TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT

GEF PROJECT 5383

"Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high conservation value forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco"

GEF	5383
PNUD ID	4829
Periodo evaluado	May 2015
Fechas de evaluación	April 2022
País	Argentina
Programa estratégico / área focal operativa del GEF	BD-2 Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors
Programa Operativo	Biodiversity
Agencia de ejecución y otros socios del proyecto	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible; MAyDS)
Otros socios involucrados	N/A
Equipo evaluador	 Ing. Diego Quishpe MSc.

May 2022

Terminal Evaluation Report – English versión

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Terminal Evaluation of the Project “Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high value conservation forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco” was made possible thanks to the support provided by the Project's Executing Unit, the facilities provided by UNDP and key stakeholders. Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this TE was carried out entirely in virtual format, covering an extensive number of interviews from the ecoregions of Chaco, Yungas and Paranaense Rainforest of the Republic of Argentina and whose valuable contributions are reflected in this report.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANMAT	National Administration of Medicines, Food and Medical Technology
NPA	National Parks Administration (for its acronym in English)
APR	Annual Project Review (for its acronym in English)
ASocIANA	Social Accompaniment of the Anglican Church in Northern Argentina
CDB	UN Convention on Biological Diversity (for its acronym in English)
PAC	Project Advisory Committee (for its acronym in English)
PSC	Project Steering Committee (for its acronym in English)
DIPROY	Directorate of National Implementation Projects, Foreign Ministry
TE	Terminal Evaluation (for its acronym in English)
ERC	Evaluation Resource Center (for its acronym in English)
ENPAB	National Strategy and Action Plan for the Conservation of Biodiversity
GEF	Global Environment Facility
INTA	National Institute of Agricultural Technology
O.I	Objective indicator
R.I.	Outcome indicator
ISEARL	Ecosystem Health Index Adjusted to Local Realities
MAGyP	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries
MAyDS	Ministry of Environment and Sustainabile Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation (for its acronym in English)
MREyC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship
FFN	Family Farm Nuclei (for its acronym in English) (FFN)
NEA	Northeast Argentina
NOA	Northwest Argentina
NIM	National Implementation Modality (for its acronym in English)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (for its acronym in English
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products (for its acronym in English)
PIMS	Project Information Management System GEF-PNUD
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
PPG	Project Preparation Grant

AWP	Annual Work Plan (AWP)
Prodoc	Project document
MTR	Mid Term Review (MTR)
SAyDS	Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)
SMPBN	Sustainable Management Plans for Native Forest
ToR	Terms of Reference
TOC	Theory of Change
CU	Commissioning Unit
UNaM	National University of Misiones
UNJu	National University of Jujuy
UNSa	National University of Salta

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Table 1. Project Information Table

PROJECT DETAILS		PROJECT MILESTONES	
Project Title	Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high value conservation forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco	**PIF Approval Date:**	20 June 2013
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	4829	**CEO Endorsement Date (FSP) / Approval date (MSP):**	22 January 2015
GEF Project ID:	5338	**ProDoc Signature Date:**	18 May 2015
UNDP Atlas Business Unit, Award ID, Project ID:	92877	**Date Project Manager hired:**	February 2020
Country/Countries:	Argentina	**Inception Workshop Date:**	23 June 2016
Region:	Latin America	**Mid-Term Review Completion Date:**	August 2019
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	**Terminal Evaluation Completion date:**	June 2022
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives:	BD-2 Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors	**Planned Operational Closure Date:**	18 May 2022
		Estimated Operational Closing Date:	15 June 2022
Trust Fund:	GEFTF		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	Government of the Republic of Argentina		
NGOs/CBOs	Province of Jujuy, Province of Misiones and Province of Salta		

involvement:	
Private sector involvement:	N/A
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	X= -312309.32 m Y= 7388234.69 m X= -313295.75 m Y= 7381180.07 m X= -342973.22 m Y= 7299240.36 m X= -356351.71 m Y= 7311091.01 m X= -106290.85 m Y= 7398723.30 m X= -144472.45 m Y= 7343293.08 m X= 744575.16 m Y= 7152911.23 m X= 782599.50 m Y= 7142795.05 m X= 792970.11 m Y= 7054615.01 m

Financial Information		
PDF/PPG	**at approval (US$M))**	**at PDF/PPG completion (US$M)**
GEF PDF/PPG grants for project preparation	150,000.00	150,000.00
Co-financing for project preparation	N/A	N/A
Project	**at CEO Endorsement (US$M)**	**at TE (US$M)**
[1] UNDP contribution:	500,000.00	N/A
[2] Government:	20,687,400.00	22,363,362
[3]] Other multi-/bi-laterals:	N/A	N/A
[4] Private Sector:	N/A	N/A
5] NGOs:	N/A	N/A
[6] Total co-financing [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5]:	21,187,400.00	22,363,362
[7] Total GEF funding:	4,620,000.00	4,620,000.00
[8] Total Project Funding [6 + 7]	25,807,400.00	26,983,632

1.1. Brief description of the Project

1. The principal objective of the Project, “Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high value conservation forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco” is “Strengthening the management framework for sustainable use of biodiversity to increase the protection of high conservation value forests in Argentina”; prioritizing implementation in sites with the greatest floral and faunal diversity in the country. To this end, the project's objective is underpinned by four impact/objective indicators (O.I.), which are detailed below:

- Objective indicator 1.- Area (ha) of forest with benefits for the sustainable use of biodiversity in SMPBN Areas – Level II;
- Objective indicator 2.- Changes in the presence (% occurrence) of key animal species at the site level (Atlantic Forest: 40,000 ha; Yungas 60,000 ha; Chaco: 100,000 ha);
- Objective indicator 3.- Percent of Sustainable Management Plans (SMP) that include NTFP and;
- Objective indicator 4.- Change in the ecosystem health index (ISEARL)* for the project landscapes.

2. In turn, the achievement of the principal objective depends on the implementation of three components with their respective outcome indicators (R.I.), which are described below:

Outcome	Outcome indicators (I.R)
Outcome 1. Sustainable use models of native forest biodiversity in areas of high conservation- value in 3 ecosystems	Percentage of coverage of forest in Category II in SMPNF Areas - Level II
Outcome 2. Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure economic and social sustainability of Sustainable Management of NTFPs of the native forest	Number of products incorporated into a "Bosques nativos (Native forests)" collective brand.
	Number of species incorporated into the "Bosques nativos (Native forests)" collective brand products
	Number of producers (including women producers) in three ecoregions with Social Tax certification to formally access the NTFP markets
	Change in the flow of financing (USD) for sustainable use initiatives measured by the increase in approved management plans that include the sustainable use of NTFPs
	Estimated proportion of average annual gross income for small producers (Family Farm Nuclei – FFN) (including women producers) as a result of the sale and sustainable use of the NTFPs
Outcome 3. Governance framework at national and provincial levels for sustainable management of NTFP of native forests landscapes .	Number of proposals submitted regarding types of new and/or reformed policies or regulations that promote and/or facilitate the sustainable use of biodiversity of NTFPs in 4.4 million ha.
	Change in the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the provincial governments to implement and monitor the sustainable use of biodiversity in landscapes as measured by the project's Capacity Scorecard: a) Capacity for participation; b) Capacity for the creation of, access to, and use of information and knowledge; c) Capacity for the development of strategies, policy, and legislation; d) Capacity for management and implementation; e) Capacity for monitoring and evaluation
	Number of persons/officials trained in the Enforcement of the Forest Law

3. The project architecture described in the Prodoc mapped out the achievement of Project goals within 4.5 years. The project was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as an agency empowered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with the National Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS) of Argentina as executing agency.

1.2. Evaluation rating

4. Below is a summary table with the main findings and ratings of the Terminal Evaluation:

Table 2. Brief summary of evaluation results.

1 Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Rating
M&E design at entry	5. Satisfactory (S)
M&E Plan Implementation	5. Satisfactory (S)
Overall Quality of M&E	5. Satisfactory (S)
2) Implementing Agency (IA) Implementation & Executing Agency (EA) Execution	**Rating**
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	5. Satisfactory (S)
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	5. Satisfactory (S)
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	5. Satisfactory (S)
3) Assessment of Outcomes	**Rating**
Relevance	6. Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Effectiveness	5. Satisfactory (S)
Efficiency	5. Satisfactory (S)
Overall Project Outcome Rating	5. Satisfactory (S)
4) Sustainability	**Rating**
Environmental sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Socio-political sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Institutional framework and governance sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Financial sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	4. Likely (L)

1.2.1. Evaluation Ratings

Table 3. TE Rating Scales

Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight, Execution, Relevance	Sustainability ratings:
6= Highly Satisfactory (HS): exceeds expectations and/or no shortcomings	**4=Likely (L):** Negligible risks to sustainability.
5 = Satisfactory (S): meets expectations and/or no or minor shortcomings	**3=Moderately Likely (ML):** Moderate risks to sustainability.

4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): more or less meets expectations and/or some shortcomings.	
3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): somewhat below expectations and/or significant shortcomings	**2=Moderately unlikely (MU):** Significant risks to sustainability.
2 = Unsatisfactory (U): substantially below expectations and/or major shortcomings	**1=Unlikely (U):** Severe risks to sustainability.
1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe shortcomings	

1.3. Summary of Findings and Conclusions

01 **Project design**

The USUBI project addressed an issue that sought to "revalue" traditional biodiversity knowledge and means of production. In its design USUBI has a clear, sequential and logical architecture between indicators, results and the central objective of the initiative. The project identifies a monitoring and evaluation plan, which was drawn up in line with project cycle guidelines. It is a clear and consistent plan that includes indicators, means of verification, personnel in charge, budget and time allocated to project activities. It highlights the use of corporate tools such as interim and final evaluations, which were coherent with the issue that USUBI proposes to address.

The monitoring system proposes the use of standard tools such as the Ecosystem Health Index Adjusted to Local Realities (SEARL) and local monitoring (support from the provinces) to estimate the positive or negative change from the interventions on sustainable use of biodiversity. All of these elements have quantifiable characteristics.

The M&E plan, in the Prodoc design, includes an initial report, periodic quarterly and annual execution reports, intermediate and final evaluations and audits.

In the implementation of the TE, a target indicator (I.O.4) linked to the index of ecosystem health (ISEARL) was identified, which is beyond the scope of the project, mainly due to the reliance on third party information. However, alternative/realistic means were sought to obtain the indicator and the difficulty was duly documented in the PIRs and Mid Term Review (MTR).

The application of SMART criteria to the project indicators is adequate (design), with the exception of the aforementioned indicator, which overstretches the project's scope and timeline.

USUBI promoted institutional strengthening (Outcome 3), work that was in tune with local and national needs while respecting existing livelihoods and customs as long-term intangible assets. As for the tangible components (Outcome 1 and 2), the latter strengthened the value chain of some forest products in the phases of production, associativity, formal registration, employment, infrastructure and conservation, with the next steps being to strengthen the market and tune in to the demand and supply for NTFPs. Outcomet 1, which is of a strategic nature, linked to forms of conservation, planning and ecosystem benefits (fauna, vegetation cover, traditional knowledge) has been adequately developed and USUBI provides tools that can be extrapolated to other initiatives or territories.

In this sense, the comment regarding Project design is Satisfactory, since the processes proposed promote sequence, consistency and clarity; they include the theory of change, a set of elements conceived from a quantitative (community monitoring, plans, products) and qualitative (associated benefits) perspective, which are adaptable to the country context.

02 Project Implementation

In terms of implementation, appropriate adaptive management strategies have been implemented, which have allowed satisfactorily addressing aspects such as monetary uncertainty, political rotation and the complexity of an innovative topic, mainly in the post MTR phase. At the level of strategic implementation and the use of corporate tools (PIR, PSC, MTR), these were solid and aligned with the individual goals and objectives of each component, including cross-cutting issues (communications, gender, territorial linkages); supervised by the governance mechanisms of the Steering Committee of the Project Management (MAyDS) and the UNDP Country Office.

In terms of effectiveness and efficiency, translated into the achievement of objectives and the use of resources, there is evidence of adequate progress of goals, activities and products post MTR (Satisfactory Effectiveness) and although there are limitations that the project has not been able to overcome, mainly of a financial nature and execution time (Satisfactory Efficiency), USUBI's performance is generally considered Satisfactory.

03 Outcomes

As of the TE, it is evident that the three project outcomes have made significant progress and are harmonized with the planning. The strategy implemented by the CU (Commissioning Unit), "rings of management" described in the TE, has allowed for adequately reaching compliance with the indicators and at the same time identifying in a timely manner the indicators that have design and scope problems, proposing alternative actions that lead to the ultimate goal of compliance with all indicators and the use of resources allocated for the purpose. A summary analysis of the outcomes is presented below:

Outcome1 "Sustainable use models of native forest implemented in areas of high biodiversity value in three ecoregions" shows relevant progress and a great opportunity for the use of tools and methodologies developed at the national level or in other regions. The indicator, “Percentage of forest cover in Category II in SMPNF areas for the period 2012-2021 was addressed through the support of the Native Forests National Monitoring Service (SNMBN) and a project consultancy, obtaining results of forest loss rates such as: Jujuy 0.20% (SNMBN) and 1% (consultancy); Atlantic Forest-Misiones: 0.23% (SNMBN) and 0.2% (consultancy); and Chaco 0.25% (SNMBN), 5% (consultancy). Thus, the goal has been achieved.

Outcome 2 "Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure the economic and social sustainability of sustainable management of NTFPs from native forests", has had a comprehensive approach in the value chain and the goals of: (1) Number of products incorporated into a "Native Forest" collective brand, which has been achieved and exceeded; (2) Number of species incorporated into "Native Forest" collective brand products, which has been achieved and exceeded; (3) Change in the flow of financing (USD) for sustainable use initiatives measured by the increase in approved management plans that include the sustainable use of NTFPs, has been achieved, and; (4) Estimated proportion of average annual gross income for small producers (Family Farm Nucleii - FFN) (including women producers) as a result of the sale and sustainable use of NTFPs, has been 90% achieved.

Outcome 3 "Governance framework and capacity building at the national and provincial levels for the sustainable management of NTFPs of native forests landscapes at the landscape scale" shows substantial progress. The legalization and publication of two resolutions enabling Inclusive Biodiversity Conservation projects and the Non-Timber Forest Products program in Argentina is noteworthy, as is the work on

important topics such as: the presentation of the preliminary draft of the "Law on Minimum Requirements for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Use of its Components" and progress has been made with a consultancy that will register the "Biodiversity Argentina" seal with the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI). This will make it possible to move forward with the implementation of the "Biodiversity Argentina" seal. Transit guides were prepared for NTFPs such as *Parkinsonia* gum, carob flour and tree tomatoes.

The indicator for capacity building of CSOs and provincial governments has also been achieved and surpassed. Likewise, the indicator referring to the number of people/authorities trained on the application of the Forest Law has been met. Therefore, the goals for the outcome have been achieved.

04 Tracking and monitoring

Corporate project management tools: These were defined in the design and established in the Prodoc (incepcion workshop, MTR, PIR, Audits, TE). The implementation was programmatic and although the MTR had an extended process, the assimilation of and response to the recommendations are very relevant for the achievement of results evidenced in the TE.

Technical tools: Several quantitative indicators were defined for the achievement of the project's objective, such as: Objective Indicator 1.- Area (ha) of forest with benefits from the sustainable use of biodiversity in SMPNF Areas - Level II; Objective Indicator 2.- Changes in the presence (% occurrence) of key animal species at site level (Atlantic Forest: 40,000 ha; Yungas 60,000 ha; Chaco: 100,000 ha); Objective Indicator 3. - Percentage of Sustainable Management Plans (SMP) that include NTFPs and; Objective Indicator 4. - Change in the index of ecosystem health (ISEARL)* for the project landscapes. The latter had to be adapted to realistic measurement conditions. Overall, all indicators were met; the value added to this is the adaptation and adoption of the technical tools and their availability to interested stakeholders.

General: The project has used and strengthened the criteria of adaptive, timely and adequate management. The changes and difficulties have been duly documented in the monitoring reports. The assimilation of recommendations and proposal for improvement post MTR lead to a level of technical and administrative execution at the date of the TE of 98%, satisfactory and consistent with the findings of the evaluation.

M&S Governance: Two levels of governance were defined in Prodoc; although the Project Steering Committee was active and played a strategic role during project implementation, there is a need to generate mechanisms for formality and follow-up of agreements and recommendations, as a good practice in future interventions, mainly in extensions, exit strategies, focused on a replicating role towards sustainability and new initiatives.

Monitoring by key stakeholders: the Government (MAyDS) has had a significant ownership of the project and of the topic in general. The project has adequately tuned the process (top-down) that requires the application of global regulations to provincial contexts, with capacity building being a valid instrument for the project's purpose. The Project has respected and promoted the construction spaces for each ecoregion, mainly as regards Component 2 on the form of production and creation of conditions for the value chain of products derived from biodiversity.

Implementing agency follow-up: There is evidence of a strategic, advisory and adaptive role that the agency has provided to the project. This role is aligned with national needs and the vision of the institutions on the subject. There have been country context situations (e.g. monetary uncertainty) that have affected the project, to which the agency has had to promote adaptive actions for the benefit of project execution, as is

the case of spotcheck, support for specialized equipment purchases, PIRs, follow-up to audit recommendations, political management and presence in the territory, among others.

05 **Relevance of the project**

The project was evaluated as **Highly Relevant** by all interviewees and is consistent with the Evaluator's comment based on the documentary information accessed. The reasons for this rating are described throughout the evaluation report and are generally based on:

Revaluation of traditional and organizational knowledge for the sustainable use of biodiversity products, which resulted in a high level of identity and ownership of the project's theme of sustainable use of resources.

Tuning the USUBI theme to local and national needs, as strategies to improve the quality of life and ecosystems, including a focus on monetary, organizational and environmental benefits for stakeholders.

Generation of national regulations derived from USUBI's work, such as the resolutions creating the national initiatives "Inclusive Biodiversity Conservation" and "Non Timber Forest Products Project Argentina".

Contribution of linkages with universities, NGOs and indigenous communities.

Processes and tools for technical training, feedback, incorporation of consultancies, which constitute tools for wider audiences for action.

Insertion of the criterion of environmental production, which translates into an increasing demand for new forms of ecosystem-friendly production as a means of diversifying livelihoods, conservation and improvement of quality of life.

Development of regulations and programs to promote the sustainable use of NTFPs, gender equity and promotion of indigenous communities, with a post-USUBI approach.

The interviewees (anonymity and confidentiality) mentioned that the topic existed spontaneously in the ecoregions, but without the presence of the USUBI project, the topic and the revaluation of practices and processes that constitute the intangible capital of the project would not have been consolidated. During the TE, the strength of the technical team stands out, who has placed the work of sustainable use of biodiversity on the radar of providers, processors and institutions. This is a result of an adequate articulation, empathy and capacity of the territorial units and the CU.

Contrast findings vs. interviews: Most of the stakeholders interviewed and under the criteria of anonymity and confidentiality, indicated that "although the knowledge of the sustainable use of biodiversity and forests was latent, USUBI generated the platform to place the topic in the political, productive and academic agendas, on the sustainable use of biodiversity and tangible benefits of conservation" which determines the rating issued by the evaluator.

