regional Plan for Fisheries Management foresees the design of a long-term financial strategy to be implemented, but it mentions that -so far- ensuring the necessary funds to continue with the activities is still a pending matter. Likewise, the [Anteproyecto de Ley de Presupuestos Mínimos para el PIECAS DP](#) (Bill to have a Law on Minimum Standards for PIECAS DP) envisaged the establishment of a National PIECAS-DP Fund (articles 10 and 11) to support its implementation, although until it is approved, certain financial risks will remain in place. On the other hand, to implement the Plan for Fisheries Management, it is foreseen for each administration to commit the necessary resources according to its jurisdiction, roles and foreseen activities within the

above, including the participation in four annual CPCyA meetings, four Technical Sub-committee meetings, and an annual meeting of fisheries control and oversight agents. .

133. With regard to the management of protected areas, although the project has reinforced planning capacities and several areas completed the training process with a management plan already outlined, the implementation of such plans and actions that have an impact on the improvement of the status of biodiversity conservation will require financial resources which nowadays are scarce. It is necessary to bear in mind that, within the project's framework, the PA topic was addressed as a supplementary strategy, with a limited scope for reinforcing planning capabilities. In this regard, there seem to be no significant risks from the financial standpoint to maintain these capacities.

134. In view of the above, there are moderate financial risks and it is thus concluded that **Financial Sustainability** can be rated as **Moderately Probable**.

Environmental Sustainability

135. As explained in Section II, the vast corridor of wetlands and floodplains of the Paraguay-Parana Rivers freshwater ecosystem has been experiencing a series of anthropic pressures, which threaten its ecological integrity and its capacity to continue providing valuable ecosystem-based services. Harnessing an important institutional baseline, the project focused on the threats on fisheries, and worked on removing a series of barriers which hinder progress towards a long-term solution. Consequently, it turned out to be very efficient in increasing the effectiveness of governance structures for the conservation and sustainable management of freshwater fisheries and wetlands.

136. The official approval of PIECAS-DP, the endorsement of COFEMA so that the Bill on Minimum Standards for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta Region is addressed by the Argentine Congress, the Law on Minimum Standards for the Conservation, Protection and Rational and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Argentina so far passed by the Senate, the approval of the Law on Fire Management, the identification of priority sites to create new wetland PAs, the nomination of a new Inter-jurisdictional Ramsar site, are examples of progress made in the country's conservation efforts by this valuable region. The project's support in materializing PIECAS has contributed to generating direct benefits to biodiversity in the Parana Delta region, and also to providing clear guidance on how to develop governance frameworks, bringing together several factors of the different sectors involved in the spatial planning of wetlands (it must be recalled that all productive sectors participate in the PIECAS preparation process). Furthermore, the bill on PIECAS minimum environmental standards foresees the harmonization of procedures for the environmental impact assessment of projects, works and activities, considering communication between the parties when potential effects are described which could have a significant impact on the Parana Delta Region or beyond the jurisdiction in which they are implemented. On the other hand, the Plan on Fisheries Management, based on the precautionary principle and an approach entailing ecosystem-based and adaptive management, as well as the adoption of responsible sports fishing practices, to minimize the negative impact on the environment, these fisheries species and those used as bait, are all valuable tools for the sustainable management of the region's fisheries resources.

137. Bearing in mind that the area served by the project is part of a bigger area (the River Plate Basin), which even goes beyond natural boundaries, many of the threats identified upstream are still there, and require trans-boundary intervention strategies and approaches to achieve the long-term objective (see Section C.5). Nonetheless, it is believed that in the part of the region directly addressed by the Project (that is to say, the Parana-Paraguay river corridor within Argentina's borders), the actions implemented and underway would be able to address potential environmental risks stemming from activities originating in this sector. Consequently, **Environmental Sustainability** is believed to be **Moderately Probable**.
138. Finally, it is worth pointing out that at the last PAC meeting, an activity schedule was agreed upon for 2015 which somehow shows the commitment of the institutions to provide continuity to the project's actions (See Annex 6).

Global Sustainability Rating

139. Since the risks of all four dimensions are considered moderate, the global sustainability rating of the project is **Moderately Probable**.

5. Global Environmental Impact and Benefits

140. Impact is one of the most important elements to be considered in evaluating projects but, often times, it is one of the most difficult to measure, above all in biodiversity conservation projects, because changes in living systems overall require longer periods of time. Therefore, changes resulting from project actions will probably not appear clearly within a project's period of implementation. In these cases, instead of measuring impact in itself, the final evaluation should assess whether the project has started up processes or created favourable conditions to encourage materialization of expected impacts in the future.
141. In the case under consideration, there is evidence that changes in regulations and policies, as well as environmental governance tools for the territory developed within the framework of the Project are already contributing to reduce anthropic pressure on the region's biodiversity. For instance, in Entre Rios, the existence of PIECAS-DP allowed the repeal of a law granting a 99-year concession of government lands in the Delta for intensive agricultural use. In Buenos Aires Province, a ban was placed on a real estate business aimed at turning several islands into a gated community, which would have serious impacts on the wetlands ecosystem. And Santa Fe province withdrew a claim for the 2008 fires it had filed with the Argentine Supreme Court of Justice against Entre Rios province. Furthermore, the project is spilling over benefits to the River Uruguay and its main tributaries, thanks to the reinforcement of technicians' capacities in the provinces participating in this GEF project.
142. The swap of nets carried out within the framework of the tripartite agreement signed by the project, Formosa Province, and the association of live bait fishermen, is a specific measure to reduce pressure on fisheries resources (the new nets will reduce mortality rates from 40% to 10%). Harmonization of regulations among provinces with regard to sports fishing permits, shared closed seasons, gauge size of nets, are measures contributing directly to reducing pressure on these resources.
143. In brief, project strategies seem to be leading to progress in a long-term solution. Nonetheless, as already explained, the specific impact on biodiversity will only be achieved in

the medium or long-run, provided the necessary sustainability and replication conditions for the processes triggered by the project are in place. In this regard, Annex 2 includes an illustration of a first approach to the *results chains*³⁰ for the project's main strategies, spelling out the necessary changes (intermediate outcomes) which should be achieved, as well as the assumptions and factors promoting change which should be present for project strategies to consolidate the impact on conservation. These Results Chains are expected to be useful for the project team to be able to define measurable indicators for each intermediate outcome, and thus provide a basis to measure the effectiveness of the designed strategies.

144. In brief, it could be asserted that the project is having a significant impact as regards a reduction in the pressure on globally important biodiversity.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

145. Based on the interviews and review of documents, it has been concluded that the project was effectively and efficiently implemented, with a great capacity to correct and adjust its course. The main conclusions are summarized below.
146. The Project strategy was appropriate to address the problems faced by the target region, as well as underlying causes and barriers already described. One of the design-related strengths was to seize the opportunity to harness over 10 years' work and commitment of the Argentine government and its provinces, to improve the sustainable use of fisheries resources and the conservation of freshwater biodiversity and wetlands of the Parana and Paraguay rivers. Many activities and programmes developed by the Project have been accepted and adopted by provincial governments and the national government, such as programmes for obtaining fisheries data, oversight and control systems at the provincial and national levels. All these built capacities are critical for managing fisheries resources.
147. The project helped to improve the quality of scientific information and the environmental baseline of the region, making them accessible and available to society. Information available on a greater number of fish species of commercial and sports interest in the area was significantly increased.
148. Despite the different political signs of the governments involved, progress was harmonically made, imposing the principle of common good, over and above that of specific interests to solve problems affecting all. The project team (PEU and enlarged PEU) had recognized technical capabilities and political independence for management, which led to building leadership that will last beyond the project's completion.
149. The project helped to improve the coordination of policies and actions among national, provincial and local governments, and between governmental actors and civil society. It also made a significant, decisive contribution to implementing the country commitments undertaken through international agreements signed by Argentina (Ramsar, MaB, CBD), and to improving coordination of international policies and programmes for managing wetlands and fisheries.

³⁰ The Results Chain is a tool to clarify the assumptions on how conservation strategies help reduce threats and preserve valuable biodiversity elements.