1.4. Synthesis of the key lessons learned

Lesson learned
In the design of projects, quantitative indicators are usually used that are mainly based on information from national censuses and official provincial information (high dependence on information providers and third parties). In addition, given the federal

Outcome 1	context with jurisdictional, political and administrative autonomy, this type of indicators are complex to collect due to the dependence on other actors. Outcome indicators such as Percentage of Category II Forest Cover, or the SEARL ecosystem health status indicator, are cited.
	Good practice
	Application of SMART tools and evaluation of the relevance of indicators, not with the objective of eliminating them, but to seek alternative and realistic reporting methods that are consistent with the available and official information available to the territories (provinces). Furthermore, in the design, consider that national censuses have tended to be carried out every ten years due to limited technical and financial resources; therefore, the generation of evaluation channels, support from academia and documentation constitute good practice in project management.
	Lección Aprendida
	Non-timber forest product value chains are market-driven by supply and demand.
Outcome 2	
	Good practice
	Integral intervention in the development of the entire NTFP value chain, creating the enabling conditions, mainly in terms of formality (records) and associativity that post project, give stakeholders continuity and access to markets.
	Lección Aprendida
	. Capacity building processes in projects with a strong presence in the territory depend on the continuity of stakeholders and authorities under the particular political and economic contexts of the provinces.
Outcome 3	
	Good practice
	Institutional (national) leadership, delegation and effective territorial decentralization, with capable and trustworthy teams that are in tune with the reality of the territory and the project proposal. In addition, the presence and institutionality of stakeholders such as CU, UNDP, MAyDS and academia provide support and legitimacy to the interventions, under a trust-based approach.

1.5. Recommendations Summary

#	TE Recommendation	Entity Responsible	Time frame
A	Category 1: For the design of future projects		

#	TE Recommendation	Entity Responsible	Time frame
A.1	The project addressed the revaluation of traditional ways of utilizing forest and biodiversity products, which end up being innovative and complex topics, but have managed to permeate the political, productive and academic spheres as a recognition of their importance for the diversification of livelihoods, alternative income and ecosystem conservation. These efforts have resulted in the generation of national programs linked to the USUBI theme. In this sense, the promotion of institutionalism is recommended as an opportunity to operationalize the recently enacted resolutions on Inclusive Conservation and Non-Timber Forest Products, by first building alliances with the territory (governance) and then seeking markets, both for knowledge and goods, taking advantage of the productive recognition of the Republic of Argentina in the region, demonstrating with examples the possibility of producing in balance with conservation.	National Ministry of Environment and Sustainabile Development (MAyDS),	Medium term
A.2	It is recommended as good practice to apply SMART criteria to the objective and outcome indicators during the life of the project. This is important given the temporality in project approvals that may change/vary the original design context, with the aim of objectively documenting (SMART) the changes beyond the control of the stakeholders. These can also be complementary tools to the corporate ones (PIR, MTR) to reorient or strengthen the interventions.	UNDP	Medium term
A.3	The circumstances of project execution are particular to each country, therefore, the support and experience of the implementing agencies are valuable in terms of processes. The case of USUBI post Mid-Term Review demonstrates the effectiveness of corporate tools. Strategic dissemination of the tools among stakeholders such as MAyDS and other key stakeholders is recommended for ownership and creation of support for the interventions and the achievement of results. Establishing and formalizing spaces for dissemination/knowledge is a good practice that can be replicated in future initiatives.	UNDP	Medium term
B	Category 2: Monitoring Strategy		
B.1	The USUBI initiative resulted in the creation of two national programs with a bright outlooks for becoming significant: Inclusive Conservation and Non Timber Forest Products. It is recommended that the implementation of the programs be monitored, in the first instance on the number of replications and adoptions in the provinces, and in the medium term through the use of indicators that can be based on what was developed by	MAyDS	Long term

#	TE Recommendation	Entity Responsible	Time frame
	USUBI, linked to registered products, management plans, forest cover, whose methodological potential can be considered by the stakeholders. A third instance can be linked to monetary and non-monetary flows, around which the USUBI processes have developed expertise.		
C	Category 3. Exit strategy		
C.1	An exit strategy has been designed by the project and for owership of the work done, the integration of aspects regarding value and management with the native communities is recommended. Also as part of the exit strategy, having a systematization document can guide other initiatives that share the challenges and complexities that USUBI addressed and managed.	PIU	Short term
D	Category 4. Financial sustainability		
D.1	The USUBI project has made a significant contribution to the value chain of forest and biodiversity products. Being time-dependent, the market link will require more time and perseverance. It is recommended that the institutional stakeholders accompany the organizations so as not to weaken the remarkable work of various stakeholders, who often require institutional support and presence for the recognition of their work.	MAyDS, UNDP	Long term

2. INTRODUCTION

5. The Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Project “Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high conservation value forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco ecoregions" is carried out as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the GEF/UNDP portfolio, defined in the design of the Project Document (Prodoc). The independent TE process must be carried out prior to the final meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The objective of the TE is to allow demonstration of the progress of the project’s planned results, the impact achieved and the sustainability based on the results, as well as to issue recommendations to develop follow-up activities and future interventions in the area of sustainable use of biodiversity to increase the protection of forests of high conservation value in Argentina.

2.1. Evaluation Purpose

6. The Terminal Evaluation follows the guidelines of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and meets the required standards for large projects (FSP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as described in the Terms of Reference (TORs).

7. The purpose of the TE is to identify the results of the project "Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high conservation value forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco ecoregions", against the expectations established in the Logical Framework/Results Framework, promoting transparency and accountability through key evaluation criteria based on Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results, Sustainability, in addition to addressing the impact of the actions implemented by the project, and the cross-cutting aspects of gender equity, women's empowerment and work with indigenous communities.

8. Lessons that can improve the sustainability of the project benefits, decision making and recommendations for future initiatives are also extracted. It also seeks to analyze the performance of the stakeholders involved in the execution of the project: Commissioning Unit (CU), Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS), UNDP, stakeholders from the provinces of Misiones, Jujuy and Salta, as well as other key participants.

2.2. Evaluation Objectives

9. Evaluate the development of the project’s central objective and the progress of the implementation of the initiative "Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high conservation value forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco ecoregions"; as well as the relevant aspects (programmatic-financial), challenges and lessons learned that arose in the day to day experiences of the project. The process is based on the discernment and analysis of six complementary objectives of terminal evaluations detailed below:

1. Promoting accountability and transparency

2. Synthesize lessons that can help improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF-funded initiatives supported by UNDP in order to improve the sustainability of benefits and overall UNDP programming.

3. Evaluate and document project results, as well as the contribution of these results to the achievement of GEF's strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefits.

4. Measure the degree of convergence of the project with other priorities within the UNDP country program, including poverty alleviation, strengthening resilience to climate change impacts, disaster and vulnerability risks reduction, as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights.

5. Document impacts, lessons learned, improved practices and products generated in terms of project design, implementation and management, which may be of interest for replication to other projects in the country and in other parts of the world.

6. Make recommendations that can contribute to the closure of the project during the remaining time of the project, with the objective of improving the results and impacts.

2.3. Scope and Methodology of the Evaluation

10. The scope of this evaluation covers the period May 2015 to May 2022, which includes the recommendations and findings of the MTR, covering a period of 6 years of project implementation. The scope is focused on national actions, articulation and derivation at the ecoregional level regarding the sustainable use of biodiversity in forests of high conservation value in the Argentine territory. The TE was carried out on the basis of a document review and access to information through key stakeholders (interviews), in order to perform a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the impact indicators (objective) and outcome indicators (components); and in turn evaluate the level of compliance of these indicators with the SMART criteria.

11. The project was evaluated using a mixed methods approach, resulting from the combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, in a logical and temporal evaluation sequence (phases), following the structure defined in the GEF-TE 2020 Guide (Figure 1). This methodological proposal sought an active interaction between the evaluator, the CU, the UNDP Argentina office and the parties involved, in order to enrich the process and allow for timely feedback of important project findings.

12. During the evaluation process, a communicative-inclusive approach was used, characterized by the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided, contrasted with data from programmatic documents, reports, monitoring reports, publications and financial statements (CDR) available to the evaluator. The results of this methodology lead to conclusions about the context, progress of activities, lessons learned, constraints and their impact on the achievement of the project's central objective.

The conceptual phases of the methodology are:

- **Phase I:** Document analysis of information available in the project files of the following documents: a) Project Document - PRODOC; b) Mid Term Review; c) Terms of Reference (TORs), d) Management Reports and PIR; d) PSC Minutes; e) Results Framework Matrix; f) CDR Financial Reports; g) Partial/Final Consultancy Reports; h) Co-financing and Budget Data; i) Operational and Work Plans; j) Audit Reports; and k) Project Deliverables.

In this phase, key stakeholders and institutions were identified. Based on this, a portfolio of questions and an interview schedule were developed to collect information about the Project from the stakeholders, a process that was coordinated with the CU.

- **Phase II**. Because of the Covid19 pandemic and the mobility restrictions not yet standardized at the time of the TE, the field phase was reconstructed to obtain information through virtual mechanisms, for which the key group of interviewees was included in a list validated and coordinated with the CU. Subsequently, with this focus group, several semi-structured interviews were conducted with an average duration of 60 minutes with each stakeholder. The interviews had two facets: a) general questions on roles, knowledge and connection of the interviewee with the project; b) standard questions of the TE. However, openness was maintained to document relevant aspects for the formulation of ratings by the evaluator.

  The process allowed the collection of primary information on evaluation criteria, barriers, lessons learned, reflections and finally relevant findings for the evaluation and dimensioning of ratings.

- **Phase III.** Processing of the information gathered from the interviews, discussion of results (working meetings with the USUBI project team), systematization, conclusions and recommendations. The preliminary report consists of: methodological aspects, work schedule, agenda and inputs required for the TE. Following the interview phase, a draft report was presented containing the main findings of the TE, incorporating the improvements proposed by the stakeholder group and the feedback from the Project Steering Committee.

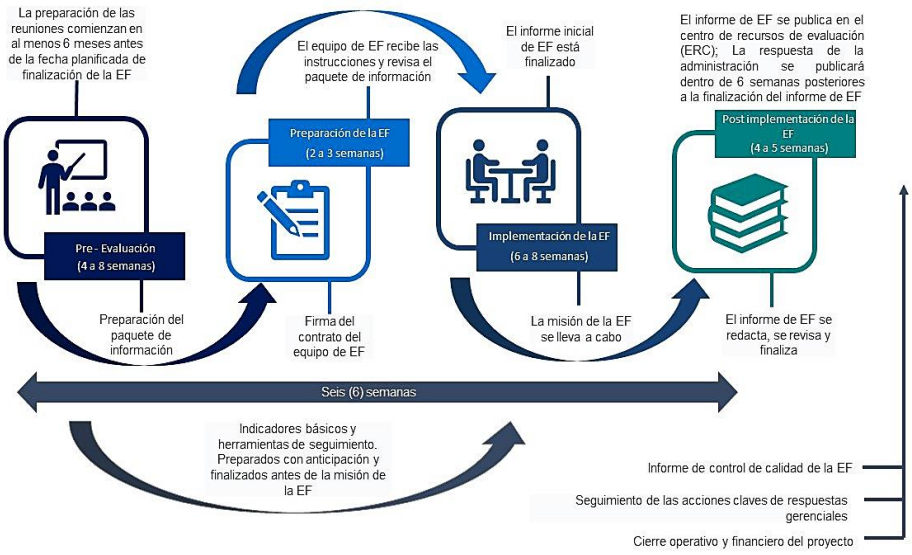

Figure 1. Concept of the Terminal Evaluation methodology for GEF projects. Source: Prepared by evaluator.

2.3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

13. Data collection was carried out based on the guidelines of the GEF-TE 2020 Guide, procedures focused on the collection of information on project impacts and results.

14. Conceptually, the modified Delphi method (Figure 2) was applied for stakeholder selection and the interview phase, in which the participants responded anonymously, confidentially and without interacting among themselves, to the evaluation questions, based on a prospective process, founded on respect for the communications and criteria of the stakeholders/interviewees. As a result of the interviews, experiential, narrative and documentary (in some cases) information was collected to support the criteria, ratings and findings described in this report.

Figure 2. Delphi method. Source: Prepared by evaluator.

2.3.2. Evaluation Report

15. Based on the Project Evaluation Guide (GEF-TE 2020), the evaluator examined and rated the quality of project implementation. The elements evaluated were: a) project relevance; b) key aspects of the project, including effectiveness and efficiency; c) project sustainability; d) results and their impact on the components described above; and e) project impact. In addition, cross-cutting issues such as gender, women's empowerment, work with indigenous communities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were addressed. The overall rating was based on the scales, guidelines and restrictions established in the GEF guidelines and detailed in Table 3 of this document.

16. The TE also used key analysis criteria oriented towards the sustainability of project results, lessons learned and barriers during the implementation process, as inputs for national stakeholders and future projects on the topic, through the concluding question "what could have been done better and what is considered the most significant aspect of USUBI positively extrapolable outside the project".

17. As a result of these processes, a report was generated that structurally consists of three levels: the first covers the general summary, purpose, scope, objectives of the evaluation work and the methodology used; the second level consists of chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 that present the results of the evaluation for each

stage of the project's life; and the last level covers chapter 6, which corresponds to the Annexes with information that supports the information presented in the report.

2.4. Ethics

18. This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles described in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations document, safeguarding the rights and confidentiality of interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing data collection. In addition, the process developed ensured the security of information collected before and after the assessment, as well as long-term protocols for anonymity and confidentiality of information sources, where appropriate. Likewise, the information, knowledge and data collected in the process of this final evaluation will only be used for the criteria and final evaluation, any other use will be under the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

The signed Code of Conduct form is attached as Annex 6.

2.5. Cross-cutting issues

19. During the information gathering phase, interviews and data analysis, evidence of how key cross-cutting issues such as SDGs, gender, women's empowerment and indigenous communities were addressed is analyzed, as well as the alignment of the project with national and local policies on gender equality and indigenous peoples. Specific measures, strategies and actions carried out during project implementation were identified and the main findings are detailed in section 4.3.8.

2.6. Limitations

20. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the limited mobility to the Republic of Argentina made it impossible to directly observe several aspects of the evaluation, mainly physical elements such as processing plants, plots, laboratories, equipment, samples, among others. In addition, the time availability of the different actors and the lack of good quality internet access in the territory limited communication, so alternative actions were sought such as direct calls, re-scheduling and group interviews.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1. Project start and duration

21. The project "Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in the production practices of small producers to protect biodiversity in high conservation value forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco ecoregions" corresponds to the Fifth (5th) GEF replenishment. With the approval of the FIP and PPG (2013), the Project formally began its implementation on 18 May 2015, with a planned duration of 4.5 years.

22. In August 2019 the MTR was conducted with its respective findings, lessons and recommendations. In November 2019, an extension of the project timeline to the end of 2021 was approved (due to the currency/exchange rate situation, political rotation and the global and country COVID-19 pandemic) and at this time has a completion date of 21 May 2022.

3.2. Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope

Environmental and socioeconomic

23. The importance of developing the sustainable use of biodiversity project lies in the fact that Argentina has a great variety of landscapes, climates and ecosystems with 18 ecoregions. The Misiones Atlantic Forest, Dry Chaco and Yungas ecoregions have the greatest floral and faunal diversity in the country and are also among the most diverse in the world. In addition, they offer the possibility of multiple use of the goods and services provided by biodiversity for conservation and promote the connectivity of existing native forest stands in productive landscapes with forest areas of high conservation value.

24. Protected areas cover 18.4% of the Atlantic Forest ecoregion, 6.4% of the Dry Chaco and 32.5% of the Yungas. In recent decades, efforts have been made to improve and diversify alternatives for multiple use of native forest stands based on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as a way to reduce deforestation pressure and diversify sources of income for the chronically poor and marginalized local population. The main threat to biodiversity in these ecoregions derives from the elimination, segmentation and degradation of forests as a result of land use change due to the advance of the agricultural frontier, mainly soybean monocultures, cattle ranching and forestry production.

25. In Argentina there are approximately 250,000 family farmers, 58% of which are located in the northern and northeastern regions of Argentina, covering 13 million hectares and coinciding with the forest ecosystems in the Yungas, Chaco and Atlantic Forest. Their economy has been based on the diversified production of subsistence crops using traditional practices and the harvesting of biodiversity-based products. Because of this, the long-term solution to avoid biodiversity loss in the ecoregions consists of strengthening their work through the sustainable management of NTFPs in combination with agroforestry systems in small properties located in areas of Category II native forests (conservation allowing sustainable use according to Law No. 26.331 on Environmental Protection of Native Forests), considering their potential to create connectivity between Category I forest habitats (strict conservation according to the same law).

Legal and institutional

26. The project is framed within the framework of national laws: General Environmental Law 25.675, which establishes the minimum budgets that must exist and be applied throughout the country and that are related to the sustainable and appropriate management of the environment, the conservation and protection of biodiversity and sustainable development; Law 26. 331 of Minimum Budgets for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests of 2007, which regulates the use of native forests, aimed at promoting sustainable forest management; and in the Ratification by the Argentine Republic of the International Agreement "Convention on Biological Diversity, enacted by Law 24.375 in 1994.

27. Currently, USUBI's work is in line with important laws for the sustainable use of biodiversity, in which the project had direct influence (1) such as:

- Inclusive Conservation Program: regulations that seek to implement a system of technical and financial support for indigenous and other communities that wish to conserve the natural ecosystems on their land and use wild resources in a sustainable manner. Its objectives are: a) To promote sustainable land use models on indigenous and other neighboring communities' lands to conserve natural ecosystems and ensure decent income and employment; b) To promote the sustainable use of biodiversity at the farm level with emphasis on traditional uses and the development of community tourism, strengthening its roots and development; and c) To build reciprocal capacities between local inhabitants and external technicians for the survey and monitoring of wild resources.
- Argentina's Non Timber Forest Products Program: Regulations promoted by National Resolution RESOL-2022-127-APN-MAD of April 2022, whose objective is to contribute to the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity through the valuation of NTFPs. To this end, its application is based on the following guidelines: a) Promote innovation, research, technology transfer and training actions that contribute to enhance the sustainable use of NTFPs and their adequate valuation and valorization; b) Promote the sustainable use of NTFPs, based on scientific and traditional knowledge applied throughout their value chain and achieve gender equality and empower women; c) Promote the incorporation, adaptation and improvement of available technologies that allow greater efficiency in the use of NTFPs, prioritizing the conservation of biodiversity; d) Promote the restoration of forest ecosystems with native species used for NTFP use, which contribute to the strategy of adaptation to climate change and; e) Strengthen the national and provincial governance framework for the sustainable management of native forest NTFPs at the landscape scale.

28. The USUBI initiative is also framed within the land-use planning regulations of the provinces of Salta, Jujuy and Misiones where the ecoregions are located.

Sanitary

29. Regarding the pandemic due to COVID-19, by April 2021, Argentina was one of the most affected countries in Latin America, with more than 14 consecutive months of blockade, whose cases of infection exceeded 4 million and deaths in more than 100,000 cases with a high trend in both indicators. Although enormous efforts have been made to keep the situation under control, partial progress has been made and by the year 2022 a positive impact has been achieved and the nation's mobility has been facilitated.

30. The preventive and mandatory social isolation, imposed by the Presidential Decree in the period 2020-2021, had a strong impact on the execution of the project, as it did not allow travel within the provincial and interprovincial territory. Added to that, a series of hygiene and safety measures that must be applied

1 https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/260418/20220405?busqueda=2

in the work areas, several people in the team were infected with the virus and some local communities were isolated.

31. This has had an impact on the level of execution of face-to-face activities at the territorial level. For this reason, the project adapted its intervention strategy to link more directly with beneficiaries and communities in situ through the signing of specific work agreements.

3.3. Problems that the project sought to address

32. In order to promote the conservation of biodiversity and mitigate its loss in high value forests in three ecoregions (Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco) of Argentina, the project proposed the development of activities for the sustainable use of biodiversity, seeking to consolidate the basis for the implementation of good practices, improve technical and socioeconomic capacities, for the generation of NTFP markets, and thus contribute to the reduction of threats to biodiversity in the prioritized ecoregions, as are detailed below:

- Elimination, segmentation and degradation of habitats and ecosystem functions.
- Unsustainable extraction and overexploitation
- Pollution.
- Overgrazing.
- Invasion of exotic species.
- Infrastructure construction
- Climate change.

33. However, problems/barriers were identified, which the project sought to address, and are described in three key areas:

Barrier #1: Technical and operational barriers to incorporating sustainable use of biodiversity in native forest management plans.

Barrier #2: Market and financial barriers to implementing commercial operations.

Barrier #3: Weak institutional capacities and regulatory framework for sustainable use of biodiversity at the landscape level.

3.4. Immediate and development objectives of the project

34.In response to the aforementioned barriers, the general objective of the project is to strengthen the management framework for the sustainable use of biodiversity, mainly the collection and use of non-timber forest products in combination with agroforestry systems in Category II native forest areas (medium conservation according to the Forest Law). In order to achieve the fulfillment of the objective, 4 Objective Indicators (I.O.) were proposed. The strategy for this objective includes three (3) components, which are: a) sustainable management of native forest in areas of high biodiversity value; b) development of markets and financial mechanisms for the sustainability of native forest NTFP use; and c) strengthening of the national and provincial governance framework for the sustainable management of native forest NTFPs at the landscape scale.

35. The described components (3) would be achieved through nine (9) Outcome Indicators (R.I.) and their respective targets. The set of programmatic elements in total results in 12 indicators that drive project implementation (four Objective Indicators (O.I.) and eight Outcome Indicators (R.I.).

3.5. Description of the project's Theory of Change

36. The evaluator reconstructed a theory of change (ToC), considering the initial state of "conventional use" of forest products in which the Argentine Republic does not have processes for rescue, valorization, added value, market, value chains and regulations that promote the rational use of biodiversity, against which the state at the end of the Project, called "sustainable use with equitable benefits" is compared, using the different impact indicators evaluating their collective trajectories for a causal effect, the control point being Percentage of forest cover in Category II in SMPNF areas and the species/products obtained in a sustainable manner.

37. This reconstruction was done using the GEF Evaluation Office approach for impact probability identification based on the concepts of Theory of Change, causal/impact pathways and risk analysis towards biodiversity from new interventions. For this, the evaluator identified the final project goals (3 objective indicators and risks -the O.I.4 indicator is not considered-), reviewed the results framework (outcome indicators, activities, outputs and assumptions) and with this basis the impact pathways were designed in a sequential manner. This allows us to understand the logic of each causal relationship and especially to identify complementary assumptions.

38. The described reconstruction determined that the overall objective of the project "Strengthening the management framework for the sustainable use of biodiversity to increase the protection of high conservation value forests in Argentina" has an umbrella role that is fed by the fulfillment of three (3) components and their respective nine (9) outcome indicators (R.I.), so the analysis of the TE and the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (ToC) has an inter-component approach considering that the project architecture is based on a bottom-up scheme (R.I bottom - O.I. up), therefore if R.I.1 is fulfilled, the project moves on to the fulfillment of Component 1, and achieving this, continues to the objective indicator O.I.1, (logical concatenation of R.I1, Component1, O.I.1, Figure 3).

39. It is important to note that this design architecture is flexible, as there is no interference between components and there is complementarity, for example: the models of sustainable use of native forest (Component 1) do not interfere with the development of capacities and governance at national and provincial level (Component 3) and on the contrary these are complemented by the development of markets and financing mechanisms that ensure the economic and social sustainability of sustainable management of NTFPs from native forest (Component 2). Therefore, in the USUBI project, the approach is integral since the prioritization/work on indicators separately would not achieve the desired impact (objective) and the application of the ToC.

40. Therefore, in the conceptual analysis (Figure 3), information was collected regarding inputs (purple boxes) and planned activities (orange boxes) to generate products (light blue boxes), thereby achieving outcomes, which are measurable through indicators (R.I), (green boxes). This sequential process follows the impact chain in its respective component, through the assumptions the components are integrated, for example, the development of R.I.1 Component 1 on: Percentage of Forest cover, when executed integrates cross-cutting activities between components such as replicable production models, producers

with capacities to implement MPs, community organization, sustainable use at landscape scale; and strongly supports (assumption) the development of R.I.2, R.I.3, I.R.4 and R.I.9 of the other components.

41. The results are distributed between direct results, which are the changes generated as a direct effect of the appropriate use of the products, and final results, which are secondary results whose achievement requires other results (the direct results). The impact is defined as a noticeable change in the initial state "conventional use" (Components 1 and 3) and the progress of the process "sustainable use with equitable benefits" (Component 2).

$$Impact = Outcomes \cdot \left(\frac{Risks}{Sustainability}\right) \quad (1)$$

Where:

Impact: Change from initial state

Outcomes: Achievements attained

Risks: Interaction of external threats with project proposals.

Sustainability: Actions promoted by the project for the sustainable use of forests

42. Formula 1 describes the ToC in a quantitative way, basing its analysis on the project's impact, considering that the level of activities and products are within the project's influence (sustainability), the higher this is numerically and the more solid the actions implemented, the greater the effect in reducing risks. As indicated, the results can be achieved and have the flexibility that between components and results there is independence, therefore in the equation the results and their achievement (numerical) are independent, therefore its stability depends on the relationship (Ri/S), set of factors that determine the impact of the project.

43. In the case of the USUBI Project, the general objective "Strengthening the management framework for the sustainable use of biodiversity to increase the protection of high conservation value forests in Argentina" is aligned with local production needs, improving the quality of life of populations and linking biodiversity conservation as the ultimate goal of the initiative.

44. By analyzing the logical steps of the ToC, the evaluator located the assumptions already included in the results framework and identified other assumptions. These are organized by sequential step in Table 4, where they are analyzed to determine whether the assumption is within the control of the institutions implementing or executing the project or out of their control. This analysis of the ToC, and especially its assumptions, helps to direct the evaluation and detail the evaluation questions within each criterion.

Table 4. Logic chain and assumptions included in the Theory of Change.

Logical step in ToC	Assumptions (=not controllable); Outcomes (+ = under the control of the institutions and CU)

	Risks (* = in the medium term potentially beyond the control of the institutions goes from + to *).
Input to Activities	• Sustainable use of biodiversity in different local and national regulatory frameworks (-) • Resources: time, financial and human resources available for project management (+) • Efficient and transparent use of available resources (+) • Institutional interest (*) • Raising cofinancing funds (*) • Incremental demand from civil society for biodiversity use (-) • Conventional agricultural vocation of the Republic of Argentina (-) • Area (ha) of forest with benefits from sustainable use of biodiversity (+)
Outcome 1: Activities to Outputs	• Percentage of Category II Forest cover in SMPNF - Level II (+). • Reduction of annual deforestation rates corresponding to each province (-) • Changes in presence/absence (% occurrence) of key fauna species (-) • Smallholders with technical information and capacity to develop and implement management plans for the sustainable use of biodiversity (+)
Outcome 2: Activities to Products	• Sustainability of the 33 NTFP registries in the Biodiversidad Argentina brand (*) • Livelihood diversification with sustainable use of biodiversity (*) • Production practices are accepted and sustained (-) • Records of average annual gross income for small producers as a result of the sale and sustainable use of NTFPs (*) • Markets and value chains that are sustainable over time (*)
Outcome 3: Activities to Products	• Number of proposals submitted regarding new and/or reformed policies or regulations that promote and/or facilitate the sustainable use of biodiversity (+) • Cross-cutting training on Forestry Law, Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (+) • Adoption of knowledge on sustainable use of biodiversity (-)
Outcome 1: Outputs to Direct Results	• Category II Forest Cover in SMPNF Areas (+) • Relative abundance of key wildlife species (*) • Adoption of new criteria for sustainable use of Biodiversity in Management Plans with conservation categories (*)
Outcome 2: Outputs to Direct Results	• Markets include bioprospecting, value chains, business plans, registers developed and available (*) • Formal organizations with a business character and consolidated conservation criteria (+) • Change in economic flow from biodiversity and use of forest products (-)
Outcome 3: Outputs to Direct Results	• Inclusive Conservation Program approved and consolidated for execution (-) • Non Timber Forest Products Program approved and consolidated for execution (-) • New provincial proposals for NTFP (-)
Direct results to final results	• Commitment from MAyDS to give continuity to management, financing, replication and technical personnel (+) • Favorable local governance conditions (-) • Markets that are sustained and operate with products with criteria of conservation and sustainable use of the forest (-)

Final results to impacts	• Area with conservation categories that include Sustainable use of Biodiversity. • NTFP conservation and management plans • Tangible monetary benefits for conservation and NTFP household income • National laws and provincial scaling of NTFPs • Sustainable and fair markets for NTFPs over time

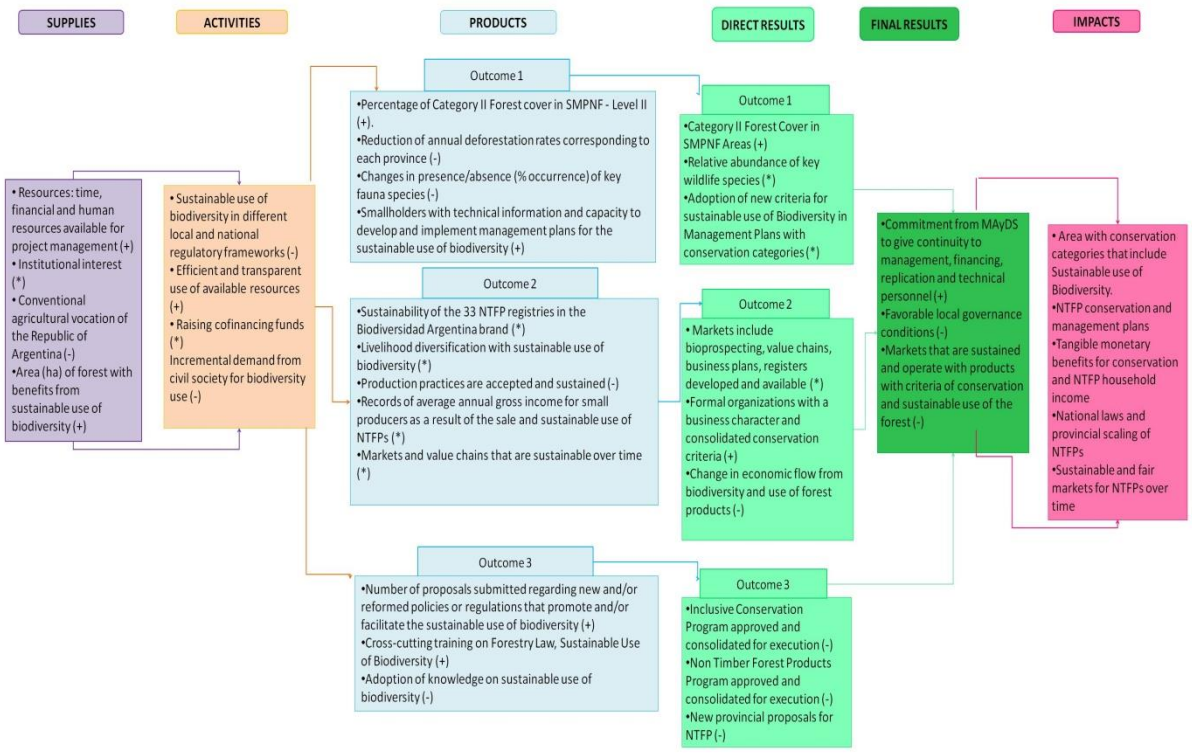

Figure 3. Conceptual analysis of the ToC. Source: Prepared by evaluator.

3.6. Expected results

45. **Outcome 1:** Sustainable use models of native forest biodiversity in areas of high conservation- value in 3 ecosystems

- Output 1.1: Technical basis for sustainable use of biodiversity in areas with restricted use by the Forest Law (Category II - yellow areas) of selected landscapes in 3 ecoregions and 3 provinces.
- Output 1.2: Replicable production models of sustainable use at the farm level validated for various biodiversity-based products.
- Output 1.3: Small producers with technical information and capacities to develop and implement management plans for the sustainable use of biodiversity in accordance with the Forestry Law.

46. **Outcome 2:** Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure economic and social sustainability of Sustainable Management of NTFPs of the native forest

- Output 2.1: Optimized value chains for 7 biodiversity-based product lines (food, alternative medicinal products, handicrafts, dyes, wildlife [non-food], *Parkinsonia* gum [multiple uses] and ornamentals).

- Output 2.2: Increased access to financing for commercialization and technical assistance for biodiversity products.
- Output 2.3: Improved community organization for production and commercialization of biodiversity-based products and marketing.

47. **Outcome 3:** Governance framework and capacity building at the national and provincial levels for sustainable management of native forest NTFPs at the landscape scale.

- Output 3.1: Regulatory framework and safeguards optimize sustainable use management for biodiversity conservation at the landscape level.
- Output 3.2: Improved supervision of Forest Law management plans at the farm level for monitoring biodiversity-based products in pilot provinces.
- Output 3.3: Implementation of sustainable use management at the landscape level.

3.7. Total resources

48. According to the Prodoc, the total resources allocated to the project correspond to US$4,620,000.00 from the GEF (grant) and US$23,687,400.00 from counterparts. The updated amount of the project at the Terminal Evaluation is: US$ 28,307,400.00 as shown in the following table.

Table 5. Resources allocated to the project. Source: Prodoc

Source	Type	Total, in US$
GEF	Cash	4,620,000
	Cofinancing	23,687,400
Province of Jujuy	Cash	550,000
Province of Misiones	Cash	400,000
Province of Misiones	In-kind	150,000
Province of Salta	Cash	75,000
Province of Salta	In-kind	475,000
SAyDS	Cash	19,337,400
SAyDS	In-kind	200,000
Ministry of Agriculture	Cash	2,000,000
PNUD	Cash	500,000
	TOTAL, US$	**28,307,400**

3.8. Key partners involved in the project

Partners	Roles and Responsibility
International	
GEF	Institution financing the project.
UNDP	Agency in charge of the implementation and administrative and financial coordination of the project.
National Government of Argentina	
Ministry of Environment and	Institution where the project will be physically located, and will mainly be

Sustainable Development	responsible for coordination with other entities and management during the different phases of project implementation.
Ministry of Social Development	Will provide management tools to group NTFPs under a "collective brand" as a way to develop and promote trade in these products.
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries	Will coordinate policies for the development of sustainable use of biodiversity with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, through the Undersecretariat of Family Agriculture and the UCAR (Unit for Rural Change). It will support the exchange, dissemination and generation of information at the institutional and producer levels.
Culture Ministry	Will provide management and logistics tools through MATRA (Mercado Argentino de Artesanía Tradicional) to achieve better access to markets for the distribution and sale of NTFPs.
INTA (National Institute of Agricultural Technology)	Will provide specific knowledge on the forms of productions used, alternative production techniques, sustainable productive developments and technical knowledge for production in general. It will benefit from access to the territory and the information that the project may generate on specific alternative production options.
SENASA (National Animal Health and Food Quality Service)	Will provide the capabilities to manage the inclusion of edible NTFPs in the Argentine Food Code, as a sanitary agency for the supervision and certification of animal and plant products and by-products, as well as their inputs.
SEPyME (Secretariat of Small and Medium Enterprises and Entrepreneurs)	Will provide possible lines of financing for small local producers through the "Program for Strengthening Local Production Systems".
APN (National Parks Administration)	Will provide the logistics of access to the protected areas under its administration and, in addition, knowledge of the terrain and the needs of the most isolated populations.
INAI (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs)	Will coordinate actions by promoting meetings with the different indigenous communities with which it works throughout the territory. It will also provide information on various topics such as the hierarchical structure of the communities, ancestral modes of production, the role of women within the community, among others.
National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI)	Will support the development of NTFP value chains that can be commercialized.
CENOC (National Center for Community Organizations)	Will provide knowledge on the management of community organizations for the development of capacities to participate in the benefits granted to CSOs by the Argentine government.
Academic institutions	
UNSa (National University of Salta), UNAM (National University of Misiones), UNJu (National University of Jujuy) and UBA (University of Buenos Aires)	These institutions will: provide technical and scientific knowledge to generate the necessary protocols to establish NTFP extraction limits; allow the dissemination of the knowledge generated through forums, talks and different presentations; and coordinate with the academic extension areas of each university.
Gobiernos provinciales	
Salta (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Production); Misiones (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources); Jujuy (Environmental Management Secretariat)	Will provide political support for the implementation of the GEF project, and for the incorporation of its results and management plans/projects for the sustainable use of NTFPs into provincial legislation. They will also provide the necessary tools to manage and coordinate activities with the different provincial agencies involved throughout its implementation.
Municipal governments	

Salta (Rivadavia Banda Norte), Jujuy (Valle Grande), Misiones (San Pedro)	Will participate in the implementation of the initiative at the local level, including awareness-raising and dissemination of the benefits and infrastructure improvements. In addition, they will provide support to the families of small producers and strengthen their self-management skills and their ability to organize cooperatives.
Yungas	
APOVA (Association of Original Producers of Valle de Altura)	Will organize the different local producers as coordinator of their initiatives. The benefit for the organization will lie in the resources, both material and symbolic, that the project intends to provide to local producers.
Artisan Weavers Cooperative of Santa Ana	Will provide key information to the project from a gender perspective, on the modes and conditions of production in the area. It will also further disseminate its products through the implementation and promotion of an exclusive brand (Collective Brand) and will obtain a higher long-term return on raw materials based on sustainable production over time.
Las Queñoas Community Tourism Association (ATuCoQue)	It will convey its principles on the sustainable use of biodiversity in native forests by raising visitors' awareness of the importance of environmentally and socially/culturally responsible tourism. It will benefit from communication channels and links with local producers to publicize their form of production as a community tourism service to be offered to visitors.
Misiones Atlantic Forest	
San Pedro Ranger School	Will contribute to the dissemination of the benefits of sustainable production and, above all, to the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the production practices promoted. Its benefits will be related to the proliferation of connectivity corridors between the different protected areas.
Argentine Native Forests Foundation for Biodiversity	Will focus on the dissemination of activities among local communities given its territorial proximity; and will also advise the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development on the conservation status of native forests.
Agricultural Cooperative for Small Producers of San Jorge Ltda.	Will participate in training workshops to strengthen productive capacities and, above all, NTFP commercialization.
Dry Chaco	
Comunidades indígenas: Wichí Lewetes Kalehí - Los Baldes- Wichí Lewetes - La Cortada y Wichí Lewetes Letsenkwat - Pozo El Chañar	Will participate in training workshops on the sustainable use of NTFPs, and in the introduction of their products into commercialization chains. They will benefit from accessing markets to sell their products and improving their raw material extraction and product manufacturing techniques.
Union and Progress Civil Association - Place La Entrada	Will provide knowledge on traditional production practices and on the conditions of production and commercialization of livestock products. It will benefit from the knowledge generated, especially on alternatives, complementarity and diversification of monolithic production.
Peasant Union - Paraje Los Baldes	Will provide knowledge on traditional production practices and on the conditions of production and marketing of livestock products. It will benefit from the knowledge generated, especially on alternatives, complementarity and diversification of monolithic production.
Lhaka Honhat Association, Holy Victoria East	Will participate in training workshops on the sustainable use of NTFPs and the introduction of their products into marketing chains. They will benefit from accessing markets to sell their products and improving their raw material extraction and product manufacturing techniques.
Tepeyac Association	Will generate fluid communication with the indigenous communities given its knowledge of the area and the problems present in the area, and will also allow for better logistics of the project's activities, based on the

	material resources it has. It will benefit from the material and human resources that the project can provide to improve existing capacities.
Social Accompaniment of the Anglican Church of Northern Argentina (ASocIANA)	Will provide technical knowledge on the production and trade of *Parkinsonia* gum. It will benefit from a wider dissemination of its products through the implementation and promotion of an exclusive brand (Collective Brand) and a higher long-term yield of raw material based on sustainable production over time.
Technical Education School No. 5127 "Justo Pastor Santa Cruz"	Will focus on the dissemination of sustainable NTFP management techniques among the youth of the local community. It will benefit in terms of its intervention capacity and the generation of projects in line with the objectives it aims to disseminate.