150. In terms of participation, the project made an important contribution to reinforcing the capacities of national and provincial institutions responsible for environmental, fisheries and protected area policies, as well as for raising awareness on the problem in this region, mobilizing resources, disseminating and exchanging information and establishing partnerships and cooperation bonds between actors. In this way, the project accomplished very significant empowerment at territorial level.
151. Despite the big size and complexity of the project's geography, distances were shortened by tapping electronic means and a positive attitude of the parties to travel, that participated in several meetings and workshops with a view to harnessing the greatest possible number of actors across all seven provinces.
152. It is worth pointing out that some outputs did not achieve their proposed goals, particularly as regards strengthening effectiveness in the management of protected areas, and those related to pilot experiences of market-based mechanisms. With regard to the management of protected areas, the indicator goals established in the PRODOC were too ambitious taking into account that the main project focus was not framed within SO1, of the GEF biodiversity focal area. Although the project has reinforced planning capabilities and several areas have completed the training process with an outlined MP, a specific strategy would be needed to achieve sustainability across the PA network in the region (including improvement as to the management effectiveness of existing areas, expansion of the PA network to cover representation vacuums, and improvement of financial sustainability) leading to an improvement in the biodiversity conservation status of the region.
153. As regards the pilot experiences on fisheries added-value as a strategy to relieve pressures on natural resources and/or increase the economic value of biodiversity for local communities to have positive incentives for their conservation and sustainable use, the evaluation team believes that, both the design and implementation of these experiences, lacked the necessary expertise, essentially in business-related matters. Although these experiences must be further reinforced, another positive aspect of the project's interventions is the strengthening of artisan fishermen's capacities in the region, including their capacity to partner and create networks, and thus contribute to a more effective, significant and informed participation in the region's biodiversity conservation efforts.
154. In brief, the project's strategies seem to be allowing progress to be made towards a long-term solution, placing fishery activities within a system of harmonized governance and planning of the whole basin and contributing to preventing, controlling and mitigating threats on the biodiversity of freshwater wetlands and fisheries resources. Nonetheless, as already explained in the document, specific impacts on biodiversity will only be achieved in the medium-long run provided the project has triggered the necessary process for sustainability and replication conditions.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

155. Hereafter are a series of recommendations aimed, on the one hand, at harnessing the project's achievements to continue moving towards the long-term objective and, on the other hand, at improving the design, monitoring and evaluation of future GEF projects.

Overall recommendations to progress towards the objectives and impacts

156. Taking into account that the area served by the project is part of a bigger region going beyond national boundaries (the River Plate basin), many sources of pressure on biodiversity overall and particularly on fisheries, originate upstream, in the upper basin³¹. Therefore, the suggestion is to move forward in the search for coordinated actions with the region's countries, to define trans-boundary intervention approaches and strategies. The specific suggestion is to coordinate with the River Plate Basin Inter-governmental Coordination Committee and its Framework Programme for the Sustainable Management of Water Resources in the River Plate Basin, with regard to the effects of Climate Change and Variability, the Joint Argentine-Paraguayan Committee of the Parana River, the Tri-national Committee for Developing the Pilcomayo River Basin, the Bi-national Committee for Managing the Lower Pilcomayo River Basin, Yacyretá Bi-national Agency, River Plate Administration Committee, Joint Technical Committee for the Maritime Front, River Uruguay Administration Committee, Bi-national Committee for Developing the Upper Basin of River Bermejo and Rio Grande River in Tarija, and the Salto Grande Joint Technical Committee, among others
157. The project's geographic area shows complex problems involving the physical-biological environment, as well as that regarding production, technology, social organization, and the economy, which can be characterized as a "complex system". As such, developing an initiative that promotes an overarching solution addressing the threats to the system does not seem possible using co-funding resources, or during GEF project execution terms (up to 4-6 years). Nonetheless, a strategy aimed at addressing key issues (such as those dealt with by the project) can be the beginning of a path leading to a long-term, comprehensive solution, through the implementation of a series of "back-to-back" projects covering broader periods, and with ensured funding for 15 years or more. In this case, particularly relevant is the sustainability of outcomes and impacts of each of the projects (links or phases), as well as their follow-up.
158. Using GEF funds, the project was able to move forward in removing barriers and reducing pressure on biodiversity, providing a sound basis which must be more thoroughly addressed and expanded to achieve the long-term objective. It is thus necessary, on the one hand, to have the commitment of partners/beneficiaries in the implementation of instruments and agreements defined within the framework of project execution. On the other hand, in order to achieve the expected impact on global biodiversity values, it would be necessary to have additional GEF support through a new project to allow the consolidation of the outcomes achieved, and expand them to the rest of the territory. Particularly, to delve deeper into matters of territorial governance, mainstreaming biodiversity into other productive systems across the region (livestock and agriculture, where there could be better conditions for demonstrating the use of

³¹ Among them, several dams interruption the cycles of migratory fish.

market instruments for conservation) and developing a specific strategy for consolidating a protected areas network, supplementing conservation and sustainable development actions within the productive matrix.

159. It is necessary to reach out to the local level (municipalities, villages) by developing Territorial Governance and environmental policy instruments, as well as by outlining and promoting conservation plans applicable to productive systems. The suggestion is to continue moving ahead with the drafting of good practices manuals for livestock, as well as in the quest for economic measures to promote these conservation practices, including the development of conservation incentives and the removal of *perverse* incentives. In this regard, the recommendation is to establish bonds with [Alianza del Pastizal](#) (Initiative for Natural Grazing Land Conservation in the Southern Cone of South America), which already has a programme in place called [Programa de Calidad “Carne del Pastizal”](#) (Grassland Beef Quality), developed within GEF Project “Grasslands and Savannas in the Southern Cone of South America: initiatives for their conservation in Argentina” co-executed by *Aves Argentinas* and WWF Argentina, with INTA and APN support.
160. Given the size of the vulnerable groups using and living on this freshwater corridor, and the consequences CC could have on the economic activities of the region, the suggestion is for Territorial Governance strategies to bear in mind ecosystem management as an effective and efficient adaptation and mitigation measure.
161. With regard to the replication of PIECAS, and in view of the suggestions of the CSO sector, the recommendation is for a case study to be carried out on the PIECAS experience as a forum of consensus-building, with lessons to be learnt and replicated.
162. The idea is for the national government to actively continue supporting the processes, expanding them to other environments and similar topics, but respecting the pertinent jurisdictions.
163. In order to follow up on the response to the recommendations set forth herein, it is suggested for UNDP and SAYDS to promote a high-level, “ex post” evaluation meeting in mid-2015, with the participation of PAC and the RTA.

Governance-related recommendations

164. Governance at landscape level is related to institutional arrangements, decision-making processes, policy instruments and underlying values within the system, through which several actors pursue their interests in the sustainable production of food, conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem-based services, and improvement of the quality of life of the population in multi-functional landscapes. Good landscape governance entails interweaving different visions which often have different actors within the same landscape, visions that, at times, are very different. The complexity implicit in landscape governance requires a system to support negotiations in which the different knowledge systems are understood by all those involved, and solutions are devised in a cooperative manner.
165. In this regard, in these four years, the project and its institutional partners achieved significant progress in building a new dialogue scenario which is regional, inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral, setting the foundations for developing a reinforced governance framework. On

this basis, efforts must be targeted to bringing in other key actors (public, private sector and civil society), and to coordinating proposals and strategies at the local, national and global levels (essentially with neighbouring countries with which the key ecosystems are shared).

166. In this regard, the suggestion is to harness the sound network of environmental and social CSO in the region, towards which the project contributed significantly to reinforce bonds of trust. Among them, the members of the [*Red Delta del Paraná*](#) (Parana Delta Network) and [*Alianza Sistema de Humedales Paraná Paraguay*](#) (Partnership for the Parana-Paraguay Wetlands System), with important capacities for organizing civil society, mobilizing resources and providing visibility to topics that many times are not visible from a government standpoint.
167. For methodological guidance to reinforce the governance systems of protected areas, we suggest consulting the publication: ***Gobernanza de Áreas Protegidas: De la comprensión a la acción*** (Protected Area Governance: from understanding to action), available at: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_spanish_governance_book.pdf

Recommendations with regard to experiences supplementing artisan fishing

168. Biodiversity-based companies have the potential of generating investments for the conservation and promotion of sustainable development through an equitable distribution of the benefits stemming from biodiversity. It is therefore advisable to continue reinforcing project experiences that have yet incipient outcomes, which need to be consolidated, such as the added value experiences, live bait fishing, process to consolidate sports fishing and tourism. It must be borne in mind that the lack of business experience can give rise to outputs and services that do not pass the market test, and thus cannot contribute to conservation objectives.
169. As stated by Bovarnick & Gupta (2003) working with rural communities, often times poor and isolated, to develop small, feasible businesses is particularly difficult, and to do so in such a way so as to ensure that the business development ensures a significant conservation impact is more difficult still. Conservation planners must recognize that the businesses operate within a national economy, often times global and many times unpredictable, and in a highly demanding and competitive market. Therefore, the design of this kind of experiences should reinforce the economic feasibility analysis, including market studies such as the comparison of different levels of potential income stemming from different activities related to the use of resources.
170. Consequently, the recommendation is to deepen the analysis and adjust the design of pilot experiences, taking into account lessons learnt worldwide and recommendations for addressing this topic in GEF Project design. See for example: [*“Lecciones aprendidas de la creación de empresas de biodiversidad para la conservación”*](#); [*“Local Business for Global Biodiversity Conservation. Improving the Design of Small Business Development Strategies in Biodiversity Projects”*](#); [*“Modelos de negocios: Una guía para lograr negocios que permitan generar ingresos para la conservación de cuencas y biodiversidad”*](#); [*“El tiempo de las empresas de biodiversidad: Una guía de desarrollo de empresas para organizaciones de conservación”*](#).
171. Taking into consideration the role played in the artisan fishing value chain by the sub-sector of activities following catch (gatherers, middlemen), as well as power inequalities which still exist in some cases, it will be essential to coordinate with this sector and its agents to be successful in

strategies for improving the sustainability (environmental, economic and social) of artisan fishing.