(Source: CEO, Prodoc)

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Project Design/Formulation

49. The project is based on a situational analysis of the environmental, socioeconomic and political context, as well as the identification of threats, barriers, key partners and baseline, with respect to biodiversity, sustainability and communities settled in high conservation value forests. With these elements the project (Prodoc) was designed, which is closely aligned with the PIF/PPG, documents that establish as a central objective the strengthening of management frameworks for the sustainable use of biodiversity in order to contribute to the protection of high conservation value forests in Argentina, in a sequential logic, articulated and coherent with local and national needs.

50. At the geographic level, the sites prioritized for project implementation are the Atlantic Forest, Chaco and Yungas ecoregions, which have the greatest floristic and faunal diversity in the country according to the different levels of intervention selected: Level I (provincial scale); Level II (landscape scale or SMPNF areas); and Level III (farm scale).

51. The structure of the project components closely resembles the PIF that was approved by the GEF. Its strategy includes three interrelated components to contribute to the conservation of globally important biodiversity:

- Outcome 1. Sustainable management of native forest in areas of high biodiversity value.
- Outcome 2. Development of markets and financial mechanisms for the sustainable use of non-timber forest products from native forests.
- Outcome 3. Strengthening the national and provincial governance framework for the sustainable management of native forest NTFPs at the landscape scale.

52. For each component, the project seeks to obtain different products and results that will lead to the fulfillment of the proposed objectives and that will be maintained in the medium term once the project is completed. Thus, there are three binding subsystems corresponding to each of the components, where the impact indicators of Component 1 are linked to the direct evaluation in the field of the biodiversity

benefits measured in hectares; Component 2, with market indicators (quantity and quality evolution, formal inclusion of producers in the tax system, number of producers with productive diversification resulting from biodiversity); and Component 3, with regulations developed and civil organizations created.

53. These actions that justify the need to implement the project were proposed in alignment with national policies, in their environmental and social inclusion aspects. The Project was also developed in accordance with the objectives of biodiversity integration in productive sectors (BD-2) and the priorities of the Government of Argentina for poverty reduction and social inclusion, and is highly complementary to the portfolio of existing GEF projects in the country.

4.1.1. Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators

54. During the implementation of the project and following the procedures for UNDP/GEF project cycles, in August 2019 the MTR was executed, covering the period 2015-2019, which issued the following conclusions as a result of the logical framework and results analysis:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Conclusions in the MRT</th><th>Summary of Follow-up in the TE</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The objective and the results proposed in the Prodoc are relevant, feasible and in line with the proposed intervention strategy. The proposed strategy for approaching the activities and planning proposes a logical way of approaching the work and is adequate to the proposed goals.</td><td>Agrees with the comment on consistency in project design with the limitations detected in Objective Indicator O.I.4, which, although beyond the scope of the project, alternative actions have been taken to monitor compliance.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The project did not specifically address gender and indigenous population issues, which are cross-cutting issues. Since they are not incorporated in the results framework, there are no specific indicators to measure these aspects in an objective manner.</td><td>Gender issues, women's empowerment and work with indigenous communities have been addressed in a cross-cutting manner, and affirmative actions, products and recommendations have been generated in this area, which are described in section 4.3.8.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">There is the perception that the fulfillment of some aspects could be ambitious and unlikely to be achieved depending on, on the one hand, the implementation time and, on the other hand, the available resources.</td><td>During the period under evaluation, the CU implemented the theory of minimums for project management, an appropriate strategy that allowed addressing all indicators (13) and additional actions to complement management, as described in detail in section 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 of the logical framework.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Some outcome indicators may require corrective action, thus it is recommended that they be reviewed to either define their measurement more clearly or, if possible, eliminate them from monitoring. Such is the case for the following indicators that proved to be difficult for the team to measure in</td><td>“Changes in ecosystem health" (Objective): because it is a long-term impact indicator.</td><td>The indicator requires the collection of at least 13 variables of the national and local context, which are not available and are beyond the scope of the project. However, the management of the CU has been proactive and alternative/realistic mechanisms have been constructed for the fulfillment of the indicator (theory of minimums).</td></tr>
<tr><td>"Percentage of management plans" (Objective): by relying on guidelines not yet approved.</td><td>Fulfilled through a process of adaptive management and adequate theory of minimums.</td></tr>
<tr><td>“Percentage of forest cover" (Outcome 1): because it is a long-term impact indicator</td><td>A vegetation cover estimation consultancy has been carried out using methodologies that can be scaled to the reality of the intervention areas; details are described</td></tr>
</table>

order to evaluate the achievement of the project's objective and results:	and because it uses data from the National Forestry Directorate at the departmental level.	in section 4.3.2.
	"Social Monotax" (Outcome 2): because the agricultural social monotax was discontinued as a result of the disappearance of the Secretariat of Family Agriculture.	Indicator replaced after the 2019 PIR and the Mid-Term Review, since it does not respond to the reality of each ecoregion and is repeated with other operational indicators. Moreover, in practice, the Social Monotax is linked to the Agricultural Social Monotax, which in recent years had many oscillations in its implementation, even reaching its practical elimination (PIR 2020).
	"Annual gross income related to NTFPs" (Outcome 2): due to changes in many of the indices required for this calculation and delays in the value chains.	The progress and challenges are analyzed in section 4.3.2. However, in general, the CU implemented a strategy to address the MTR's comments, showing a substantial improvement in the achievement of results.

55. From 2019 to 2022, the fulfillment of the objective and of Components 1 and 3 advanced considerably in accordance with the fulfillment of most of their goals, evidencing the effectiveness of their strategies; Component 2, linked to markets, is complex and under the context of a pandemic that directly affected productive and exchange activities gave rise to greater challenges, which did not imply that there was no progress. In general, the project worked on a bottom-up approach to achieve its goals, with the premise of "theory of minimums", i.e. "orienting the work to comply with everything established in the Prodoc logical framework (indicators and goals) and generating additionality through sustainability strategies, alliances and decentralization of actions". This concept fits with fulfilling what has been defined and going beyond (additionality). However, one of the 13 project indicators (I.O.4) has had difficulties in its implementation per se, but alternative mechanisms have been used to fulfill it, given the complexity and the need for information that must be collected by third parties to the project, a context duly documented in the annual PIRs and the MTR.

56. Synthesis: The development of the objective with its respective O.I. progressed in a harmonized manner, meeting important goals such as: conservation areas, sustainable management plans, abundance of key fauna species, application of landscape and conservation approach, thanks to the changes made in the CU's management (adaptive management).

57. As of 2020, the indicator of percentage of forest cover (I.R1) and the indicator of social monotax (I.R3), for the progress of Component 1 and Component 2 respectively, were still pending analysis. However, following the recommendations of the MTR and the national reality, a strategy was planned for the first case, to comply with the indicator through specific consultancies, and for the second, the technical arguments for its elimination, motivated by the national reality and the instability of the social monotax framework and its disappearance.

58. As of 2021, compliance with indicator R.I.1, percentage of forest cover, showed progress according to data from the project's consultancy, which analyzed the percentage of cover using remote sensing methods, but the results were pending validation in the field. Although the change in the indicator's analysis method allowed initial progress to be made, time and the health situation have limited it. On the other hand, the social monotax indicator was eliminated, as the other four indicators for Outcome 2 allow its monitoring.

59. It is worth mentioning that in 2021 new strategies were added to respond to the suggestions of the MTR, such as: project communication, planning and implementation of the project's knowledge management work, work with participatory planning and stakeholder engagement (ownership). Also, based on the MTR and Prodoc, work was strengthened on: gender approach, education, agroforestry systems, localized agri-food systems, forest nurseries, green employment, agroecological transition, from a bottom-up approach, recognizing the conditions and realities of the territory.

4.1.2. Assumptions and Risks

60. The project design identified risks related to financial, social, political and environmental issues that could hinder the achievement of the project's objective, an in addition, mitigation measures to be taken for each of these risks were included, as shown below:

Table 6.Risks identified in the design of the project

Identified risks	Level	Mitigation strategy identified in the Prodoc	Comment to the EF
Lack of financing can undermine the mainstreaming of sustainable biodiversity production models by smallholders.	half	The project will work with the Forestry Law to increase the flow of funds from existing sources of resources for sustainable use, which are currently unused. The level of subsidies feasible to be received through the Forestry Law (26.331) is attractive to small producers as it will minimize the risks of biodiversity-based production, as it is expected that the Law will at least continue at the same level of government priority. The project will also promote a Law on Minimum Budgets for Sustainable Use of BD, complementary to Law 26.331 in terms of allocating resources for sustainable biodiversity production in areas of high conservation value. It will also work with existing agricultural subsidies and credits for small farmers to increase the availability of financing to incorporate NTFP production. In addition, work on markets and value chains is designed to increase the income generated from NTFP commercialization by making the models developed economically self-sufficient.	The financing risk at the terminal evaluation remains at a medium level, due to two aspects: First, the USUBI initiative changes the conventional extractivist paradigm, and proposes planned, friendly and sustainable actions for NTFP use. In this sense, being an innovative issue, the allocation of resources from different agencies will not be in the short term, although there are already regulatory mechanisms that promote sustainable forest use, these instruments (inclusive conservation program and NTFP national program) do not have financial tools to operationalize them, at the time the TE was conducted. Secondly, the characteristic of markets responds to the demand for NTFPs. Although the project has worked on the development, rescue, valorization and registration of various products, the value chain necessarily responds to a need that, although incremental at the time of the TE, is marginal in

Identified risks	Level	Mitigation strategy identified in the Prodoc	Comment to the EF
			relation to conventional markets.
Local communities and key stakeholders are unwilling to adopt the proposed biodiversity-based production practices; or restrictions on access to private land interfere with the extractive models of non-landowners.	low/half	The restriction of land use in certain forest categories established by the Forestry Law is the basis on which the project will be built. Farmers in the yellow zones are currently required by law to change their production practices. For small producers the subsidy of the Law is significant, and the project will develop production options based on biodiversity and to access these resources which are attractive. This will be complemented by capacity building for implementation, and increased additional income from improved access to markets and optimization of value chains. The latter will increase the share of producers in the profits generated by NTFP commercialization, making it even more attractive. Awareness raising, training and dissemination activities will demonstrate the environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits of sustainable use, enabling more producers to join the project. Strengthening the regulatory framework will further promote the adoption of best practices. The project will also promote dialogue, consensus and coordination among key stakeholders (e.g., provinces, landowners, indigenous communities, etc.) to facilitate project interventions at the field level.	The capacity building strategy generated and worked with indigenous communities (Wichis and Ocoyas) that were integrated into the day-to-day work of the project and particularly post MTR, in this sense the acceptance of the work and the USUBI theme is valued by the stakeholders. The risk that is evident is an adequate transition after project implementation, due to the characteristics of the indigenous communities that require technical presence (assistance) as a matter of identity and commitment. Therefore, in the TE, the risk maintains a low level of incidence.
Lack of political will and poor coordination to institutionalize sustainable use reduces the effectiveness of the project's results.	low/half	The provinces have the mandate to implement the Forest Law in their territories and the resources in the baseline are available to build their capacities in this area. Resources are also available to compensate landowners. The project will remove barriers that have restricted the use of these resources for biodiversity-based production by developing management tools (best practices, control and monitoring protocols) and increasing capacities to improve biodiversity-based production through resources from the Forestry Law. Awareness-raising and dissemination activities will be developed for technicians and officials (institutional strengthening) aimed at incorporating sustainable forest management and NTFPs into existing initiatives for small producers.	Argentina is a federated country, in which the provinces have jurisdictional autonomy, therefore as a mandate the Forest Law must be implemented in their territories under the particular local context, in that sense the appropriation strategy reduced the risk, also the involvement through letters of agreement with provinces and subsequent signing with academic institutions, has allowed to take the first steps for institutionalization and sustainability of the sustainable use of biodiversity. By the time of the TE, the risk is low as it depends on administrative and bureaucratic processes that require management and effort.

Identified risks	Level	Mitigation strategy identified in the Prodoc	Comment to the EF
		Different government agencies will be involved in the development of the project and there will be a stakeholder participation plan. Strengthening interinstitutional coordination mechanisms will also help reduce this risk.	
Changes in local, provincial or national governments could mean a change in policies to promote sustainable use, or the promotion of economic activities that conflict with sustainable use.	low/half	Awareness-raising and dissemination programs will be permanent, providing local knowledge through the integration of institutions and organizations involved and identified as key stakeholders. The consolidation of inter-institutional articulation mechanisms for sustainable use will contribute to avoid the generation of incentives contrary to project objectives. In addition, the UNDP country office will keep the different members of local, provincial or national governments informed of progress, results and products through the use of different resources (e.g., the Project Steering Committee, knowledge transfer and learning processes, field visits, etc.) in order to maintain their interest in the project and highlight its environmental and social benefits.	This risk has prevailed throughout project management. Efforts have been made to create permanent spaces for dialogue with key stakeholders at different hierarchical levels and with the work nucleus (CU). At the local management level, having decentralized technical structures in each ecoregion has made it possible to adequately mitigate the rotation of actors, in a scheme known as "tuned to the local", i.e. the local team belongs to the ecoregion and has technical and political capacities that mitigate the risk. In the general context of the country, the risk is constant; therefore, the TE considers that the risk should be considered for future interventions.
Increased vulnerability of ecosystems due to climate change	low	Climate change will be introduced as a variable in the development of sustainable use models. The project strategy is based on the sustainable management of forests in ecological corridors, increasing connectivity between forest remnants, which will contribute to increasing resilience to climate change.	Climate change has been considered one of the main challenges to be faced by regional, national and local governments in the Republic of Argentina. This reality has a direct impact on Components 1 and 2, corresponding to conservation categories and forest products, because climate change exacerbates extreme events, delays or damages production and, in the particular case of Jujuy, has caused damage to road infrastructure, isolating the intervention areas. It should be mentioned that these exogenous factors are beyond the scope of the project and that work is being done to mitigate them in the various related plans. The risk is external to the project management and is latent to many interventions, so it must be considered

Identified risks	Level	Mitigation strategy identified in the Prodoc	Comment to the EF
			in future interventions.
Health emergencies and mobility restrictions to reduce the possibility of contagion in the event of diseases such as COVID19	high	The project design did not identify any threats from health issues, mobility restrictions or pathogens that would affect project performance.	The risk is high and remains high. Due to mobility restrictions, human losses and the general uncertainty in treating an unknown disease such as COVID19, it had a direct impact on the execution of the project. Although it is a situation outside the project management, this left lessons to be incorporated in the actions of this project and all activities in general, introducing prevention criteria, use of technology, sanitation, conservation value and added value, as elements to face situations similar to those experienced by the pandemic described.

4.1.3. Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into project design

61. The Government of Argentina has prioritized poverty alleviation and sustainable production, and has developed several programs that represent a solid starting point for this project. Among the linked programs are:

- The Social Forestry Program (PROSOBO) is aimed at peasants, indigenous peoples, islanders and small producers who live in the forests.
- The general objective of the Wildlife Habitat Protection Program is to contribute to the conservation of wildlife habitat.
- The National Program for the Management and Sustainable Use of Wild Species seeks to revalue ecosystems through the use of wildlife.
- The National Endangered Species Conservation Program carries out actions for the preservation of endangered species and their habitats.
- The National Flora Management Program aims to carry out coordinated actions for the integrated management of plant resources.
- The objectives of the Native Forests and Biodiversity Component of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Project include the participatory formulation of an Investment Project.
- The main objectives of the Non Timber Forest Products Program are to compile and systematize information on NTFPs.

62. In addition, MAGyP implements several rural development programs, contributing at the sectoral level to poverty reduction. Its three important programs are:

- The Program for Inclusive Rural Development (PRODERI).
- The Rural Areas Development Program (PRODEAR).

- The Family Farming Development Program (PRODAF)

63. These respond to the need to promote small family farming by improving the productivity and income generation of family farmers, in order to reduce agricultural pressure and expansion on forest lands.

64. In addition, UNDP has a large portfolio of GEF projects, both in Argentina and Latin America, related to biodiversity conservation, which provided an opportunity to extract good practices and replicate activities. Prodoc identified possible participation and coordination links with other programs and projects, which are described below:

- The UNEP/UNDP/GEF Sustainable Forest Management in the Transboundary Ecosystem of the Gran Chaco Americano Project has sites in Argentina where experiences of Sustainable Forest Use and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity are being developed, which will provide useful information on land degradation parameters and deforestation data.
- The UNDP/GEF project Establishing Incentives for the Conservation of Globally Important Ecosystem Services sought to establish payment mechanisms for ecosystem services to ensure the protection of Argentina's natural ecosystems and the services provided by them.
- IBRD/GEF Rural Corridors and Biodiversity Conservation Project: seeks to conserve biodiversity of national and global importance by financing plans in green category areas for the protection of selected corridors.
- The main objective of the UNDP/GEF Sustainable Land Use Management in the Drylands of Northwest Argentina project was to implement sustainable land management practices for the drylands of Northwest Argentina and Cuyo.
- FAO/GEF project Strengthening governance for biodiversity protection through the formulation and implementation of a National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species, which aims to develop a strengthened governance framework for the effective protection of biodiversity from the negative impacts of invasive alien species.
- GEF Project Biodiversity Conservation in Productive Forest Landscapes, currently being implemented with IBRD support, seeks to increase the integration of responsible biodiversity management practices and policies in forest plantations.
- IBRD Native Forests and Biodiversity Project: seeks the participatory formulation of an investment project for the protection and sustainable management of native forests and their biodiversity.
- UNDP/GEF Project Incorporation of biodiversity conservation criteria in sectoral and cross-sectoral public policies and programs to safeguard threatened wildlife in Argentina.
- UNDP/GEF project Promoting the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS in Argentina, which sought the equitable sharing of benefits derived from the sustainable use of genetic resources and biodiversity.

4.1.4. Planned stakeholder participation

65. The participation of key stakeholders and their respective roles in the project was defined at project design. The Prodoc shows the stakeholder participation plan for project implementation, which describes

the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, divided into national, provincial and municipal government agencies, academic institutions, community associations, foundations, among others.

66. During the PPG phase of the project, key stakeholders participated in planning and project design workshops, as well as multiple working sessions and meetings. These participation forums included: a) PPG Phase Inception Workshop and b) Project Results Framework (logframe) Workshop.

67. Similarly, the Prodoc has defined the participation plan whose objectives are: a) to clearly identify the basic roles and responsibilities of the principal stakeholders in this project, b) to ensure that the stakeholders are fully aware of the progress and obstacles in the development of the project and take advantage of the experience and skills of the stakeholders to improve project actions, and c) to identify the key moments within the project cycle where participation will be effective.

68. In the post-MTR phase, management mechanisms were strengthened to respond to the conclusions and recommendations of the review. In March 2020, the CU project coordination held a strategic planning meeting proposing “rings of management” described in this evaluation, which include: a) theory of minimums (compliance with all Prodoc indicators); b) political management; and c) decentralization of management; a set of actions that marked an improvement in the understanding of the project and focusing of efforts. In this effort, the stakeholders of the participation plan move into a facilitator role, as is the case of the University, CU and MAyDS.

4.1.5. Gender responsiveness of project design

69. The project considered women's participation from its design, which is descriptively addressed in the section "Stakeholder participation plan during implementation-Women's participation" (Prodoc, p. 116). The design recognizes that women will play a fundamental role in NTFP activities. It was proposed that the project would promote an egalitarian culture that would raise awareness against gender stereotypes.

70. In addition, the design considered the different family member’s participation in the process of preparing the native forest management plans. It is important to mention that the gender and women's participation approach was considered from the genesis of the project (PPG), carrying out workshops with women artisans belonging to communities located in the Chaco and Yungas ecoregions, with the objective of strengthening ties, exchanging experiences, as well as ensuring employment during the implementation of the project.

71. In the next phase of project formulation, there was a social and environmental project appraisal model (SESP), which mentions that, although the project does not have a specific focus on gender, it will incorporate the promotion of gender equality during the process, which is strongly evidenced post-MTR.

72. Also, in the Project Document (Prodoc) the importance of women's participation is highlighted, however, in this document and in the MTR it was evidenced that it did not have a specific Gender Plan. It is inferred that this absence is due to the fact that cross-cutting aspects such as equity, gender and empowerment were not mandatory for projects financed by GEF until July 1, 2018, and this project was designed before that date.

73. In response to these gaps, the CU made an important effort to include and mainstream gender in the project's actions, from the strengthening of the team's technical structure (integration of 3 professionals in

each ecoregion) and the attainment of several achievements that are detailed throughout the report and in the corresponding sections, which will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.3.6.

4.1.6. Social and Environmental Safeguards

74. The project document (Prodoc) presents the environmental and social analysis in its annex Project Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), where the general profile of the project was classified in the "Moderate Risk" category. In general terms, the principles for safeguarding the social elements and biodiversity of the three ecoregions targeted by the project were considered in the construction of the initiative and the planning of activities.

75. The SESP checklist addressed the principles of: Human Rights, Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Environmental Sustainability, which included standard 1) Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management; standard 4) Cultural Heritage; and standard 6) Indigenous Peoples. A total of 3 risks were marked on the checklist, which allows the evaluator to have a view toward project impacts and how they will be addressed during implementation.

4.2. Project Implementation

This section reviews the implementation of the project with respect to results and activities, as well as the administrative arrangements for its execution.

4.2.1. Adaptive Management

76. With respect to adaptive management, it is important to mention that there were factors that had a positive impact on the technical and financial execution of the USUBI project, mainly after the MTR, promoting actions to resolve, implement and complement the recommendations made in the evaluation.

77. It should be noted that the CU's actions are based on a theoretical framework called "three rings of management", which proposes the use of available resources (financial, technical) according to the project's duration and adapting management to: 1) the fulfillment of all indicators, and respond with realistic methods those that exceed the scope of the project, a process called the theory of minimums, which translates into the fulfillment of the minimum elements for which funding was obtained; 2) Political and governance management, which corresponds to the alignment of actions and interventions, adapting them to the context and needs of the nation and territory, understanding that the project is implemented in MAyDS and that it must be technically and politically positioned in the vision of the state; and 3) Effective decentralization in the territory, which are actions in tune with local actors and that promote ownership in the ecoregions, which translates into strengthening the team and an implicit trust in its management, bottom up criterion. This set of guidelines is aligned with the programmatic planning (Logical Framework) and results-based management (Results Framework, PIR) that are defined in the Prodoc and have been adequately internalized in the CU.

78. Other external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, forced all activities to be rethought and adapted to the country's context and guidelines. Being a project with a presence in the territory, this element became of greater significance and therefore adaptive management was substantial. In this sense, the project followed the guidelines in force for the pandemic, developed the work in virtual platforms (Components 1 and 3) and decentralized the actions in the ecoregions according to the

particular conditions to continue the pace of work. As a result, as of the date of the TE, the execution of indicators and budget exceeds 98%.

79. In this last aspect (financial execution), adaptive management is the most recurrent component, driven by several elements, such as inflation, monetary uncertainty and devaluation of the Argentine peso, which results in increasing the complexity of processes, suppliers and timing. A reflection of these elements can be seen in the number of substantial revisions (7) and their implicit reprogramming of budgets and activities from year to year, which translates into additional effort for the project's operational team.

80. It is important to mention that the aspect of currency uncertainty is clearly beyond the scope of the CU and supporting institutions. For reference, the project was designed with a reference value of 17 pesos per dollar and as of the date of the TE the index is at 118 pesos per dollar.

81. This set of elements translates into a second formal extension of the project at no cost, with a planned completion date of May 2022. The adaptive management section, during the interviews confirmed that the project has followed broad adaptive management criteria during its execution, and although they have been able to face situations such as those described, the effort has been great and the feeling remains that a longer period was still required to produce results, however, the planned technical and financial goals have been achieved in a satisfactory manner.

82. In the closure phase, the project implementation team, the national authority and UNDP have generated a closure strategy, which is relevant. As a recommendation and as a result of the interviews, two key elements should be considered for modifying the strategy: (1) taking advantage of the installed capacities and (2) accompanying the native communities (Wichis), whose customs and behavior require accompaniment as a synonym of trust until the ownerhship and sustainability per se of the work developed is achieved.

4.2.2. Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

83. The Stakeholder Participation Plan established in the Prodoc was fundamental for ensuring stakeholder involvement in project management and decision making. Stakeholders were involved as follows:

84. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina has supported, together with external consultancies, Project management in the territory, the relevance and dissemination of NTFPs, the strengthening of communication, technical training to communities, the development of a national NTFP program and another of inclusive conservation, the incorporation of the gender perspective in the project, among other assistance, which has helped to strengthen coordination with the competent authorities, the scientific-academic sector, indigenous peoples and other government agencies. Although the rotation has a direct impact on the involvement and technical knowledge of the staff, it is beyond the control of CU.

85. The participation of the provinces during the execution of the project had different levels of empowerment/participation; at first, with the signing of the Letters of Agreement for the implementation of activities during the year 2019, the work remained as stipulated in the signed agreements. At a second stage, the level of participation has had ad hoc characteristics, more equivalent to inter-institutional coordination with the USUBI territorial units. In this sense, the levels of work and action are not paired up, however, it was always promoted, highlighting the case of Misiones whose involvement leaves positive

lessons that extrapolated to regulatory bodies. Finally, the provincial participation culminated with the participation of academic units present in the territory, an absolutely relevant situation with a view to sustainability from a research/training perspective.

86. Indigenous communities have had an active participation, depending on their culture and collective behavior, in the development of their businesses with regard to the revaluation, production, processing and commercialization of NTFPs. The progress in the ecoregions and provinces is significant and clear in certain issues that are more developed according to each context. In this sense, the work in the province of Misiones stands out for the high degree of participation of communities, creation of formal associations, such as cooperatives, which have benefited greatly from the project, in their NTFPs, gender approach and their work. In Dry Chaco, the adaptation of the work to the context of native and creole communities, assertive and aligned to the local customs reality and own time is notable. And in the case of Yungas, what stands out is the day-to-day work with stakeholders, who seek to change their livelihoods to more sustainable forms and who integrate added value and conservation in their work. As can be seen, integration in the midst of diversity makes it possible to generate valuable lessons that can be replicated in other initiatives and territories.

87. In terms of participation, the presence and work with non-governmental organizations, such as Tepeyac, have had a fundamental impact on the transfer of information, which, through the sustainable use of natural resources, has resulted in improving the living conditions of indigenous and creoles. This organization, which has been present in the territory for more than 30 years, has been able to capitalize on the project to integrate and revalue the sustainable use of biodiversity. Underlying this, the organization has helped to direct funds to the communities, to link USUBI with communities and to strengthen the role of government actors, the results of which can be seen in the technification of NTFP processing, in the proposed sustainability of commercialization and in the promotion and respect for community culture, etc.

88. In the area of stakeholder participation, Letters of Agreement were negotiated with National Public Universities as counterparts of the project to achieve some goals and guarantee the sustainability of the project's actions in the medium term, with a greater anchoring of the project in Misiones. In addition, the universities of Misiones, Salta, Jujuy and Río Negro have contributed with consultancies on: monitoring networks, agroecological experiences, characterization of species and products, production techniques, management plans, workshops, training and technical assistance to governmental actors and communities, which are important inputs for the development of reports on new NTFPs, documents and integration of the gender issue. Regarding the scope of indicators, the National University of Río Negro was hired as a consultant to analyze the percentage of forest cover through remote sensing methods (R-I.1).

4.2.3. Project Finance and Co-finance

89. The original budget allocated to the project, according to the Prodoc, is USD $28,307,400.00, corresponding to US$4,620,000.00 from the GEF (grant) and US$23,687,400.00 from counterparts, for the execution period 2015-2020 and extensions to the year 2022. Up to 30 December 2021, the project had an execution of USD $4,292,220.28 or 93% of the available budget (Table 7), leaving an approximate value of USD $327,779.72 (7%) available, whose execution is expected to be completed at the operational close of the project (estimated date of operational closure June 2022).

Table 7. Financial execution of the USUBI project until December 30, 2021

Item	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	TOTAL
Outcome 1	125,623.19	432,152.53	510,482.11	281,682.21	63,226.6	142,447.67	358,276.00	1,913,890.34
Outcome 2	65,044.91	81,066.93	174,671.51	183,523.14	285,863.06	95,821.4	314,706.12	1,200.697.13
Outcome 3	22,114.70	51,462.74	85,489.34	103,630.13	90,483.66	184,319.77	298,414.43	835,914.77
Outcome 4 M&E	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,636.13	0.00	0.00	7,636.13
Project Management	18,168.8	29,042.5	19,656.0	16,506.4	33,039.6	21,104.7	26,377.9	163,896.19
Foreign Exchange Currency Loss	6,319.24	1,594.58	15,317.02	77,321.8	46,690.5	17,442.9	5,500.00	170,186.24
TOTAL	237,270.32	595,319.36	805,615.98	662,663.81	526,939.66	461,136.62	1,003,274.53	4,292,220.80

As of the date of the FF (June 2022), the execution is 98%, with an approximate remaining value of US$ 114,000 to be executed. Table 8 indicates the estimated financial execution for the year 2022, and that must be completed until the operational closure of the project.

Table 8. Estimated financial execution at the operational clousure of the project

Item	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022	TOTAL
Outcome1	125,623.19	432,152.53	510,482.11	281,682.21	63,226.6	142,447.67	358,276.00	93,913.0	2,007,803.35
Outcome 2	65,044.91	81,066.93	174,671.51	183,523.14	285,863.06	95,821.4	314,706.12	71,910.60	1,272,607.73
Outcome 3	22,114.70	51,462.74	85,489.34	103,630.13	90,483.66	184,319.77	298,414.43	138,976.21	974,890.98
Outcome 4 M&E	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,636.13	0.00	0.00	10,000.0	17,636.1
Project Management	18,168.8	29,042.5	19,656.0	16,506.4	33,039.6	21,104.7	26,377.9	12,979.9	176,875.57
Foreign Exchange Currency Loss	6,319.24	1,594.58	15,317.02	77,321.8	46,690.5	17,442.9	5,500.00	0.00	170,186.24
TOTAL	237,270.32	595,319.36	805,615.98	662,663.81	526,939.66	461,136.62	1,003,274.53	327,779.72	4,620,000.00

90. Implementation is under the National Implementation Modality (NIM) with follow-up and monitoring in accordance with UNDP transparency and accountability standards. It includes annual audits and spot checks carried out from 2016 to 2021 by the firm Bértora, with their respective recommendations and letters to the management. The project budget detailed by result is presented in the following figures.

Table 9. Expenditure by component

Result	Amount in USD$

Outcome 1	$2,007,803.35
Outcome 2	$1,272,607.73
Outcome 3	$ 974,890.98
Outcome 4 M&E	$ 17,636.13
Project Management	$ 176,875.57
Foreign Exchange Currency Loss	$ 170,186.24
Total	$4,620,000.00

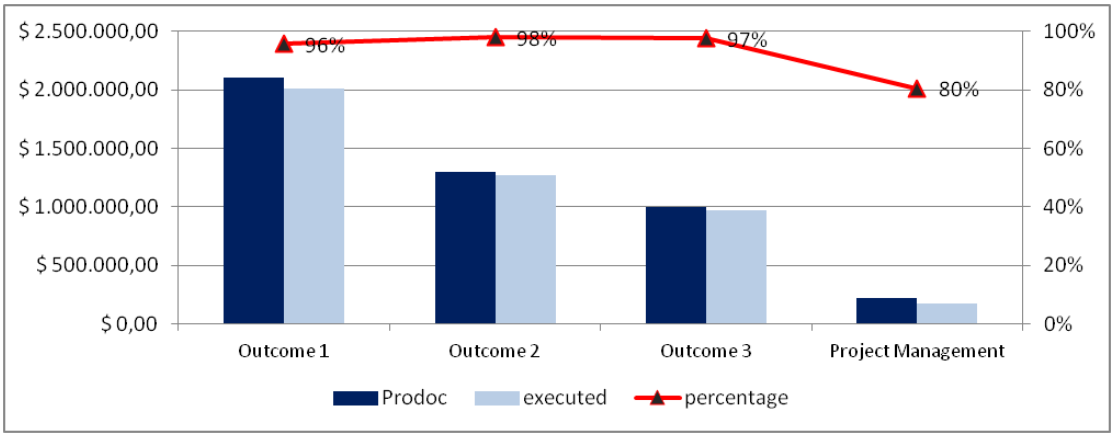

Figure 4. Allocation of funds according to Prodoc activities (UNDP)

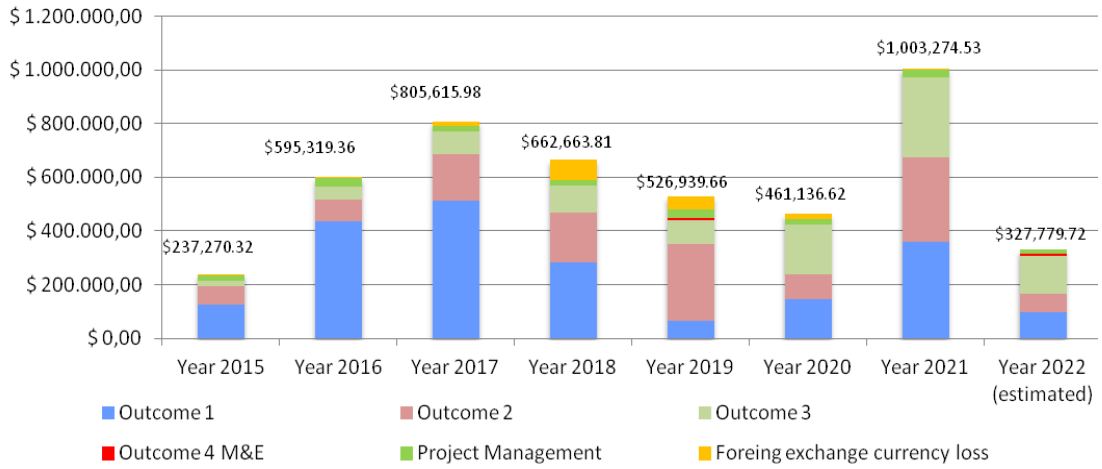

Figure 5. Execution of funds according to result and period (UNDP)

91. As for the counterparts, both in kind and in cash, the amount committed by the project partners amounts to USD $23,687,400.00. As of the date of the evaluation, the counterpart amount is USD $22,363,361.96, as shown in Figure 6.

Table 10. Cofinancing

COFINANCING	UNDP financing		JUJUY PROVINCE		MISIONES PROVINCE		SALTA PROVINCE		MAyDS		MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA		TOTAL	
	US$		US$		US$		US$		US$		US$		US$	
Source / Type	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
CASH	500,000.00	-	550,000.00	606,892.47	400,000.00	1,578,722.84	75,000.00	563,392.85	19,337,400.00	19,614,353.79	2,000,000,00	-	22,862,400.00	22,363,361.96
IN-KIND	-	-	-	-	150,000.00	-	475,000.00	-	200,000.00	-	-	-	825,000.00	-
TOTAL	500,000.00	-	550,000.00	606,892.47	550,000.00	1,578,722.84	550,000.00	563,392.85	19,537,400.00	19,614,353.79	2,000,000,00	-	23,687,400.00	22,363,361.96

92. Annual Operational Plans (AOP), execution, roles and approval: The body leading the strategic management has been the Project Steering Committee; operationally the CU prepares the planning documents, processes, TORs, in coordination with the Cooperation Project Directorate (MAyDS). Subsequently, coordination takes place with UNDP in order to supervise the process and conclude with the transfers to the account assigned to the project through the FACE mechanism. This is usually done on a quarterly basis, but in the case of USUBI it is done on a monthly basis. In the execution mechanism, the project maintains a special account and the budgetary space is assigned by the national government, a process defined in accordance with the guidelines of the Republic of Argentina.

93. The project was designed with a currency valuation of 17 Argentine pesos per US dollar. At the date of the evaluation (May 2022) the conversion is around 118 pesos for each US dollar; this is not a minor aspect, considering the purchasing power of the project. There is uncertainty for suppliers regarding the volatility of the currency, mainly for the specialized scientific equipment to import from abroad. In addition, the financial resources (budgetary space) of the governmental system are in pesos; therefore, the financial information includes an item corresponding to the cost of devaluation. Therefore, in general, the devaluation of the peso, in projects implemented in Argentina, has a substantial impact; for outsiders it could be perceived as positive due to the month to month increase of pesos to be executed, but in practice it is the opposite; it constitutes a limitation of loss of purchasing power and competitiveness (suppliers) that have a negative impact on time and also on the stability of the initial implementation rules/agreements.

94. In general terms, the planning tools are consistent and are duly recorded in the agency's cooperative instruments such as CDRs, substantial reviews, procurement plans and annual operational plans, to which the evaluator has had access. However, the processes applied (bureaucracy, MAyDS, UNDP coordination and the exchange rate uncertainties) have generated efforts greater than those corresponding to the implementation of a project with strong characteristics in the territory and under the dynamics of local suppliers.