Recommendations with regard to capacity reinforcement for managing wetlands, fisheries and protected areas

172. As stated by several of the interviewees, the recommendation is to continue strengthening training and providing technical assistance and support to agencies in charge of managing wetlands and fisheries, at the provincial and municipal levels, to contribute to developing capacities of excellence at the technical and professional levels. This is essential for consolidating the fisheries and wetlands conservation strategies in the long-term, both within and outside the protected areas.
173. The effective and efficient management of protected areas requires, *inter alia*, sufficient human resources and appropriate training. The project made a significant effort to train actors across all seven provinces, essentially as regards planning. The recommendation is to harness these achievements by defining *a training strategy* in line with the needs of PAs in the region, including explicit strategies to systematize the lessons learnt and to exchange experiences and knowledge among technicians from different areas, and even with staff from neighbouring countries with which the basin is shared. In this regard, the suggestion is to continue with the Google discussion group created by GTRA, within the framework of the training programme, as a way to keep in place that sense of a network generated among the participants, and to analyze the possibility of establishing *a virtual learning platform*.
174. The training strategy should be based on the definition of the necessary *key competences* for an effective management of modern protected areas, to identify and prioritize the training needs as per the region's reality. We suggest consulting the IUCN publication [*Protected Area Staff Training. Guidelines for Planning and Management*](#) and [*Competence Standards for Protected Area Jobs in South East Asia*](#). Another suggestion is to establish South-South Cooperation relationships with other countries, institutions and UNDP-GEF projects in the region, which have already addressed these topics.
175. It is also necessary to have *a regulatory framework in support of the modern management of PAs*, according to the challenges that must be faced by these areas in the 21st century. Therefore, worldwide it is recommended for these countries to examine their protected areas legislation, with a view to updating it in light of the evolution of international law, recent scientific knowledge and the new management principles. Currently SAYDS – through GTAP – and APN are promoting within the framework of SIFAP, a Bill on the Minimum Standards for Protected Areas, which is being submitted to the project partner/beneficiary provinces for consultation. In support of this process, and in line with international standards, we recommend consulting the [*Directrices para la legislación relativa a áreas protegidas*](#) (Guidelines on protected area legislation). For those provinces that are updating their legislation on PA systems, we suggest taking into consideration the latest version of the [*“Directrices para la aplicación de las categorías de gestión de áreas protegidas”*](#) (Guidelines for applying protected area management categories) - (IUCN 2008). Taking into consideration the ecosystem-based approach adopted by the basin's actors, we also recommend consulting the publication on [*Aspectos legales de la conectividad en las estrategias de conservación*](#) (The legal aspects of

connectivity in conservation strategies), and the different case studies available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/EPLP-085-002.pdf>

176. In order to achieve financial sustainability of the protected areas network, it is essential to ensure budgetary allocations by the national and provincial governments, diminish fluctuations of these funds throughout time, and find ways to increase financial management efficiency, fully harness funds available and diversify available funding, including the potential of the areas themselves to raise funds. In this regard, we suggest, on the one hand, to design appropriate communication strategies with the political sector, so as to communicate environmental, economic and social benefits that well-managed PA can provide, and thus try and generate support and commitment in the allocation of financial resources. On the other hand, and taking into account that many times the responsibility for managing and financing PAs is shared among several institutions, it is important to clarify and harmonize the roles of each one and design appropriate funding strategies for PAs. In this regard, we suggest consulting [*Sostenibilidad Financiera para Áreas Protegidas en América Latina*](#), [*Sostenibilidad Financiera de las Áreas Protegidas de América Latina y el Caribe: Guía para la política de inversión*](#) (Financial sustainability of protected areas in Latin America and the Caribbean: Investment policy guidance) and [*Planificación financiera para sistemas nacionales de áreas protegidas: lineamientos y lecciones preliminares*](#) (Financial Planning for National Systems of Protected Areas: Guidelines and Early Lessons).
177. As regards the *evaluation of management effectiveness*, the project promoted the use of METT, a relatively quick and simple tool to be implemented by protected area staff *to monitor* management progress. The process of application of the datasheet generates a very rich forum for reflection, to identify the strengths and weaknesses related to the management of the areas, and guide the preparation of operational plans. Nonetheless, its limitations as a tool to measure the impact of management with regard to the area's conservation objectives must be taken into consideration. Indeed, METT intends to provide an overview of the first five elements of the PA management cycle (context, planning, inputs, processes and outputs) but it is not appropriate for an *impact assessment*. It must be borne in mind that although the management level is excellent, if biodiversity declines, the area's conservation objectives are not being met. Consequently, METT should not substitute other monitoring and evaluation tools/methods, which allow the evaluation of progress in improving the biodiversity conservation status in the areas. In view of the above, our recommendation is to continue using METT as a space for collective reflection, before preparation of the operational plans. In this regard, it is very useful to pay special attention to the columns "*Comments*" and "*Next steps*" (many times underestimated or overlooked), check with the information recorded in the previous evaluation, and identify potential lines of action for preparing the following POA. Furthermore, it is recommended that the institutions in charge of PA explore, select and/or design appropriate evaluation tools to measure the impact on conservation, for which it could be useful to consult the document [*Evaluating Effectiveness: A framework for assessing management effectiveness of protected areas*](#).
178. Taking into account that most wetland systems identified in the inventory (15) are poorly or insufficiently represented in the currently nominated protected areas, national and provincial governments as well as CSO should make efforts to define a planned and coordinated strategy

with the purpose of filling these vacuums and strategically protecting a certain area or kind of wetland in view of its location, vulnerability, rarity, or for the conservation of the goods and services they render. Furthermore, as proposed by the National Biological Diversity Strategy, one of the essential elements for improving the management of protected areas in the freshwater corridor is the coordination among different jurisdictions. See, for instance, [Identification and Gap Analysis of Key Biodiversity Areas. Targets for Comprehensive Protected Area Systems.](#)

179. Within the framework of several strategies to use the land and manage the natural resources, the protected areas have a privileged position as regards their potential to contribute to mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and to maintaining the global and local benefits of the ecosystems in the short and long-run. To improve the participation of PAs in national, provincial and regional strategies in response to climate change, please see [“Soluciones naturales. Áreas protegidas ayudando a la gente a enfrentar el cambio climático”](#) (Natural Solutions. Protected areas helping people cope with climate change).

Recommendations on communication and awareness-raising

180. Knowledge on floodplains, and the environmental goods and services provided by the “islands” ecosystem has been quite absent from the populations mind. It is thus necessary to continue investing in formal and informal environmental awareness-raising programmes together with the mass media, ministries of education, private educational institutions and rural extension organizations. Such sensitization activities must focus on generating an impact on conservation, for which the strategies should include indicators to measure changes in behaviour, new skills, as well as the specific support of relevant decision-makers to further conservation and sustainable use policies.

Recommendations with regard to promoting gender equality in conservation

181. Working from a gender equality perspective means recognizing unequal power relations between genders and undertaking a series of actions at all levels, making men and women participate in building equitable and participatory relationships in the processes of conservation and sustainable development. This recognition makes differences in roles visible as regards access to and control of natural resources and the distribution of costs and benefits; furthermore an unequal participation in decision-making can be identified, as well as the skills, interests and needs inherent in gender. In order to work on process building to promote gender equality in conservation and PA policies see, for instance: [En búsqueda del género perdido. Equidad en Áreas Protegidas](#) (In search of the lost gender: equity in protected areas); [Guía para la Transversalización de Género en las Estrategias Nacionales de Biodiversidad y Planes de Acción](#), (Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans) [blog sobre Género y Medio Ambiente de UICN](#) (IUCN blog on Gender and the Environment).