4.2.4. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

1) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	Rating
M&E design at entry	5. Satisfactory (S)
M&E Plan Implementation	5. Satisfactory (S)

Overall Quality of M&E	5. Satisfactory (S)

RATING 5	M&E design at entry / Satisfactory (S)	

95. The project's PRODOC includes the monitoring and evaluation plan, which was conceived following project cycle guidelines. It is a clear and consistent plan that includes indicators, means of verification, personnel in charge, budget and time allocated to project activities. It highlights the use of corporate tools such as mid-term and final evaluations, which were consistent with the thematic that USUBI proposes to address. The application of SMART criteria to the project indicators is adequate, with the exception of the objective indicator (O.I.4) linked to the ecosystem health index (ISEARL), which overestimates the project scope and temporality.

96.The monitoring system proposes the use of standard tools such as ISEARL and local monitoring (support from the provinces) to estimate the positive or negative change of sustainable biodiversity use interventions. All these elements have quantifiable characteristics.

97. The M&E plan in the Prodoc design includes an inception report, project implementation reviews, quarterly and annual review reports, mid-term and final evaluations, and audits. Periodic monitoring of implementation progress was designed to be carried out through quarterly meetings with the implementation team, or more frequently as deemed necessary. This would allow the parties to take stock and address project-related issues in a timely manner to ensure timely implementation of project activities.

RATING 5	M&E Plan Implementation / Satisfactory (S)	

98. The CU was in charge of the execution of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and the available corporate instruments were used. The reorientation and planning after the Mid-Term Review was relevant, since the correct application of the corporate tools (Incepcion Workshop, MTR, Governance Committees) from a strategic perspective, constituted a good practice.

99. The MTR had significant delays; it was originally planned to be carried out in mid-2018. However, it was available for the second half of 2019; this situation was not related to the management of the project and was caused by the actions of the International Evaluator who, after the field mission, arbitrarily abandoned the contract and closed communications with the project stakeholders. This had a substantial impact and forced a search for new evaluators to close the evaluation and generate useful recommendations for the project.

100. Subsequent to the MTR, new strategies were added to respond to the suggestions and recommendations made, such as: strengthening project communication, planning and implementation of knowledge management work, working with participatory planning and stakeholder engagement, deepening and enhancing the progress made in terms of the gender approach, education, agroforestry systems, localized agri-food systems, forest nurseries, green jobs, and agroecological transition.

101. During the pre MTR phase, the application of M&E tools was executed according to the demands and needs (reactive). At the close of the project, it was notable that the entire team has a clear understanding of indicators, roles and responsibilities, the application of management rings and other elements that result in the Satisfactory execution of the plans designed and applied to USUBI.

102. With the aforementioned, starting in 2019 with the findings of the MTR, reports and actions have greater alignment to the results framework. Greater use is made of corporate tools, mainly

communications, risks, gender and achievements by stakeholders.

103. Regarding progress to objectives (Satisfactory) and project implementation (Satisfactory), there are two Project extensions, which bolstered the achievement of indicators and a satisfactory financial execution at the date of the TE, despite factors beyond the control of the project (inflation, devaluation and monetary uncertainty, Covid-19).

104. UNDP's participation in monitoring and guiding project execution has been dynamic and constant. This is evidenced through field visit reports and management reports, participation in substantive reviews and technical and operational support in general.

RATING 5	Overall Quality of M&E / Satisfactory (S)	

105. The overall quality of the M&E is Satisfactory and execution was consistent with the designed monitoring plan. Strong alignment with the logical and results framework of the project and adequate adaptive management post MTR is evident.

106. The conformation of the CU in the last stage of the project is a success, it has solid technical and managerial characteristics and in addition it strengthened the territorial spaces. The technical and administrative solvency allowed the achievement of goals and, on a day-to-day basis, the resolution of project management problems.

107. During the first years of the project (2015 to 2017), corporate tools were applied. However, it is after the MTR at the end of 2019 (despite the difficulties it had) where a considerable positive change is evident for making important decisions for the achievement of results.

4.2.5. UNDP implementation/oversight (*), Implementing Partner execution (*) and overall assessment of implementation/oversight and execution (*)

2) Implementing Agency (IA) Implementation & Executing Agency (EA) Execution	Rating
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	5. Satisfactory (S)
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	5. Satisfactory (S)
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	5. Satisfactory (S)

RATING 5	Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight / Satisfactory (S)	

108. UNDP played a relevant role (Satisfactory) as supervisor throughout the project cycle. It provided positive support in the design, execution and follow-up of the project. UNDP supported the political management processes during the rotation of authorities. UNDP supported the projet with technical supervision through the application of M&E tools. It also supported administrative and financial issues. During project execution, it allowed for a bidirectional exchange in order to achieve the correct application of the tools for the transfer of resources and financial settlements (FACE and HACT). This set of elements, has allowed positioning the project and achieving results that are evidenced in the TE.

109. In addition, the agency has a comparative advantage in that it leads and manages several initiatives related to biodiversity and climate change. This has allowed it to spontaneoulsy foster cross-learning; an example of this is several actions that coincide with the small grants program in the area of

sustainable use of biodiversity and territory.

110. The strength of the timely application of corporate tools (Spot Check, audits, CDR, PIR, MTR) is evident as elements that help project management. This allowed for positively reorienting actions and enhancing the articulation of stakeholders to achieve results, such as the letters of agreement in the territory with the provincial governments and universities of Jujuy, Misiones and Salta.

111. In this last aspect, UNDP's participation in different meetings, spaces and events of the project stands out, supporting exchange processes, gender and territorial accompaniment. Operationally, UNDP supported the stakeholders' proposal for the integration of universities and provinces (letters of agreement), which has led to a series of lessons learned for the management of projects with similar characteristics.

RATING 5	Quality of Implementing Partner Execution / SatisfactorY (S)	

112. The MAyDS was responsible operationally and strategically for the project, adequately guiding the sustainable use of resources and directing the management in the territory with a logic of pilot sites and with an environmental and community-based production approach.

113. After the MTR, the implementing partner (MAyDS), in coordination with the CU, acted assertively in project communication strategies, knowledge management, participatory planning and greater stakeholder involvement.

114. The MAyDS also promoted strategies to develop alliances to continue with the Project themes and is working to replicate and continue with the activities promoted, from a focus on sustainability and scalability, as evidenced by the two resolutions in force since April 2022 on Inclusive Conservation and Non-Timber Forest Products, as national policy.

115. Despite management difficulties beyond the control of the institutions, such as the pandemic, COVID19, which resulted in delays, changes in work methods, inflation and immobility that had a strong impact on the project, they were progressively solved as evidenced in the TE.

4.2.6. Risk Management

116. In the design and proposal of the project, the social and environmental assessment of the initiative was carried out, in which the baseline was determined for the socio-environmental conditions of the areas of intervention in the national approach and ecoregions. Regarding the project's risk management, for the TE, the documentary information (PIRs) shows the update of the risk register (SESP), where the COVID-19 pandemic was included as a new risk, and also describes the mitigation measures adopted by the project.

Table 11. Project risk management

Identified risk	Description of Risk	Action taken	Comment to the TE

Identified risk	Description of Risk	Action taken	Comment to the TE
COVID 19 global pandemic	Social and environmental risk that impacted the implementation of the project, due to the preventive and mandatory social isolation (ASPO) imposed by Presidential Decree in 2020-2021. The decree does not allow travel within the provincial territory and travel between provinces. People from the project team were infected with the virus and some local communities were isolated. All this caused delay in the execution of project activities.	The project continued to work in a context of Preventive Social Isolation (ASPO). In addition, it had to reschedule or suspend planned activities, or carry them out through virtual channels. Some mitigation measures adopted by the project were: Yungas: developed and implemented a hygiene and safety protocol model. Acquisition of supplies for the prevention of contagion. Dry Chaco: adopted the protocol presented in Jujuy. Atlantic Forest: Accompanying producers virtually and in person (as possible). Management of biosafety signage for processing plants.	Although the risk posed by the COVID 19 global pandemic and the measures imposed to control contagion had an impact on the implementation of activities and actions in the territory, the measures taken were appropriate in this context, for example hygiene and safety protocols, the development of activities through virtual platforms, training and workshops in small groups. By complying with the protocols established by the authorities, in addition to having developed and adopted measures for the three provinces, the project was able to strengthen its implementation capacities.
Operational risks	Delays and the bureaucracy of the management processes of public administration in general and of the project administration were aggravated by the context of the pandemic. Therefore, procurement was affected due to the following drawbacks: Suppliers: it is very difficult to find suppliers who have all the documentation required for contracting and who are willing or able to sell their products to the	The USUBI team, together with the UNDP Officer and those responsible for the financial management of the MAyDS, held regular meetings to manage difficulties and find ad-hoc solutions. In this sense, several proposals for solutions were made suitable to both parties (i.e. UNDP and MAyDS); the project's administrative team was strengthened and organized by responsibilities and concatenated tasks. This	Operational risk responds to the design and initial agreements for project implementation. In this regard, the MTR and annual reports show the operational limitations of structures with a considerable bureaucratic burden, which, although necessary, the project includes its main actors (MAyDS and UNDP), who proposed and implemented strategies to counteract the problem in two areas: the first, continuous capacity building and monitoring of

Identified risk	Description of Risk	Action taken	Comment to the TE
	project or to government institutions due to the particularities of the payment methods. Supplies and commodities: Due to the pandemic, there are commodities and supplies that are not available. Currency fluctuations: The fluctuation of the Argentine currency against the U.S. dollar is recurrent and has a direct impact on the possibility of purchasing. Inflation: Inflation in the country was 36% in 2020 and overall cumulative inflation was 23.7% so far in 2021. This is the reason why suppliers cannot guarantee the price for 30 days.	has developed human resources that today have more experience for overcoming the inconveniences and handling the extremely bureaucratic procedures.	processes; the second, the creation of ad-hoc processes within the framework of current regulations but that constitute real support given the country context. In this regard, monthly FACEs and annual audits were used to mitigate the effects of currency depreciation and the review of the contextual processes. Even so, the effort is considerable, so the risk is still present and requires mechanisms such as those implemented by USUBI to mitigate impacts in future initiatives. . It should also be noted that, due to the federalism of the Republic of Argentina, the processes and progress will be different according to the characteristics of the provinces and their administrative and jurisdictional autonomy, which may be seen as an additional but necessary burden for the ownership of actions.

4.3. Project Results and Impacts

4.3.1. Progress Towards Objective and Expected Outcomes

117. The central objective of the project is *"Strengthening management frameworks for the sustainable use of biodiversity increases the protection of high conservation value forests in Argentina"*, supported by four impact indicators that consider: O.I.1) Forest areas with sustainable use benefits; O.I.2) Changes in the presence of key animal species at site level; O.1.3) Sustainable management plans that include NTFPs; O.I.4) Change in the Ecosystem Health Index. On the above described structure of the project, in the TE the progress to objective and expected results are evaluated using the logical framework of results, which is presented in the following section.

118. A narrative commentary was included with the TE and the achievements attained in each of the result indicators, and a color (rating) was also assigned, methodologically resulting from the review of the aspects of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, catalytic role and impact of the USUBI

project as a whole. In general, there is evidence of Satisfactory compliance with the objective indicators, mainly three of them (O.I.1, O.I.2, O.I.3); the exception is indicator O.I.4 (ecosystem health) achieved through real alternative actions. The abovementioned is consistent with the findings of the MTR, which confirms the capacity to respond to indicators and their fulfillment.

Table 12. Progress to objective

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
Area (ha) of forest with benefits for the sustainable use of biodiversity in SMPBN Areas – Level II	-Atlantic Forest (Province of Misiones): 0 ha -Yungas (Province of Jujuy): 0 ha -Chaco (Province of Salta): 0 ha	-Atlantic Forest (Province of Misiones): 40,000 ha -Yungas (Province of Jujuy): 60,000 ha - Chaco (Province of Salta): 100,000 ha	**ACHIEVED** - Atlantic Forest (Province of Misiones): 40,705.5 ha - Yungas (Province of Jujuy): 46,698 ha - Chaco (Province of Salta): 156,248 ha Atlantic Forest and Chaco: This objective has been met and exceeded. Yungas: there is still a need to incorporate hectares.
Changes in the presence (% occurrence) of key animal species at the site level (Atlantic Forest: 40,000 ha; Yungas 60,000 ha; Chaco: 100,000 ha)	Dry Chaco: - 4 species Atlantic Forest: - 5 species Yungas: - 8 species	Dry Chaco: - 4 species (Intervention sites: maintained or increased % occurrence; Control sites: decreased % occurrence). Atlantic Forest: - 5 species (Intervention sites: maintained or increased % occurrence; Control sites: decreased % occurrence). Yungas: - 8 species (Intervention sites: presence of keystone species is	**ACHIEVED** Dry Chaco (Province of Salta): 3 species: the % of occurrence in the intervention sites has been maintained. Atlantic Forest (Misiones) - The % of occurrence of 5 species in the intervention sites is maintained. Yungas (Jujuy): - The % of occurrence of 8 species in the intervention sites is maintained. The percentages of presence of key fauna did not vary, so the objective has been met. Fauna monitoring is carried out through periodic and standardized estimation of the presence/absence of target species. For this purpose, calendars and recording protocols were designed (supporting documents attached). Monitoring is carried out with the key species listed below, which correspond to those indicated in Annex 8.8 of the Prodoc.

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
		maintained; Control sites: absence of keystone species)	Dry Chaco (3) *Catagonus wagneri* (Chacoan peccary), *Chaetophractus villosus* (Big hairy armadillo), *Dasypus novemcinctus* (Nine-banded armadillo) Misiones: (10) *Leopardus pardalis* (ocelot), *Tapirus terrestris* (South American tapir), *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris* (capybara), *Nasua nasua* (South American coati), *Sapajus apella* (Tufted capuchin), *Cuniculus paca* (paca), *Dasyprocta* (agouti), *Mazama americana* (red brocket deer), *Puma concolor* (puma), *Panthera onca* (jaguar). Jujuy: (2) *Tapirus terrestris* (South American tapir), *Tayassu pecari* (white-lipped peccary)
% of Sustainable Management Plans (SMP) that include NTFP	-Province of Jujuy: 0 -Province of Misiones: 0 -Province of Salta: 0	-Province of Jujuy: >50% of small producers present SMPs with NTFPs - Province of Misiones: >50% of small producers present SMPs with NTFPs - Province of Salta: >50% of small producers present SMPs with NTFPs	**ACHIEVED** - Province of Jujuy: 185 % (13 instead of the 7 initially planned) - The target has been met and exceeded, as 13 management and/or conservation plans have been registered. - Province of Misiones: 275% (11 plans instead of the 4 initially planned) The target has been met and exceeded. - Province of Salta: 22.73% (5 of 22 plans include NTFPs).
Change in the ecosystem health index (ISEARL)* for the project landscapes * Ecosystem Health Index Adjusted to Real Local Conditions (ISEARL).	-Atlantic Forest: 0.61 -Yungas: 0.48 -Chaco: 0.44	-Atlantic Forest: >0.7 -Yungas: >0.7 -Chaco: >0.7	This indicator cannot be measured because the census and the results necessary to obtain some of the data needed to calculate it have not been carried out in the country at the government level. Activities were carried out to contribute to the achievement of the goal of this indicator and there are three more indicators to evaluate compliance with the objective. Although there are no updated data from national, provincial or agency statistics that provide this information, we could infer that ecosystem health improves as

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			a direct result of fulfillment of other related indicators such as coverage, presence of wildlife species, increase in NTFP management plans, training in the forestry and biodiversity sectors, increase in income and quality of life. Some of these factors are an integral part of ISEARL.

4.3.2. Outcome progress

119. The goals of the project's intervention strategy are summarized in the definition of a strategic objective supported by three key outcomes (R) with their respective indicators (total 8 R.I.). The achievement of the outcome indicators (R.I.) are related to: R.1) Forest coverage in Category II in SMPNF; R.2) Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure economic and social sustainability of native forest; R.3) Governance framework at national and provincial level for sustainable management of native forests.

120. From the described strategy, progress was made in terms of results, as described below in this section:

Outcome 1: Sustainable use models of native forest biodiversity in areas of high conservation- value in 3 ecosystems

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
Percentage of coverage of forests in Category II in SMPBN Areas – Level II	-Atlantic Forest (Province of Misiones, Department of San Pedro): 0.77%. -Yungas (Province of Jujuy, Department of Valle Grande): 0.55% -Chaco (Province of Salta,	-Atlantic Forest: 0.77% -Yungas: 0.55% -Chaco: 0.76% Control sites (without project intervention): % decrease in forest cover according to annual deforestation rates in each province:	**ACHIEVED** - According to the National Native Forest Monitoring Service (SNMBN), the loss of native forests by conservation category (Law 26.331) in 2019: Yungas-Jujuy 0.20% Atlantic Forest-Misiones: 0.23% Chaco-Salta: 0.25% Data for each department are not officially available. Atlantic Forest (Misiones): Pilot Site: Department of San Pedro. Annual loss rate

	Department of Rivadavia): 0.76%	-Atlantic Forest: 0.75% -Yungas: 0.46% -Chaco: 0.73%	less than 0.2%. - Yungas (Jujuy): Pilot Site: Valle Grande. Natural forests have an annual loss rate of less than 1%. - Chaco (Salta): Pilot site: Department of Rivadavia. Natural forests have an annual loss rate of less than 5%.

Outcome 2: Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure the economic and social sustainability of sustainable management of NTFPs from native forests.

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
Number of products incorporated into a "Native forests" collective brand	-0	-7 (one NTFP in each category)	**ACHIEVED** - 14 This objective has been met and exceeded. Note: Misiones- Products: medicinal herbs, palm heart, edible mushrooms, ornamental fish, melipona honey, native fruit jams, vinegars and frozen pulp of native fruits, orchids. Salta:- Products: handicrafts made from chaguar (*Bromelia hieronymi*), carob flour (*Prosopis* spp.), Parkinsonia gum (*Parkinsonia praecox*, for multiple uses), fauna (non-edible), honey from native bees (Melipona), fodder for cattle and goats prepared with native species. Jujuy- Products: tamarillo or tree tomato (*Solanum betaceum*, as fresh and processed fruit), native bee honey (Melipona), vegetable dyes.