Recommendations with regard to future GEF projects

182. The recommendation is for the Argentine Government to harness available GEF resources in the Country Support Programme to prepare [ejercicios nacionales de formulación de la cartera de proyectos nacionales](#) – national exercises for formulating the national project portfolio (up to

USD 30,000), ensuring they take into account national priorities. And furthermore, request GEF support in carrying out national dialogues to reinforce coordination and partnerships among the country's different stakeholders. A diversity of ministries and public agencies participate in these dialogues, together with civil society organizations (CSO), communities, academic and research institutions, the private sector, as well as country donors and partners. These dialogues normally last two to three days and are organized by the GEF focal point, with the financial and technical support of the GEF Secretariat.

183. According to the evidence collected and the analysis of procedures for selecting consultants as established in the [Manual de Gestión de Proyectos UNDP Ejecutados por el Gobierno](#) – Management Manual for UNDP Government-Executed Projects (as well as the Project Operations Manual adopted within the framework of PAC), the evaluators believe there are certain weaknesses in the current recruitment and staff selection processes; particularly, the exclusiveness of the “search for and evaluation of a minimum of three applicants” (known as “short list”) for hiring national and international professionals and administrative staff. Although the short list selection process helps to minimize the complexity of the process, it is not the best method for maximizing effective competition and promoting the broadest participation of qualified candidates. In this regard, it would be advisable for the short list to be used exceptionally. Should this process be deemed necessary, the suggestion is to prepare a database, register or roster of consultants which should be updated periodically updated. In this regard, there are precedents of this kind of records at SAYDS, such as the Registry of Consultants in Environmental Impact Studies or the Registry of Experts and Consultants in Clean Production and Sustainable Consumption.
184. Although GEF requires the application of METT to monitor its projects on protected areas, it is necessary to bear in mind the limitations of the tool to carry out a detailed management impact assessment. Likewise, taking into consideration that the basic minimum ingredients for efficient PA management include appropriate funding, staff trained in management and M&E, and effective control and surveillance mechanisms, and that most areas lack these minimum requirements, it can take many years to improve the METT score (as a global indicator of management effectiveness), because of GEF-supported project interventions which generally cover a maximum period of 4 to 5 years. On the other hand, and as a result of the reinforcement of capacities by the projects, many times participants in METT assessments express a change in the way of viewing, interpreting and weighting the status of the protected area management (in general, they are more stringent than when the tool is applied for the first time). In this regard, when the starting point is characterized by relatively low levels of management effectiveness, it would not be advisable to exclusively use METT-based indicators to measure project achievements. At least they should be supplemented with other more sensitive, broken down indicators, capable of better recording progress of the different elements of the PA management cycle, catalyzed directly by the project (regarding context, planning, inputs, processes, outputs, etc.)
185. To reinforce the building of logical framework matrices using SMART indicators, we recommend that GEF promotes in the design phase of projects, the use of tools such as the *Conceptual Model*, the *Results Chains* and the *Theory of Change*. See for instance *Manual de Capacitación Conceptualización y Planificación de Proyectos y Programas de Conservación*

Basado en los Estándares Abiertos para la Práctica de la Conservación de la Alianza para las Medidas de Conservación (Manual for Training in Conceptualizing and Planning Conservation Projects and Programmes based on Conservation Measure Partnership's Open Standards) (<http://www.fosonline.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/FOS-CMP-Online-Training-Guide-Spanish-2011-11-02.pdf>). The Miradi software is suggested for preparing conceptual models and planning conservation projects, since it is a programme that allows conservation professionals to design, manage, monitor and learn from its projects to more efficiently meet conservation objectives (<https://miradi.org/>). The application of planning technologies for building the project's logical framework would help the Executing and Implementing Agencies to develop, implement and supervise the project effectively and efficiently, and would provide evaluators with a clear framework to assess project outcomes.

186. Furthermore, a cost-effective strategy for future projects would be to organize training courses and capacity-building strategies for project management teams in topics such as strategic planning, based on outcomes, planning and financial management, setting up of teams, drafting of terms of reference, as well as UNDP/GEF policies linked to the follow-up and evaluation systems. In this manner, a relatively small, focused training effort could help to optimize project performance.

Recommendations with a view to completing the project

187. Given the weaknesses of the project's M&E systems, particularly its indicators, it is difficult to quantify and codify the contribution of several of the project's achievements towards accomplishing its objective and effectively protecting the region's biodiversity. Therefore, recommendations made by the RTA in the last project PIR with regard to the importance of making all efforts in this final phase, and of allocating resources to rebuild the bond between outputs – outcomes – objective, as well as systematizing project experiences, consolidating lessons learnt, identifying the best practices, organizing all documents produced (including the many activity minutes which, as already mentioned, are the collective and institutional memory of the process). This process is essential for the full recognition the project deserves, not only in Argentina but within the GEF global portfolio.

VI. LESSONS LEARNT

- xiii. Respecting the independence of each jurisdiction, the inter-jurisdictional role in a Federal state is essential for achieving outcomes and for the sustainability of achievements once the project has ended.
- xiv. In multi-jurisdictional projects, a good practice to be replicated is the investment in staff for a relatively small central team and the reinforcement of public sector teams, in coordination with key local stakeholders. A project leaving installed capacities in provincial and national institutions promotes greater levels of ownership by key actors, thus providing for greater possibilities of sustainability.
- xv. A strong leadership and sense of commitment of the project's CG can catalyze positive changes beyond the project's scope.
- xvi. It is essential to promote the active participation of key stakeholders in all decision-making (from the design phase through to implementation), so as to increase the sense of ownership and minimize potential conflicts. Achieving a sense of ownership with

- regard to an idea, a notion and a unified strategy is fundamental vis-à-vis potential institutional changes, while also fostering sustainability beyond project duration.
- xvii. At the technical level, it is essential to involve decision-making political levels to ensure commitment for subsequent implementation of the actions defined by the technicians.
 - xviii. The design of complex projects, without clear indicators to measure performance, hinders implementation, follow-up and evaluation tasks. In order to achieve sound logical frameworks, it is essential to include M&E experts in the projects (as from the formulation stage), and train team members in results-oriented management and the design of SMART indicators, as a key tool for project follow-up and evaluation. For cost-effectiveness purposes, an M&E consultant could be shared among several projects.
 - xix. Along the same line, it is essential to have expertise in financial-administrative matters during project formulation so as to appropriately plan for periods covering four or more years.
 - xx. Promoting fora for interaction among governmental, academic, non-governmental, productive and community actors allows a more efficient identification of key problems and their subsequent solution.
 - xxi. It is very useful to have field training and practical demonstrations as regards policies, laws and regulations. This promotes the exchange of knowledge and experiences, while contributing to set up partnerships and cooperation bonds between actors.
 - xxii. During project implementation, it is important to ensure a timely re-direction of actions when implementation proves not feasible for different reasons, to thus optimize resources.
 - xxiii. Integrity of the ecosystems and their services must be maintained across broad landscapes to preserve environmental services which operate on a large scale, facilitate connectivity between natural and semi-natural ecosystems, and ensure the notion of ecosystem services is mainstreamed into policies, strategies, production practices and the decisions of land and resource users.
 - xxiv. Policies are a crucial governance element since they provide visions, strategies and plans for managing matters of common interest.

VII. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ANNEX 2. RESULTS CHAINS REGARDING PROJECT STRATEGIES

ANNEX 3. EVALUATION MATRIX AND CRITERIA

ANNEX 4. LIST OF REFERENCE MATERIAL REVIEWED

ANNEX 5. LIST OF PERSONS CONTACTED/INTERVIEWED

ANNEX 6. ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED FOR 2015

ANNEX 7. TERMS OF REFERENCE

ANNEX 1. SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Annex 1.1 Disbursements of the initial grant of USD 2,355,000 in GEF funds

Initial grant amount: USD 2,355,000				
Disbursement No.	Date	Disbursed (USD)	% disbursed	% cumulative disbursement
GEF UNDP direct payment	9/2010 to 6/2011	54,486	2.3%	2.3%
1	05/07/2011	101,029	4.3%	6.6%
2	25/08/2011	87,097	3.7%	10.3%
3	16/09/2010	72,954	3.1%	13.4%
GEF UNDP direct Payment	07/12/2011	88,378	3.8%	17.2%
4	27/10/2011	27,231	1.2%	18.3%
5	01/11/2011	100,369	4.3%	22.6%
6	06/12/2011	55,193	2.3%	24.9%
7	17/01/2012	24,489	1.0%	26.0%
8	14/02/2012	44,115	1.9%	27.8%
9	07/03/2012	31,366	1.3%	29.2%
10	25/04/2012	51,114	2.2%	31.3%
11	08/05/2012	79,658	3.4%	34.7%
12	23/05/2012	33,470	1.4%	36.1%
13	11/07/2012	77,251	3.3%	39.4%
14	02/08/2012	111,653	4.7%	44.2%
15	16/10/2012	84,657	3.6%	47.7%
16	09 /11/2012	101,407	4.3%	52.1%
UNDP direct payment	01/12/2012	72,839	3.1%	55.1%
17	16/01/2013	20,367	0.9%	56.0%
18	05/02/2013	26,125	1.1%	57.1%
19	10/03/2013	39,690	1.7%	58.8%
20	29/04/2013	28,894	1.2%	60.0%
21	02/05/2013	57,593	2.4%	62.5%
22	28/05/2013	58,382	2.5%	65.0%
23	27/06/2013	20,108	0.9%	65.8%
GEF UNDP direct payment	01/06/2013	15,526	0.7%	66.5%
24	11/07/2013	40,844	1.7%	68.2%
25	26/07/2013	18,619	0.8%	69.0%
26	30/07/2013	46,411	2.0%	71.0%
27	03/09/2013	53,505	2.3%	73.2%