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
Number of species incorporated into the "Native forests" collective brand	-0	-At least 20 species	**ACHIEVED** - 100 species. This objective has been met and exceeded. The project directly managed the registration of a trademark (Biodiversidad Argentina/Biodiversity Argentina - supporting documents attached) and the inclusion of new species in the National Food Code. List of species by ecoregion: Misiones: 80 species Medicinal herbs (3): *Cecropia pachystachya, Maytenus ilicifolia, Baccharis trimera* Palm heart (1): *Euterpe edulis* Fungi (3): *Poliporus sp., Macrolepiota sp., Auricularia fuscosuccinea* Ornamental fish (9): *Gymnogeophagus lipokarenos, Australoheros ykeregua, Crenicichla misioneira, Leporinus amae, Characidium serrano, Ancistrus taunayi, Hemiancistrus fulliginosus, Tachellyopterus cf. Teaguei, Diapoma lepiclastus* Melipona honey (3): *Tetragonisca fiebrigi* (yatei) *Scaptotrigona spp* (Tobuna) *Melipona torrida* (Manduri o Mondori) Native fruits (12): *Campomanesia xanthocarpa, Guapurium peruvianum, Eugenia uniflora, Bromelia balansae,*

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			Jacaratia spinosa, Eugenia myrcianthes, Eugenia involucrata, Plinia rivularis, Campomanesia guazumifolia, Philodendron bipinnatifidum, Rollinia emarginata, Acrocomia aculeata Orchids (27): *Brassavola tuberculata, Cattleya cernua, Leptotes unicolor, Rodriguesia decora, Warmingia eugenii, Zygopetalum maxillare, Isabelia virginalis, Acianthera klotzschiana, Acianthera pubescens, Acianthera recurva, Brasiliorchis chrysantha, Brasiliorchis picta, Campylocentrum grisebachii, Capanemia superflua, Catasetum fimbriantum, Cattleya lundii, Cyclopogon congestus, Cyrtopodium hatschbachii, Cyrtopodium palmifrons, Eltroplectris schlechteriana, Gomesa planifolia, Isochilus linialis, Maxillaria spegazziniana, Pleurothallis rahbdosepala, Polystachya concreta, Miltonia flavescens, Oeceoclades maculata* Trees *Bastardiopsis densiflora* (Loro Blanco), *Apuleia Leiocarpa* (Grapia), *Cordia trichotoma* (Loro Negro), *Parapiptadenia rigida* (anchico colorado), *Pelthoporum dubium* (caña fistola), *Enterolobium contortisiliquum* (timbo). Fibers (16): *Adenocalymna marginatum, Merostachys clausseni, Cordyline spectabilis, Arecastrum romanzoffianum, Daphnopsis racemosa, Ceiba speciosa-* Ceibo, *Terminalia triflora, Cyperus entrerianus, Pseudananas macrodontes, Chusquea ramosissima, Guadua trini, Guadua angustifolia, Arundo donax., Helietta apiculata-* Canela de venado, *Urera baccifera-* Ortiga, *trichilia catigua-*

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			Catigua. SALTA:11 species Chaguar (1): *Bromelia hieronymi* Carob flour (1): *Prosopis alba* Gum (1): *Parkinsonia* o *Cercidium praecox* Non-food fauna (1): *Amazona aestiva*. (Turquoise-fronted amazona - talking parrot) Pet Melipona honey (2): *Scaptotrigona jujuyensis; Melipona orbignyi* . Forage preparation made of native species (5): *Geoffroea decorticans; Caesalpinia paraguariensis; Prosopis nigra; Ziziphus mistol*; *Acacia aroma*. JUJUY (9 especies) Tamarillo or tree tomato (1): *Solanum betaceum* Melipona honey (1): *Plebeia mansita* Plants for dyes (7): *Berberis fiebrigii, Alnus acuminata, Sambucus nigra, Campovassouria cruciata, Juglans australis, Rumex sp.* Total: 100 species

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
~~Number of producers (including women producers) in three ecoregions with Social Monotax invoice to formally access NTFP markets.~~	- Atlantic Forest (Province of Misiones, Department of San Pedro): 39 (30 males and 9 females) - Yungas (Province of Jujuy, Department of Valle Grande): one (1) (male) - Chaco (Province of Salta, Department of Rivadavia): 96 (66 males and 30 females) Source: National Registry of Local Development and Social Economy Actors of the National Ministry of Social Development.	- Atlantic Forest (Province of Misiones, Department of San Pedro): 350 (175 males and 175 females) - Yungas (Province of Jujuy, Department of Valle Grande): 450 (225 males and 225 women) - Chaco (Province of Salta, Department of Rivadavia): 600 (300 males and 300 females)	This Indicator was evaluated in the MTR and it was recommended to be removed for two substantial reasons: The "Social Monotax" is no longer in force because the agricultural social monotax has been discontinued. The "Social Monotax" is no longer in force because the agricultural social monotax has been discontinued as a result of the disappearance of the Secretariat of Family Agriculture in Argentina. Also, anchoring the actions to the social monotax does not reflect the work with the communities, or the increase in the participation of its male and female members, since the issue of invoicing depends on the organization and on facts that are not linked to USUBI's purpose and more on the order of alignment to the country's tax regulations.
Change in the flow of financing (USD) for sustainable use initiatives measured by the increase in approved management plans that include the sustainable use of NTFP	-Jujuy (Yungas): $0 USD -Misiones (Atlantic Forest): $0 USD -Salta (Chaco): $0 USD	-Jujuy (Yungas): $30,000 USD -Misiones (Atlantic Forest): $30,000 USD -Salta (Chaco): $30,000 USD	**ACHIEVED** -**Jujuy (Yungas)**: $ 49,000 USD This objective has been met and exceeded. Contributions come from: 1.- Economic benefits per Management Plan (PM) and/or Conservation Plan (PC) 2015-2021, 13 PM or PC projects were financed, with a total financing of $4,708,810.00 (equivalent to USD 46,737). 2.- Funded projects (2015-2021): up to the 2020 PIR, funding was reported for USD 22,738, which comes from the National Fund for the Arts (USD 3,200), the ProHuerta INTA project (USD 10,000) to support small local producers; and the project "Strengthening handicrafts based on traditional embroidery - Valle Colorado, Santa Ana and Caspalá Communities" (USD9,583). During the analyzed

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			period, a project of the OVINE Law was financed for USD51,413.00 and another of the Secretary of Family Farming Indigenous Farmers for USD38,539. According to this, the external financing of the projects presented amounted to USD112,684. -**Misiones (Atlantic Forest)**: $ 16,540,000 Argentine pesos / 174,105 USD This objective has been met and exceeded. Contributions and financing were received from different sources and cooperation projects. Among them is the approval of a PPD initiative (UNDP Small Grants Program), the financing was approved for USD 20,000. Two projects were also approved as part of the Making a mess - Common Home Plan, led by the National Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS) to strengthen the fruit orchard and nursery of native species. This amounts to USD 2,800. Financing of USD 115,000 for the areas of Aristóbulo del Valle and Salto Encantado to strengthen the processes linked to the agroecological transition and the addition of value in the use of biodiversity products. Job training programs called "Environmental and green job promoters" will be financed with a fund of USD 15,051 -**Salta (Chaco):** (Forest Law USD $143,000; Integral community plans - (PIC USD $200,000)*. This objective has been met and exceeded. On November 1, USD 17,046 were deposited in the Los Baldes community account for the execution of the

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			management plan financed by the Forestry Law. Within the framework of the Program for the Promotion of Green Employment - Ministry of Social Development of the Nation- three proposals for funding requests are prepared.
Estimated proportion of average annual gross income for small producers (Family farm nuclei [FFN]) (including women producers) as a result of the sale and sustainable use of the NTFP	Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 15% (proportion of women in the FFN: 0.50) -Jujuy (Yungas): 15% (proportion of women in the FFN: 0.51) -Salta (Chaco): 25% (proportion of women in the FFN: 0.50) The proportion of annual income from NTFPs is based on interviews with the Steering Unit of the Ministry of Family Farming. Note: Baseline estimates of FFN gross income are approximate given the lack of accounting records among producers and the multi-activity approach prevalent in family farming. Baseline estimates have not been adjusted for inflation.	Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 35% and 45% (proportion of women in the FFN: 0.50). -Jujuy (Yungas): 35% and 45% (proportion of women in the FFN: 0.51) -Salta (Chaco): 35% and 45% (proportion of women in the FFN: 0.50). (in all cases the target increases up to year 4 and remains the same in year 5)	**ON THE WAY TO BEING ACHIEVED** **The indicator is 90% complete, and two consultancies have been developed, one to determine the composition of family income in the ecoregions and another with the Universidad Nacional de la Plata on value chains for exsitu forest products.** Jujuy. Although it is expected that the proportion of income from the sale of biodiversity products will be reflected at the end of the project cycle, it is difficult to quantify the family income of the beneficiaries at present, since the production is communal and income by cooperatives, in addition to the fact that production/income is stabilizing after the Covid pandemic. Nonetheless, there is a common methodology in the three ecoregions. Within the Yungas, this proposal was considered together with the characterization of the use of the territory and quantification of the geographic space used in transhumance. During the 2021 season, 1853 kilograms of fresh tamarillo (tree tomato) were harvested and distributed as follows: 591 (Ocloyas), 659 (Valle Grande) and 600 (Normenta). Given

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			that the producers' selling price is US$ 1.00 per kilogram, we can estimate that the sale of the fruit was US$ 1853.00. However, it is important to note that this direct relationship is for the purpose of quantifying the indicator. It should be remembered that marketing is handled by cooperatives, which implies that the sales value is tripled (US$3.00/kg fresh) or value is added through industrialization. For more details, we recommend reading the annexes on the tamarillo value chain and business plan. Other elements must be added to the calculation of income from the sale of fresh tomatoes, such as capital goods purchased by the cooperatives: acquisition of land in the town of Ocloyas for US$5,200 as a result of the income obtained from the sale; and the acquisition of land in the town of Valle Grande for a fiscal value of US$3,000. Total income, between the two cooperatives, was US$12,250.00. According to the application filed with the registry of cooperatives, a total of 25 families are estimated to have participated. Given that the cooperatives integrate many different producers and seek an equitable redistribution among their members, we can assume that during 2021 the per capita income was US$490. Based on the survey data, the average annual income of producers is US$2760.00. It is estimated that income from commercialization represents 17.75% of household income. - Salta (Chaco): no improvement in income from the sale of biodiversity products was detected during this period due to the fact that the demand for these products has been reduced by the pandemic, ASPO and its economic consequences. The Community of Los Baldes has regularized its situation with the Federal

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			Administration of Public Revenues (AFIP), which allows the families of the community to trade within the formal parameters in the name of the community. Related to the improvement of income from the sale of biodiversity products, activities and training have been carried out related to: - Assembly and validation of the Business Model using the LINK Methodology (participatory guide for inclusive business models with small farmers) and the Palancas Model created by Mr. Manuel Sbdar of the MATERIBIZ Business School). - Training aimed at strengthening the management and work of the Tayhi K'OS LHAY Milling Plant of the Communities on the following topics: Identity, Market Research, Production, Costs, Commercialization and Administration. Training for the creation of a network of Solidarity Markets for carob trees and other fruits so that they understand the functioning of social enterprises. In the case of carob pods, sales increased from 38 bags in 2018 to 239 bags in 2019 – a 6-fold increase over the previous season; in *Parkinsonia* gum, from 5 kg to 540 kg, an increase of over 100 times the previous season. All of the above generated income for the indigenous communities in the Morillo tar gum area: 740 USD for the tar gum harvest; ARS 59,750 / 625 USD for the carob harvest and ARS 42,000 / 440 USD for the sale of carob flour so far. The total amount is ARS 172,750 / 1800 USD and the communities have the remaining stock of carob flour for sale. Misiones: In terms of kilograms of fruit harvested, Ubajay had an increase of 52%,

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos a la EF
			Yacaratia 70.5% and Caraguata 30%. It should be noted that during the period August 2020 - January 2021 the province experienced a water emergency. Additionally, it is estimated that around 500 hectares in the north (San Pedro) and 340 hectares in the center of the province (El Valle del Cuña Pirú) were affected by fires in the native forest. This caused a decrease in the production of fruits, mushrooms and honey. Revenues generated from the sale of NTFPs in the ecoregion are as follows: Native bee honey: ARS 210,000 / 2200 USD; native bee hives: ARS 150,000 / 1570 USD; vinegars and liquors: ARS 202,000 / 1296 USB; jams: ARS 227,000 / 2365 USD; orchids: ARS 40,000 / 420 USD; edible mushrooms: ARS 10,000 / 100 USD; palm and sweet pulp: ARS 402,000 / 4200 USD. Medicinal herbs: 1875 USD 0,000 ARS This generated a total income of ARS 1,241,000 (US$14,732) for the ecoregion's beneficiaries, and there are still products to be harvested and marketed.

Outcome 3: Governance framework at national and provincial levels for sustainable management of NTFP of native forests landscapes.

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos de la EF
Number of proposals submitted regarding types of new and/or reformed policies or regulations that promote	-0	- Protocol for the sustainable management of NTFPs adopted by the Forestry Unit for 3 ecoregions, and updates made in at least one province that	**ACHIEVED** The project team participated in and supported the creation of the following regulatory bodies: National level: 1. Bill 2283/19. Law of minimum budgets for the preservation and conservation of biological diversity, and the sustainable use of its components presented for debate in parliament pending approval. 2. Argentine Biodiversity Trademark - Registration in the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI) granted to the Secretariat of Environmental Policy on

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos de la EF
and/or facilitate the sustainable use of biodiversity of in 4.4 million ha.		increase the proposed requirements (improving sustainability).	Natural Resources of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, granted No. 3230221 Date 05/11/2021. 3. Ministerial Resolutions - National Directorate of Biodiversity 3.1. Creation of the Program to Promote the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Agroecosystems Reso-2020-78-GDEBA-MDAGP 3.2 Single Public Registry of Wildlife Operators - Resol-2021-170-APN-MAD At the provincial level: Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 1) Creation of the Provincial Registry of Beekeepers of the Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources of the Province of Misiones (MERNR) (ANSA Nest Rescue Registry, Registry of natural and legal persons). 2) Compilation of Provincial Digests (compilation of laws, regulations, resolutions) 3) Sustainable Use of Biodiversity Regulations (USBD): Harvesting Protocols, Monitoring 4) Ruling on the use of fruit trees (Mirtaceae family), 5) Requirements and forms for the submission of Management Plan Proposals for the sustainable use of biodiversity as established in Law No. 26.331 of Minimum Requirements for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests. 6) Incorporation of protocols for the sustainable use of biodiversity in the Manual of Agroecological Standards for the implementation of the Single System of Participatory Certification (SUCP) for quality assurance. 7) Training on work environment between non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of Ecology of Misiones for the formulation of guidelines for biodiversity monitoring. Jujuy 1) Proposal of Associated Beneficiaries, which contemplates the reception of the benefits of Law 26.331 by indigenous peasant producers who do not have a property title. Resolution 017/21 (attached). 2) Protocol for action in the context of the pandemic. Approved by an Emergency Operating Committee composed of local health authorities, and created for the purpose of responding to the pandemic. 3) Local protocols: 3.1.-Protocol for the management and use of biodiversity products; and 3.2.-Protocol for the use and monitoring of plant species with dyeing potential.

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos de la EF
Change in the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the provincial governments to implement and monitor the sustainable use of biodiversity in landscapes as measured by the project's Capacity Scorecard: a) Capacity for participation; b) Capacity for the creation of, access to, and use of information and knowledge; c) Capacity for the development of strategies, policy, and legislation; d) Capacity for management and implementation; e) Capacity for monitoring and evaluation	CSO -Salta (Chaco): 10% -Jujuy (Yungas): 10% -Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 10% Provincial Governments -Salta (Chaco): 29.4%. -Jujuy (Yungas): 35.3% -Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 41.2%.	CSO Salta (Chaco): baseline + up to 30% -Jujuy (Yungas): baseline + up to 30% -Misiones (Atlantic Forest): baseline + up to 30% Provincial Governments -Salta (Chaco): 59.4% -Jujuy (Yungas): 65.3% -Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 71.2%	**ACHIEVED** Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) - Salta (Chaco): 61,50% This objective has been met and exceeded. -Jujuy (Yungas): 62,30% This objective has been met and exceeded. - Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 59,10% This objective has been met and exceeded. Provincial Government - Salta (Chaco): 57,40% - 97% of the goal has been met. -Jujuy (Yungas): 73,53% This objective has been met and exceeded. - Misiones (Atlantic Forest): 76,47% This objective has been met and exceeded.
Number of persons/officials trained in the Application of the Forest Law	Atlantic Forest -Province of Misiones: 0 Yungas -Province of Jujuy: 0 -Additional province: 0	Atlantic Forest -Province of Misiones: 44 (4 people in the forestry sector + 40 people in the biodiversity sector).	**ACHIEVED** Atlantic Forest: - Province of Misiones: 1,330 (1,245 in the biodiversity sector and 85 in the forestry sector) This objective has been met and exceeded.

Indicador	Línea Base	Meta al final del proyecto	Hallazgos de la EF
	Chaco -Province of Salta: 0 -Additional province: 0	Yungas -Province of Jujuy: 24 (4 people in the forestry sector + 20 people in the biodiversity sector) -Additional province: 50 Chaco -Province of Salta: 33 (13 people in the forestry sector +20 people in the biodiversity sector) -Additional province: 50	Yungas: - Province of Jujuy: 334 (124 from the forestry sector and 210 from the biodiversity sector) This objective has been met and exceeded. Chaco: -Province of Salta: 209 (48 from the forestry sector and 161 from the biodiversity sector) This objective has been met and exceeded.

4.3.3. Relevance

3) Assessment of Outcomes	Rating
Relevance	6. Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Effectiveness	5. Satisfactory (S)
Efficiency	5. Satisfactory (S)
Overall Project Outcome Rating	5. Satisfactory (S)

RATING 6	Relevance / Highly Satisfactory (HS)	

121. The project was evaluated as **Highly Relevant** by all interviewees and is consistent with the evaluator's comment based on the documentary information accessed. The reasons for this rating are described throughout the evaluation report and are generally based on:

122. Revaluation of traditional and organizational knowledge for the sustainable use of biodiversity products, which resulted in a high level of identity and ownership of the project's topics in the sustainable use of resources.

123. Tuning the USUBI topics to local and national needs, as strategies to improve the quality of life and ecosystems, including a focus on monetary, organizational and environmental benefits for

stakeholders.

124. Creation of national regulations derived from USUBI's work, such as the resolutions creating the national initiatives "Inclusive Conservation of Biodiversity and Non-Timber Forest Products Project Argentina

125. Contribution of linkages with universities, NGOs and indigenous communities.

126. Processes and tools for technical training, feedback, incorporation of consultancies, which constitute tools for wider audiences for action.

127. Insertion of the criterion of environmental production, which translates into an increasing demand for new forms of ecosystem-friendly production as a means of diversifying livelihoods, conservation and improvement of quality of life.

128. Development of regulations and programs to promote the sustainable use of NTFPs, gender equity and promotion of indigenous communities, with a post-USUBI approach.

129. The interviewees (anonymity and confidentiality) mentioned that the topic existed spontaneously in the ecoregions, but without the presence of the USUBI project, the topic and the revaluation of practices and processes that constitute the intangible capital of the project would not have been consolidated. During the TE, the strength of the technical team stands out, who has placed the work of sustainable use of biodiversity on the radar of providers, processors and institutions. This is a result of an adequate articulation, empathy and capacity of the territorial units and the CU.

4.3.4. Effectiveness and Efficiency

RATING 5	Effectiveness / Satisfactory (S)	

The project's rating in terms of effectiveness is Satisfactory, justified by:

130. The project is aligned with the UNDP Strategic Program, GEF strategic priorities, national development priorities and the SDGs.

131. The objectives have been achieved in a manner consistent with the project planning and its original design; there are relevant milestones for the nation and the territory, ranging from increased coverage under conservation categories, planning of important areas, increase of key fauna species, registration of non-timber forest products in the Argentinean food catalog, which translates into an effective intervention and translation of conceptual results into tangible ones. In addition, critical aspects that exceed the scope of the project were identified, for which alternative instruments were proposed in order to achieve compliance with the project's "theory of minimums" described throughout the evaluation.

132. The effectiveness was analyzed comprehensively in terms of objectives, results, products and

relevant activities and their milestones. In this sense, the impact indicators (O.I.1, O.I.2, O.I.3) related to: area in hectares with benefits from sustainable use of biodiversity; management plans and key species presence, respectively, exceed 100% of execution and are documented in the project repository. In the case of the SEARL indicator, work was carried out on alternative and real methods of measurement and application, and it is important to note that the importance of changing the indicator was documented during the MTR and the PIRs.