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Initial grant amount: USD 2,355,000				
Disbursement No.	Date	Disbursed (USD)	% disbursed	% cumulative disbursement
28	10/10/2013	75,802	3,2%	76,5%
29	26/11/2013	94,754	4,0%	80,5%
30	11/12/2013	32,760	1,4%	81,9%
31	17/01/2014	8,284	0,4%	82,2%
32	31/01/2014	91,033	3,9%	86,1%
33	29/04/2014	6,933	0,3%	86,4%
34	07/05/2014	37,495	1,6%	88,0%
35	11/06/2014	29,725	1,3%	89,2%
36	24/06/2014	14,671	0,6%	89,9%
37	11/07/2014	29,558	1,3%	91,1%
38	01/08/2014	52,521	2,2%	93,3%
39	01/09/2014	50,434	2,1%	95,4
40	16/10/2014	41,981	1,8%	97,2
GEF UNDP direct payment	04/10 y 04/11/2014	4,500	0,2%	97,4
Total amount disbursed	14/11/2014	2,295,269	97,4%	
Balance to be disbursed		59,731	2,6%	

Annex 1.2 Financial delivery of project outcomes in US dollars as at 31 August 2014

OUTCOME/YEAR	2010 (June to Dec)	2011	2012	2013	2014(*)	Foreseen PRODOC (Rev. A+B- Feb. 2011)	Foreseen Revision C (Oct. 2011)	Foreseen Revision D (Dec. 2012)	Foreseen Revision E (April 2013)	Foreseen Revision F (Oct. 2013)	Foreseen Revision G (April 2014)	Foreseen Revision H (May 2014)	Total Delivered as at August 2014	Delivery Percentage (%)	Variation with regard to POA Rev. A to Rev. H
Outcome 1. Harmonized, ecosystem-based regulatory and policy framework for freshwater fishing in the Paraguay-Parana Rivers	30	229,031	283,578	145,238	41,579	626,608	646,608	694,070	702,070	702,070	699,456	699,456	697,359	100%	12%
Outcome 2. Capacities reinforced at key institutions for fisheries and wetlands management	12,065	98,178	179,446	141,636	107,095	612,349	592,349	550,327	542,327	542,327	538,420	538,420	490,188	91%	-12%
Outcome 3. Development of pilot projects for the optimization and sustainable use of fisheries resources to improve fisheries governance.	2,560	36,749	111,829	155,354	170,395	502,340	502,340	481,610	478,610	478,610	476,887	476,887	396,478	83%	-5%
Outcome 4. Pilot spatial and inter-sectoral ecosystem-based planning process in the Parana Delta, with a potential for replication throughout the Parana Delta	17,571	127,251	67,205	132,028	57,462	395,766	395,766	404,278	407,278	401,517	401,517	401,517	386,133	96%	1%
Project Management Unit	13,223	57,930	52,598	48,999	50,187	217,937	217,937	222,937	222,937	222,937	222,937	222,937	206,554	93%	2%
Exchange rate difference		1.778	5.761	8.244				1.778	1778	7539	15.783	15.783			
GRAND TOTAL	45,449	550,917	700,417	631,499	426,718	2,355,000	2,355,000	2,355,000	2,355,000	2,355,000	2,355,000	2,355,000	2,176,712	92%	

Annex 1.3 Project Funding by source, according to MOP and PRODOC (Rev. A) and reported co-financing

Funding Source	Outcomes	Committed amount (USD) according to						Reported co-financing (USD)				Reported-committed (USD)
		MOP			PRODOC			Salaries	Misc	Total	Comments	
		In cash	In kind	Total	In cash	In kind	Total					
GEF		2,355,000		2,355,000	2,355,000		2,355,000					
National Government*			1,227,972	1,227,972		1,227,972	1,227,972		1,352,180	1,352,180	20% NTFP	124,208
SAyDS*			1,136,894	1,136,894		1,136,894	1,136,894	1,227,268	532,263	1,759,530	Year 2014 missing	622,636
DPC*			1,184,369	1,184,369		1,184,369	1,184,369	130,909	819,268	950,177	Year 2014 missing	-234,192
Local Governments (Provinces)						310,680	310,680					-310,680
Buenos Aires	Outcomes 1 to 4	135,000	45,000	180,000			135,000	104,922	415,463	520,385	2011 & 2014 missing	385,385
	1	21,600	5,400									
	2	27,000	9,000									
	3	14,400	3,600									
	4	72,000	27,000									
Chaco	Outcomes 1 to 4	134,400	57,600	192,000			67,200	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	1	38,400	19,200									
	2	57,600	19,200									
	3	38,400	19,200									
	4	0	0									
Corrientes	Outcomes 1 to 4	115,200	28,800	144,000			115,200	185,776	84,887	270,663	Only 2013	155,463
	1	36,000	7,200									
	2	57,600	14,400									
	3	21,600	7,200									

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Funding Source	Outcomes	Committed amount (USD) according to						Reported co-financing (USD)				Reported-committed (USD)
		MOP			PRODOC							
	4	0	0									
Entre Ríos	Outcomes 1 to 4	234,000	78,000	312,000			234,000	298,409	152,839	451,248	2011, 2014 missing	217,248
	1	34,320	12,480									
	2	49,920	12,480									
	3	56,160	21,840									
	4	93,600	31,200								0	
Formosa	Outcomes 1 to 4	32,000	18,000	50,000		50,000	32,000	157,382	2,030	159,412	Only 2013	127,412
	1	9,000	6,000									
	2	20,000	10,000									
	3	3,000	2,000									
	4	0	0									
Misiones	Outcomes 1 to 4	49,920	28,080	78,000		78,000	49,920	51,556		51,556	Only 2013	1,636
	1	10,920	4,680									
	2	23,400	15,600									
	3	15,600	7,800									
	4	0	0									
Santa Fe	Outcomes 1 to 4	336,000	84,000	420,000			336,000	626,045	2,486,186	3,112,231	2011, 2014 missing	2,776,231
	1	106,000	25,000									
	2	80,000	20,000									
	3	55,000	10,000									
	4	95,000	29,000									
ONGF						217,726	217,726	25,131	16,101	41,233		-176,493
NGO*						117,089	117,089					-117,089
UNDP						100,000	100,000			-100,000		
TOTAL		3.391,520	3,888,715	7,280,235	2,355,000	4,422,730	7,619,050	2,807,398	5,861,219	7,668,617		3,571,767

Strengthening Fisheries Governance to Protect Freshwater and Wetland Biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers, Argentina –Final Evaluation

Funding Source	Outcomes	Committed amount (USD) according to		Reported co-financing (USD)	Reported-committed (USD)
		MOP	PRODOC		

*Parallel Co-funding

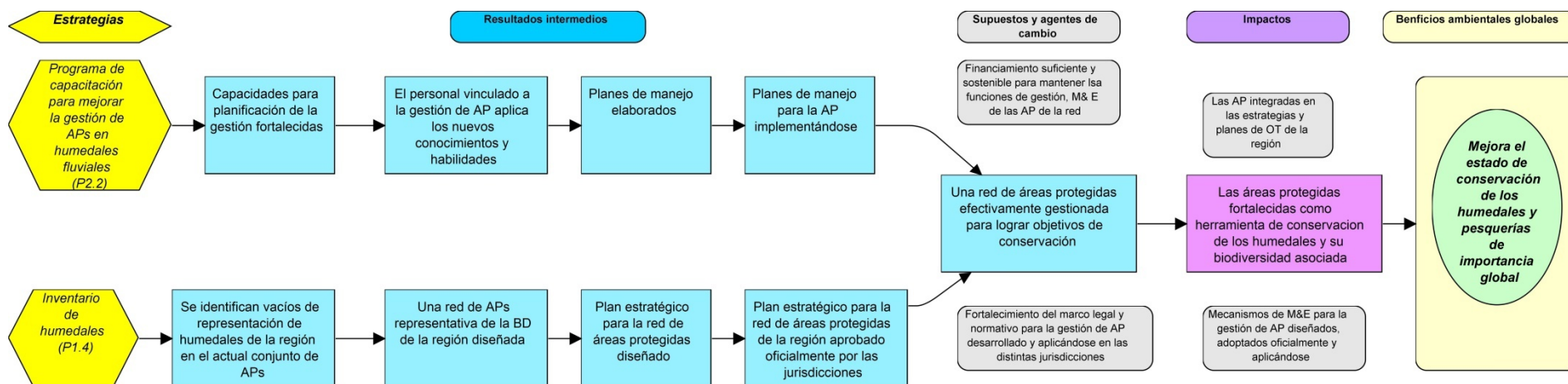
Strengthening Fisheries Governance to Protect Freshwater and Wetland Biodiversity along the
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Annex 1.4 Compliance status of Argentine State co-funding

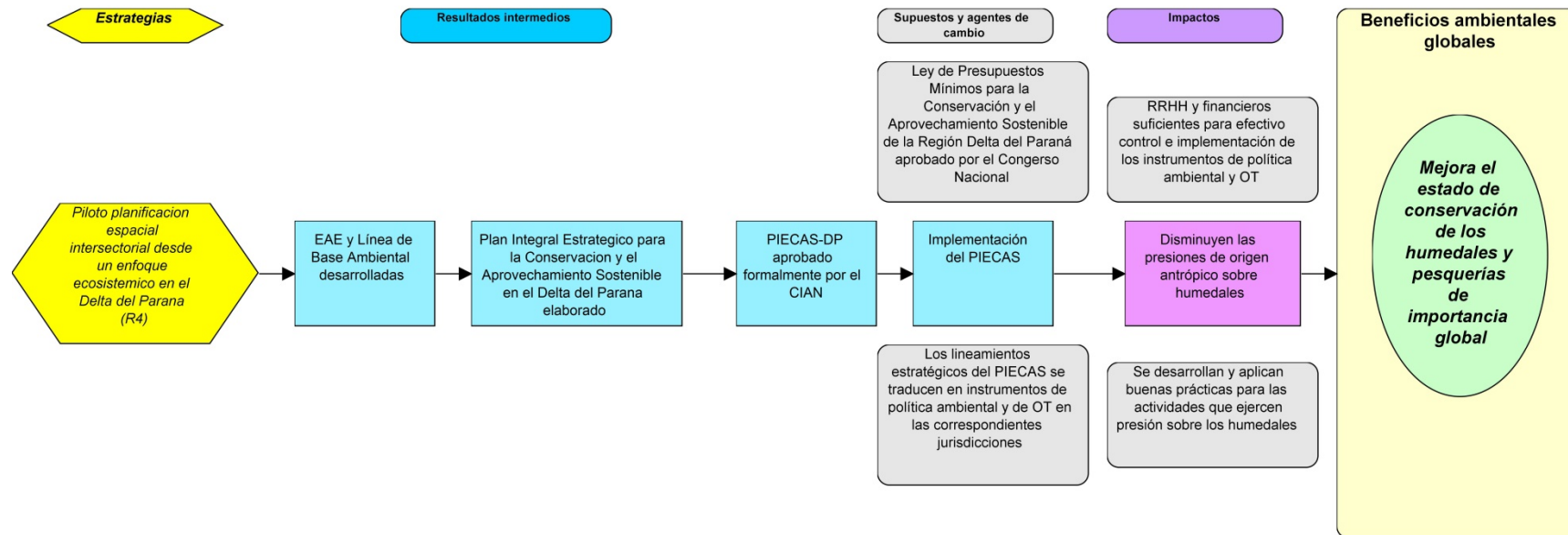
Institution	Committed amount (USD) PRODOC	Reported Co-funding (USD) As at 14/11/14
	Total	Total
National Government	1,227,972	7,088,981
SAyDS	1,136,894	2,054,624
DPC	1,184,369	1,189,332
Local Government (Provinces)	310,680	0
Buenos Aires	135,000	520,415
Chaco	67,200	141,512
Corrientes	115,200	711,312
Entre Ríos	234,000	606,177
Formosa	32,000	278,631
Misiones	49,920	51,556
Santa Fe	336,000	3,485,399
ONGF	217,726	537,136
NGO	117,089	0
UNDP	100,000	100,000
TOTAL	5,264,052	16,765,076

ANNEX 2. RESULTS CHAINS

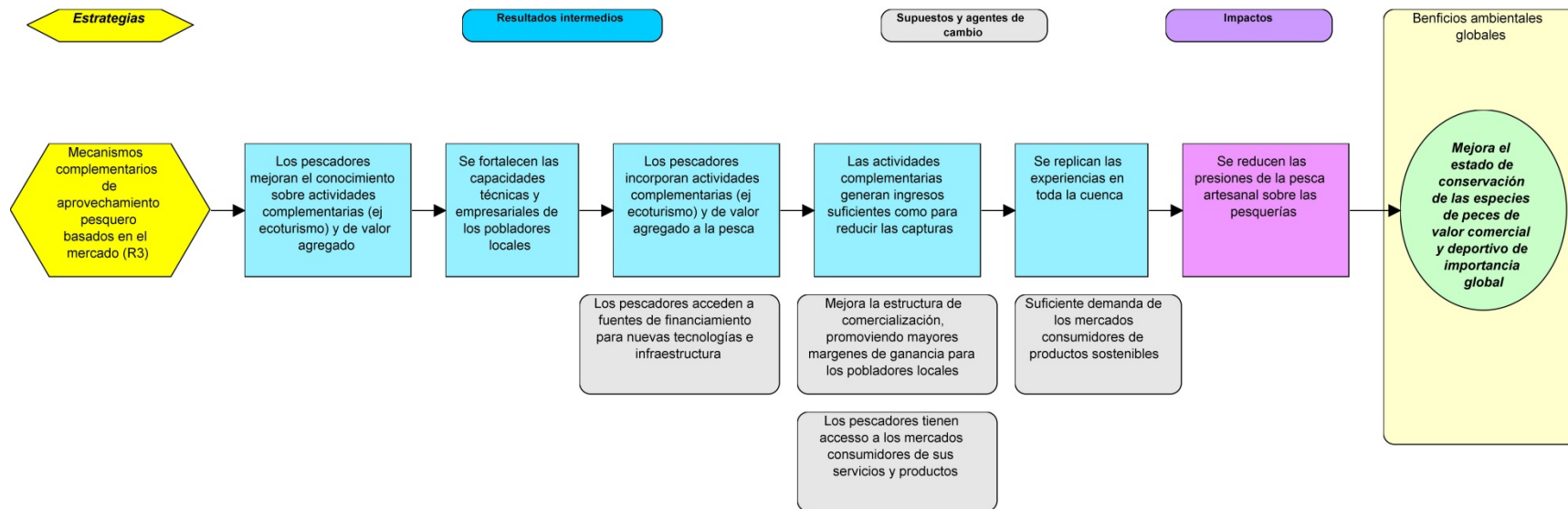
Results Chains to improve Strategy Effectiveness: Capacity reinforcement for Managing Protected Areas



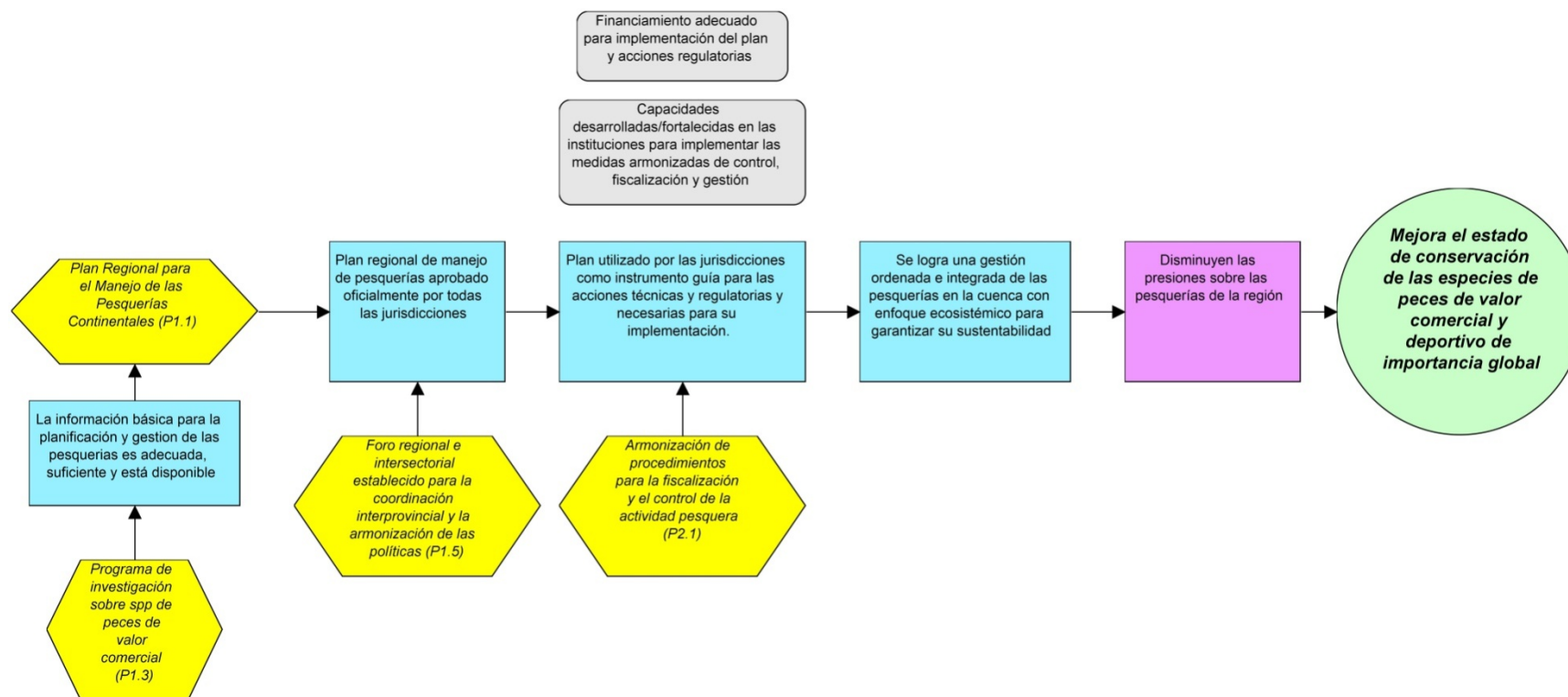
Results Chains to improve Strategy Effectiveness: Inter-sectoral, Spatial Planning



Results Chains to improve Strategy Effectiveness: Supplementary mechanisms for harnessing fisheries



Results Chain to improve Strategy Effectiveness: Harmonized regulatory and policy framework for freshwater fisheries



ANNEX 3. EVALUATION MATRIX AND CRITERIA FOR THE PROJECT “STRENGTHENING FISHERIES GOVERNANCE TO PROTECT FRESHWATER AND WETLAND BIODIVERSITY ALONG THE PARANA AND PARAGUAY RIVERS, IN ARGENTINA –FINAL EVALUATION” - GEF 4206 -UNDP ARG 10/003

Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data collection method
1. Evaluation criteria: Pertinence and Consistency (How does the project relate to the main objectives of the areas of interest of the CBD and GEF, and with the conservation and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project support the objectives of CBD, Ramsar and other relevant international conventions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of enforcement of CBD in the Argentine Republic, and project’s contribution Priorities and fields of work of the CBD mainstreamed in the project’s design. Priorities and fields of work of other conventions included in the project’s design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Documents CBD Website National policies and strategies to implement CBD, and other international Conventions relating to the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Analysis Interviews with Project Team, UNDP and other partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Project relevant for conservation and sustainable development objectives in the Argentine Republic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of consistency between the Project and national priorities, policies and strategies. Level of participation of government officials and other partners in the project design process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Documents National policy and strategy documents Key project partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Analysis Interviews with Project Team, UNDP and other partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Project relevant for the GEF focal area on biodiversity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of consistency between Project objectives and the strategic priorities of the GEF focal area on biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents GEF focal area strategies and documents for the period of approved project implementation and current ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis GEF website Interviews with UNDP and Project team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were local stakeholders and beneficiaries appropriately included in the project’s design and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of participation and inclusion of stakeholders in project design and implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with relevant stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project address the needs of foreseen beneficiaries at the local and regional levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of consistency between the foreseen project outcomes and the needs of key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal studies on the needs Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with relevant stakeholders

Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data collection method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project consistent in its design? Are there links between the foreseen outcomes (logical framework) and project design (in terms of project components, choice of partners, structure, scope, budget, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of consistency between foreseen project outcomes and the internal rationale of project design Degree of consistency between the project's design and implementation approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with relevant project partners and stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is Project duration enough to achieve the outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of consistency between foreseen project outcomes and the internal rationale of project design Degree of consistency between project design and the project implementation approach (%) of component delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with relevant project partners and stakeholders
2. Evaluation Criteria: Efficiency (Was the project efficiently implemented pursuant to international and national regulations and standards?)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the project logical framework and work plans and any other change in them used as management tools during project implementation? Were progress reports produced appropriately and in a timely manner? Was adaptation management used or needed to ensure an efficient use of resources? Were there discrepancies between the foreseen budgets and actual expenditure? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports provided in a timely and appropriate manner Quality of progress, follow-up and evaluation reports Incidence of change in project design and implementation approach (that is to say, restructuring) when it is necessary to improve project efficiency Degree of discrepancy between planned financial spending and actual expenditure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP Project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were project implementation arrangements efficient for achieving the outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjustment of implementation structure and coordination and communication mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team National, provincial and local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with the project team and other national, provincial and

Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data collection method
Did the implementation agency appropriately meet Project requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differences in the level of planned and available human resources Degree and quality of partnerships with Project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> partners Minutes, framework agreements, revisions 	local partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the level of co-funding (in cash and in kind)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of co-funding (in cash and in kind) with regard to expected level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Framework agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with project team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the Project leverage additional resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of resources leveraged compared to budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with project team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the project coordinate with other GEF projects or regional/international agencies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other pertinent projects in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with Project team References in GEF, others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could implementation have been more efficient (in terms of management structure and procedures, partnership agreements, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management measures requested and not channeled Recommendations on implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout the evaluation Project team Notes, memos UNDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis Interviews with project team
3. Evaluation criterion: Effectiveness (¿To what extent have the foreseen project outcomes and objectives been achieved or will be achieved in the future?)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent will Project objectives be achieved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of progress towards achieving project indicator goals, with regard to the goals at the current stage of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators within the framework of the project document outcomes and logical framework Project team Partners and beneficiaries Annual project reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with Project team Interviews with partners and beneficiaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key factors contributing to the project's success or low performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of documentation of and preparedness to face risks, assumptions and promoters of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with Project team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What risks and barriers are still present and can affect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence, evaluation of, and preparedness to face risks and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with project team and

Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data collection method
achievement of expected Project objectives and global environmental benefits?	assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners and beneficiaries 	key stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the probability for impact assumptions and promoters to materialize in achieving global environmental benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions implemented to address key assumptions and harness change promoters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with Project team y Key stakeholders
4. Evaluation Criterion: Outcomes (What are the current real outcomes and future long-term outcomes of the activities supported by the project?)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the planned outputs been achieved? Have they helped to achieve project outcomes and objectives? Were the expected outcomes achieved? Will the project have achieved its general objective of developing a reinforced governance framework across the provinces allowing an effective protection of freshwater fisheries and wetland biodiversity along the Parana and Paraguay Rivers in Argentina? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of progress with regard to outputs at the current stage of implementation Existence of logical links between outputs, outcomes and impacts (Results Chain) Change in the capacity of key stakeholders to harmonically manage wetlands and fisheries Changes in the application of practices for the sustainable use of natural resources Changes with regard to barriers identified at the time of project design Environmental indicators Degree of progress of the project based on the pertinent Theory of Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with project team and key stakeholders Field visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project contribute to the key elements of social and economic sustainability? Are there appropriate market incentives to warrant sustainability of economic and environmental benefits achieved throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of contributions to sustainable socio-economic changes, backing national development objectives and strategies, CBD objectives and those of other Conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project staff and partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis

Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data collection method
project implementation?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project achieve or help to achieve any outcome initially unforeseen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail of unforeseen outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with project team and key stakeholders
5. Evaluation Criterion: Sustainability (Are the conditions in place to uphold project-related outcomes and benefits?)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What obstacles are still to be overcome to achieve long-term objectives, or what measures must stakeholders take to achieve an ongoing impact and benefits for the global environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of barriers still to be overcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project staff and partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do project outcomes depend on ongoing financial support? What is the probability of obtaining the necessary financial resources to support outcomes once the GEF project has been completed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimate of the financial gap and requirements for keeping project benefits in place Evidence of the commitments of international partners, governments or other stakeholders to financially support the relevant sectors and activities after Project completion Potential to attract additional resources for keeping project benefits in place GEF Tools (METT, FSC, others) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project staff and partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have key stakeholders achieved an appropriate level of ownership of the outcomes so as to ensure their interest and commitment in project benefits continues throughout time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of initiative and commitment of key stakeholders in Project activities and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do key stakeholders (at the national, provincial and local levels), have or have they developed the necessary technical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of technical capabilities of relevant stakeholders with regard to the necessary level for supporting project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis

Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data collection method
skills to ensure the benefits generated by the Project are maintained throughout time?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the preservation of project outcomes depend on social and political factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of social-political risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the preservation of project outcomes depend on water governance and institutional factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of water governance and institutional risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there some kind of environmental risk which could negatively affect preservation of expected project impacts and global environmental benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of environmental risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Evaluation of threats Government documents or other external information published UNDP, project staff and partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which could be the potential measures that would contribute the most to the sustainability of the benefits achieved by the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal of measures in support of sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Beneficiaries UNDP, project staff and partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Document analysis

ANNEX 4. LIST OF REFERENCE MATERIAL REVIEWED

Project Documents– PRODOCs (Versions A to H)

By-laws and Minutes of the Project Advisory Committee (from the 1st to the 12th)

Project Operations Manual

Project Annual Operations Plans (POAs) (2010 – 2011 – 2013 – 2014)

Project Implementation Review (PIR) (2010-2011-2012-2013)

Reports to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011 – 2012- 2013)

Executive Summaries prepared periodically by the Project Executing Unit (2011 – 2012 – 2013 - 2014)

Final Report of the Mid-Term Evaluation (Consultant Carlos Pastor 2013)

Management Measures taken to address the Recommendations of the Mid-Term Review

Reports by consultants Beatriz Giacosa, Marcelo Morandi, Jorge Liotta

Minutes of the meetings of the Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission – CPCyA

Minutes of the High-Level Inter-jurisdictional PIECAS – DP Committee and of the Inter-Jurisdictional Coordination Group

Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta

Environmental Baseline of the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta

Strategic Environment Assessment of the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Parana Delta

Press articles and newsletters related to the Project and PIECAS on the SAYDS web site

General Environment Law (Law 25,675)

Towards Enhancing the Impacts of Environmental Projects - The ROTI Handbook

Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects

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ANNEX 5. LIST OF PERSONS CONTACTED/INTERVIEWED

NAME	INSTITUTION
Laura BELFER	Project Coordinator-General
María Paula IRURZUN	Expert in Project Procurement
Analía RIVERA	Project Assistant
Pablo E. MESA	National Director DNOAyCBD – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Fernando GARCÍA DE GARCÍA	Director DOAT -DNOAyCBD – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Guillermo LINGUA	Advisor DNOAyCBD – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Graciela PIEN	GTAP – SSPyPA – SAyDS –MaB Focal Point
Jorge FABRICANT	GTAP – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Laura MEYERHOFER	GTAP – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Luis POLOTTO	GTAP – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Antonio DE NICHILLO	Coordinator GTRA – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Francisco FIRPO LACOSTE	GTRA – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Sara SVERLIJ	GTRA – SSPyPA – SAyDS
Diana VEGA	SAyDS–GEF Operational Focal Point
Aurora JUAREZ	SSPyPA – SAyDS – SEA Coordinator
Gisela PERALTA	SSPyPA – SAyDS – Protected Area Professional
Mauricio REMES LENICOV	Under-Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture – MAGYP
Fernando G. FERNANDEZ	Argentine Coast Guard (PNA)
Edgardo CHURRUARÍN	Environmental Management Unit – SENASA
Alejandro PUGLISI	Directorate of International Cooperation Projects - MREC
Néstor SUCUNZA	National Parks Administration (APN)
Matías CARPINETO	APN – Mayor of the Río Pilcomayo National Park
Juan Pablo MANCHIOLA	Provincial Directorate for Biodiversity Preservation (OPDS) –Buenos Aires Province
Ana Susy GUTIERREZ	Fauna and Natural Protected Areas Directorate - SSRN - MP – Chaco Province
Santiago FAISAL	Natural Resources Director - MT – Corrientes Province

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NAME	INSTITUTION
Fernando RAFFO	Secretary of the Environment –Ministry of Production –Entre Ríos Province
Juan M. RODRIGUEZ PAZ	SMA – Ministry of Production - Entre Ríos Province
Claudio V. LEDESMA	Director-General of Natural Resources– Ministry of Production –Entre Ríos Province (President of PAC)
Raúl Omar QUINTANA	Minister of Production and the Environment – MPyA – Formosa Province
Franco DEL ROSSO	Biodiversity, PA and Climate Change Programme – Directorate for Natural Resources and Management - MPyA – Formosa Province
Julio Ramón SOUPET	Director, Natural Resources and Management - MPyA – Formosa Province
Luis REY	Advisor - MPyA – Formosa Province
Juan Manuel DIAZ	Under-Secretary of Ecology and Sustainable Development - – Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources –Misiones Province
Ricardo BIASATTI	Under-Secretary of Natural Resources – Environment Secretariat– Santa Fe Province
Roberto TION	Secretary of Water, Forest and Mining Systems - MP – Santa Fe Province
Sandra CABRAL	Social Worker - MP – Santa Fe Province
Cristian KOMOROVSKY	Social Worker- MP – Santa Fe Province
Walter SIONE	Director, <i>Centro Regional de Geomática</i> (Geospatial Technology Centre)
Pamela ZAMBONI	Technician at <i>Centro Regional de Geomática</i>
Beatriz GIACOSA	Project Consultant in Protected Areas – Fundación Oga
Martín IRIGOITIA	Environmental Association A Ñangarecò Nderejhé
Víctor Hugo RODRIGUEZ	Environmental Association A Ñangarecò Nderejhé
Diego RODRIGUEZ	Fundación M'Biguá
Alfredo BERDUC	<i>Parque Escolar Rural Enrique Berduc</i> (Rural School Park), Parque San Martín Natural Reserve
Elba STANCICH	<i>Taller Ecologista</i> (Ecology Workshop), Rosario
Daniel TOMASINI	Environment and Development Cluster Coordinator – UNDP Argentina
Matías MOTTET	Project Officer – UNDP Argentina
Helen NEGRET	RTA - RCLAC UNDP GEF

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ANNEX 6. ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED FOR 2015 (Source: 14th Meeting of the Project Advisory Committee, 19/11/2014)

TITLE	VENUE	DATE
1st CPCyA Meeting - 2015	MAGyP, CABA	18/03/15
1st Technical Sub-Committee Meeting – CPCyA - 2015	MAGyP, CABA	19/03/15
1st GCI –PIECAS Meeting, 2015r	SAyDS, CABA	19/03/15
Ramsar Sites Meeting – NEA (Northeast Argentina)	Resistencia, PCH	08/04/15
Regional SIFAP Meeting – NEA (Northeast Argentina)	Resistencia, PCH	09/04/15
Meeting on Live Bait Management Plan	Formosa, Corrientes, Resistencia	15 al 17/04/15
41st Meeting of the Coordination Committee on the Agreement for the Conservation and Development of Fish Resources along the Boundary Sections of the Parana and Paraguay Rivers	C.A.B.A.	05/15 <i>To be determined</i>
Meeting on Live Bait Management Plan	Formosa, Resistencia, Corrientes	14 al 16/04/15
Annual Meeting of Fishing Inspectors	Corrientes, PCO	21-22/05/15
National Conference on Protected Areas	San Juan	05/15
COP – Wetlands Convention – Ramsar	Punta del Este, ROU	1 al 9/06/15
2 nd GCI –PIECAS meeting, 2015	Victoria, Entre Ríos	18/06/15
2 nd Technical Sub-Committee Meeting – CPCyA - 2015	Resistencia, PCH	24/06/15
2 nd CPCyA meeting, 2015	Resistencia, PCH	25/06/15
Annual Meeting of the National Network of Biosphere Reserves	Formosa Province	07/15 <i>First fortnight</i>
3rd GCI –PIECAS Meeting, 2015	Rosario, PSF	12/08/15
National SIFAP Meeting	Rosario, PSF	13/08/15
Workshop/Meeting for Implementation of IberoMaB 2010-2020 Action Plan	Misiones Province	17 y 18/09/15
3rd Technical Sub-Committee Meeting – CPCyA - 2015	Santa Fe, PSF	23/09/15
3rd CPCyA Meeting 2015	Santa Fe, PSF	24/09/15
4th GCI –PIECAS Meeting, 2015	Buenos Aires Province	14/10/15
4th Technical Sub-Committee Meeting – CPCyA - 2015	MAGyP, CABA	25/11/15

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4th CPCyA Meeting 2015	MAGyP, CABA	26/11/15
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