133. In terms of relevant results and achievements for each component, USUBI was able to contribute to the generation of data on the coverage of conservation areas to determine the real impact of the project on the intervention sites (Outcome 1). Also, the number of products incorporated into the Argentine Food Catalog and the registration of the Biodiversidad Argentina trademark exceeded the goals set. The value of the latter process "Biodiversidad Argentina" is particularly noteworthy, due to the diversification of forest-friendly activities, as a result of which 33 products have been registered in a portfolio that includes fibers, food, supplements and value-added products, medicinal plants, orchids and others, which integrate biodiversity, community and gender criteria for their production (Outcome 2). In addition, in the same outcome, the indicator of change in the flow of financing has been surpassed; the leveraging of resources in the territory has been recursive, generating interactions with initiatives of PPD, INTA and the Nation, which give visibility and attractiveness to the work between sustainable production and conservation of biodiversity.

134. Regarding Outcome 3 and relevant activities, a series of important milestones have been achieved; for example, the draft bill for the "Law on Minimum Requirements for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Use of its Components"; the registration of the "Biodiversidad Argentina/Biodiversity Argentina" trademark with the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI); and the creation of two Inclusive Conservation and NTFP programs of the Nation. In addition, the creation of two national programs of Inclusive Conservation and NTFPs. In the same outcome, the indicator of change in the capacities of CSOs and provincial governments, has been fulfilled and surpassed. Likewise, the indicator referring to the number of people/authorities trained on the enforcement of the forestry law was widely achieved and managed with equity and gender criteria.

135. The time to achieve the proposed results did not contemplate unforeseen events (COVID 19) nor the articulation in the territory and the implications involved with adapting to the customs and understanding of the native peoples, which exceeded the time originally planned. However, in the USUBI project, time extensions do not represent last minute conditions but rather respond to a strategy of greater transcendence of the topic in the national context.

136. Adaptive management was used effectively post MTR, for example, the comment on the NTFP production chain was addressed and although there are aspects such as the market that exceed the scope of the initiatives, there is evidence of a shared responsibility of the CU and partners to address this and other recommendations of the MTR.

RATING 5	Efficiency / Satisfactory (S)	

Overall efficiency is Satisfactory.

137. Efficient use of financial and technical resources should enable timely and quality project execution. In the case of USUBI, the use of the corporate MTR/PIR (Highly Satisfactory), financial

(Moderately Satisfactory) and M&E (Satisfactory) tools, in general give a very positive reference (Satisfactory) of the project management and stakeholders. The element that disallowed the rating of very satisfactory in this section is: the two extensions of the project, which overall add 36 additional months to those originally planned. While these aspects limited the rating, they do not counterbalance the positive impacts identified by the evaluator in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and day-to-day work; and conceptual work elements such as rings of management rings, theory of minimums and effective decentralization are valued.

138. The allocation of financial resources and mainly its timely use was a limiting factor for the project. Although this had an under-execution until 2019, coupled with the devaluation of the Argentinean currency (an external factor beyond the control of the project executing unit), for external actors it limits the issuance of a rating of very satisfactory.

139. In terms of efficiency, the project has achieved close to 98% of the overall objective and use of financial resources as of the date of the TE; there is a strategy for executing the remaining resources, mainly the closing of agreements with academia, communication and knowledge management of the project. Components 1 and 3 have demontrated greater economic and operational performance. On the other hand, Component 2, linked to markets, has made progress that is considered foundational for consolidating the benefits of the sustainable use of biodiversity in the medium term.

4.3.5. Overall Project Outcome

140. The overall rating of the project is Satisfactory, which is justified with significant progress in the development of objectives (Satisfactory), and implementation progress Satisfactory. This last section includes the components: technical (Highly Satisfactory), financial (Satisfactory) and time (Satisfactory).

4.3.6. Sostenibilidad

4) Sustainability	Rating
Environmental sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Socio-political sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Institutional framework and governance sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Financial sustainability	4. Likely (L)
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	4. Likely (L)

RATING 4	Environmental sustainability / Likely (L)	

141. The project design proposed environmental sustainability based on strengthening sustainable production practices with biodiversity in sites of high value for biodiversity conservation, using instruments for the adaptation of sustainable non-timber forest management plans and best practices, which together with the strengthening of local capacities will help local stakeholders to have diversified income, which will reduce the current pressure on the remnants of native forests and contribute to their conservation. The production management plans that will be generated under the premises of good practices and framed within the concept of sustainable use will allow for a reduction in the use of

agrochemicals and excessive deforestation, a decrease in soil erosion, an improvement in the quality of water in streams and rivers, and the possibility of improving the carbon dioxide capture capacity of the forests.

142. Along the same lines in the MTR, it was identified that the greatest environmental risk that could reverse the results of the project lies in the vulnerability of ecosystems due to climate change, as well as the impacts that invasive species could have.

143. With the background described above, the environmental sustainability of the USUBI initiative has a rating of Probable (P), since the efforts made by the project, such as the conservation of areas of ecosystemic importance, the Sustainable Management Plans, local empowerment and the articulation of institutions, are well established and are unlikely to have setbacks due to the sense of "revaluation of the forest" as a provider of tangible benefits for communities and ecosystems.

144. Inherently, the regulatory frameworks that have a very good possibility of impacting provinces, such as the two programs, Non Timber Forest Products Argentina and Inclusive Conservation, reaffirm the environmental sustainability criteria issued in the TE.

RATING 4	Socio-political sustainability / Likely (L)	

145. In designing the project, social sustainability was achieved through the direct participation of local producers and indigenous peoples in all phases of the project. The work with producer associations and different social organizations in the territory strengthened the technical and economic support that they can provide to small producers in order to generate sustainable management practices during the life of the project and beyond. In addition, small NTFP producers benefited from training and extension services, technical assistance and access to economic incentives for the implementation of conservation and sustainable production initiatives. On the other hand, an important part of the social sustainability of the project was the awareness raising and strengthening of local community organizations in the defense of the native forest. Social sustainability at the regulatory level was based on the incorporation of concepts and the definition of specific actions related to the incorporation of management plans (Forest Law) to improve capacities for their preparation, implementation and management.

146. Along the same lines, the MTR mentions that there is a high socioeconomic risk that the strong pressure for the expansion of traditional production will continue, with its consequent impact on the project's goals, beyond the three ecoregions intervened, with the consequent elimination, segmentation and degradation of forests as a result of land use change due to the advance of the agricultural frontier, mainly monocultures. Another risk lies in the fact that current project beneficiaries are not settled in large-scale communities, with few families moving in and out of the project, which would mean little increase in additional income from improved access to markets and the optimization of value chains.

147. In the TE, a high level of stakeholder involvement has been identified in the formalization of organizations linked to the sustainable use of biodiversity in the project intervention areas; this element is relevant and is consistent with the MTR's comments on formalizing social interventions. Although the particular characteristics of each ecoregion, such as customs and organization, were addressed to enhance USUBI's intervention, the market component requires institutional work and the work of the organizations themselves, considering that the market responds to needs and demands that must be in tune with what USUBI has achieved and the understanding of market messages. In the short and long term, these actions will contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and of the ecosystems targeted by the project and for the final TE there are minimal risks of setbacks, which supports the

comment made.

RATING 4	Institutional framework and governance sustainability / Likely (L)	

148. In the project design, institutional sustainability lies in the project's contribution to strengthening the existing political-administrative structures for the management of sustainable use for biodiversity conservation through the integration of actions by the central and provincial governments. The project established conditions for the sustainable use of biodiversity through the development of specific regulations at the provincial level on the sustainable use of NTFPs, control and evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of productive activities in Category II native forest areas in the three provinces. On the other hand, through institutional strengthening and the organizational development of small producers for production and marketing, the capacity of provincial institutions and producers was increased to achieve and sustain the technical and commercial results of the project.

149. Also, the national Forest Law was one of the fundamental tools for inserting USUBI's considerations through the dissemination of the benefits obtained by the sustainable use of NTFPs, models of sustainable use of biodiversity will strengthen the presence and institutional vision of MAyDS and provinces, legitimizing the actions aimed at the approval of management plans as a valid and proven alternative for the conservation of biodiversity and the improvement of the living conditions of local populations.

150. Along the same lines, the MTR identified as the greatest institutional risk the renewal of national and provincial authorities, due to the elections, impacting the support that the authorities will provide to the parliamentary process of the "Law on Minimum Biodiversity Budgets". A governance risk results in the need for the establishment of "anchors" with individual agents.

With this background, the TE's comment is Probable, given that the proposed scenarios have not affected the project's performance and, on the contrary, laws, regulatory bodies and processes have been promoted that strengthen the management of the sustainable use of biodiversity, such as the " "Biodiversidad Argentina/Biodiversity Argentina" trademark, and the national NTFP and Inclusive Conservation programs, which have a very good prospect of being replicated in provinces and mainly in the ecoregions of Project intervention. This highlights the scalability and replicability approach promoted by the institutions. In addition to all this, there is the linkage of academia, marking an area of knowledge to be exploited and that can result in benefits for stakeholders.

RATING 3	Financial sustainability / Likely (L)	

151. In the project design, financial sustainability is based on the establishment of conditions for the use and sale of NTFPs including regulations, adequate infrastructure (machinery and tools, warehouses, etc.) and technical training for the development of sustainable use techniques, strengthening of small producer organizations for commercialization, and development of stable markets for these products. Finally, it is expected that small producers' improvements in production and marketing will generate more stable and increasing incomes, which will contribute to the sustainability of their NTFP production initiatives. These results will lead to an increase in income, which in turn will open up the possibility that small producers will be able to better manage their own resources and become self-financing.

152. At the MTR, a medium probability of sustainability was identified; lack of funding would undermine

the incorporation of sustainable biodiversity production models by smallholders after GEF support ends.
153. In the TE, there is evidence of hard work in the development of regulations, registration of NTFP products and species, equipment and infrastructure for adding value to NTFPs, which have led to improved organizational, production and conservation processes. However, the criterion of Moderately Probable is issued because the link in the value chain that constitutes the "market" is not under the control of the suppliers, a confluence of product demanders is required, and although USUBI has generated spaces for the positioning of sustainable products, the market is a space that has many variables and requires constant work that is the responsibility of the producers themselves and the institutions. The case of the pandemic is cited, which in some cases improved the demand for alternative products (honeys) but in other cases the products can be considered a luxury. The effort is highlighted in this report and the limitations that reinforce the TE's comment are issued.

4.3.7. Country ownership

154.Starting from the design, the project was built based on a good contextual review, and ownership by the country has been evident, since it is aligned with the national laws of the Republic of Argentina, such as: Law 24.375 (Convention on Biological Diversity), Law 26.331 on Minimum Standards for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests and Law 25.080 on Investments for Cultivated Forests, Law 22.421 on Fauna Conservation and the General Environmental Law (Law 25.675), as well as programs promoted by the MAyDS, Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and Social Development, such as: PROSOBO (Social Forestry Program), PRODEAR (Program for the Development of Rural Areas), PRODERI (Program for Inclusive Social Development), Collective Trademark, the National Program for the Management and Sustainable Use of Wild Species, the National Program for the Conservation of Threatened Species, the Program for the Protection of Wildlife Habitats, the National Program for the Management of Flora.

155. The project addressed and responded to key national needs for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and opted for the proposal in the three ecoregions of Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco; this proposal is reflected in two instances, the generation of local work and coordination mechanisms (formal and ad doc agreements) and the increase of capacities and knowledge of the stakeholders in general.

156. In addition to the policy alignment and conservation/sustainable production management described above, USUBI has managed to actively involve key stakeholders, as mentioned in section 4.2.2. “Real stakeholder participation and agreements and partnerships" by keeping governance mechanisms in place (Project Steering Committee and Territorial Units) and maintained work with associations, organizations, communities, NGOs, academia and government agencies in the provinces of Jujuy, Salta and Misiones. In this sense, each ecoregion, under its own administrative particularity, has had different levels of ownership. To cite the relevant aspects of each one, for example, the province of Misiones had remarkable results in the formulation of regulations, links with academia and the articulation with the national protected areas units; in the same line, Jujuy had remarkable aspects in terms of direct training with producers and a well achieved link with the University for advice and generation of information; and finally Salta stands out for its work with native communities such as the Wichi peoples, where they adapt the work to local customs and traditions, incorporating a vision of respect for their way of life and harmonized complement with the USUBI proposal.

4.3.8. Gender equality and women's empowerment

157. Although in the project design the gender issue was integrated in a narrative manner, without considering mainstreaming or the allocation of funds for the issue, the project incorporated it through an external consultancy for each ecoregion, with the participation of professional women's teams and the motivation and promotion of community women and minority groups in their activities, with a positive response from these sectors and an enrichment of ideas and experiences for the project. A contextual social appraisal from a gender perspective was prepared and is currently being reviewed and final corrections made, resulting in valuable recommendations, four of which (a, c, d and e) have been internalized in project management; It highlights the work related to institutional training against gender violence within the framework of the Micaela Law No. 27499, which USUBI used to integrate the axes of equity, respect, participation and equality in its daily work and that of the stakeholders with whom it is linked; item b is a medium-term recommendation and is a proposal for post-project knowledge management, the summary of recommendations are detailed below:

a) To deepen in a sustained and continuous manner the training for technical teams and personnel in general of the national and provincial ministries of environment, such as those present in the territory, on human rights, indigenous law, women's rights and all those issues related to gender issues.

b) Encourage the various public programs and policies, as well as all documentation related to the systematization, identification of indicators, results and experiences of the processes in which state participants state participants intervene, to be elaborated in relation to the multiple structural problems, which should include an analysis from a gender perspective, intersectionality, ecofeminism, transdisciplinarity and intersectoriality.

c) **Modify cultural barriers regarding the role of women in conservation.** The integration of women in conservation projects from a gender perspective should be oriented towards overcoming the obstacles that prevent their full participation in programs and projects, as well as modifying the sexual division of labor. It requires facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and access to technical training in the areas of greatest impact within conservation.

d) **Modify the scale and nature of the projects**, contemplating the active, dynamic participation of women and other non-binary identities, taking into account specificities, such as participation in the preparation of budgets that are adjusted according to demands and needs, taking into account women's schedules, which leads to encouraging positive leadership and revitalizing processes of autonomy.

e) **Generate spaces and instances of inter-institutional collaboration** so that the involvement can strengthen the different social groups involved, so that results, impact and experience can have or come close to the expected results.

158. On the inclusion of gender issues, it is interesting to note the configuration of the hiring of personnel in the gender consulting teams, most of whom are women present in each ecoregion; the solvency and ownership of the thematic of sustainable use of biodiversity and gender at the time of the interviews in which women provided valuable information for the TE and that are worthy of externalizing to other fields, such as the *contextual social diagnosis from the gender perspective, the toolbox, participatory surveys, work calendar for rural women, intergenerational information sources and many aspects that are part of the project products*. Likewise, in terms of native communities and their participation, it can be qualified as

efficient and successful, therefore, it can be concluded that the participation of women has been carried out in a fair manner, allowing them to take relevant positions and decisions.

159. On the gender results effectiveness scale (Figure 7), the project is gender responsive because it addresses women's needs, as well as the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, but it did not address the root causes of inequalities in their lives.

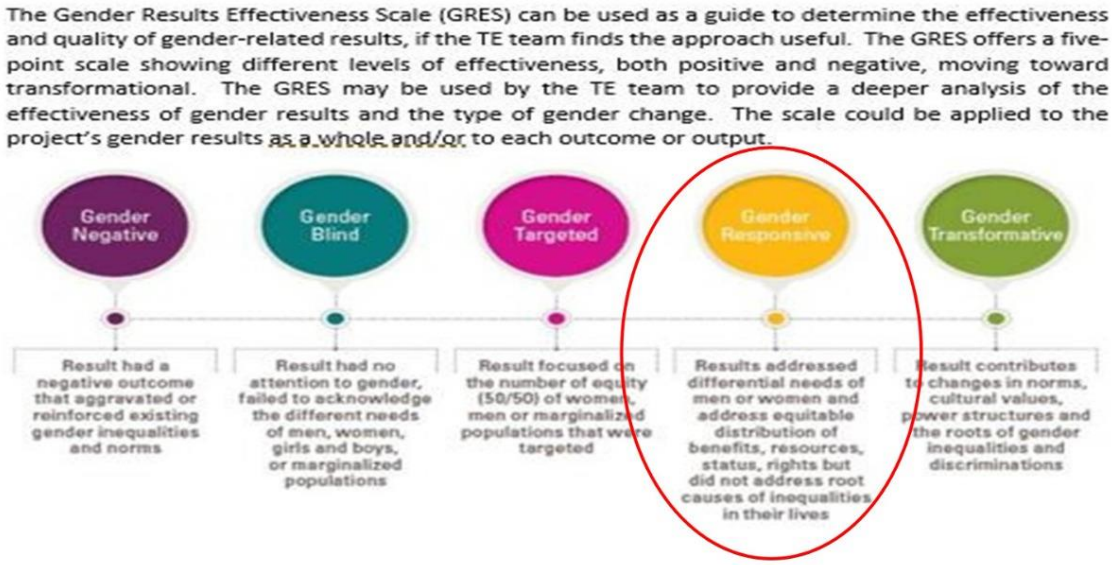

Figure 6. Gender results effectiveness scale (UNDP, 2015).

160. As mentioned, the design of the USUBI project did not explicitly address the issue of gender and women's empowerment in a cross-cutting manner, nor did it include the allocation of specific funds for this issue. However, during the implementation of the project, mainly post-MTR and its recommendations, three professionals were hired as part of the core team for each territory, highly respected and experienced professionals in the field who contributed on a day-to-day basis to addressing gender issues, whose base products were as follows:

- Analysis of the USUBI program related to food sovereignty and a gender approach.

- Anthropological calendar of Biodiversity from a gender perspective.

- Contextual social diagnosis from a gender perspective

- Gender Toolbox

-. Survey “Re-survey of land use and biodiversity”.

- Awareness-raising workshop on the Micaela Law. Incorporation of the gender perspective and recognition of violence against women and non-binary identities.

161. Regarding the above, the effort to reduce gender gaps was worked on according to the realities of each ecoregion, for example, Wichi (Salta), Creole and mestizo communities, whose results show varied progress, but unquestionably useful in the context of each ecoregion.

162. It is important to mention the sequential approach to gender in the project, where it was initially identified that the participation of women is fluctuating, what the project called "seasonal beneficiaries" for various reasons, one of which has to do with domestic responsibilities.

163. To promote women's empowerment, work was done on the concept that the forest is part of the domestic universe, acting on affirmative actions that translate into equality and respect for and among women. Action strategies were designed to mobilize participation structures and change roles in order to promote leadership in productive enterprises by groups of women and young people, in which men (spouses, family members) were also able to participate as members. Participation and training spaces such as "Women, community feminisms and sustainability of the forest", in which the enterprises led by women from the different ecoregions were presented, experiences were shared and the producers had the opportunity to tell the story behind each product.

164. This integration of the factors described above, in regards to the TE, shows that the balance of the participation of women, mainly producers, was positive, since it values, makes visible and empowers the work that has been carried out in the territory and in coordination with local organizations.

165. As each ecoregion is very particular in terms of its conformation and customs, the specific approach to them should be emphasized: In the Yungas ecoregion, extensive training processes on Gender and Social Issues were carried out. Their main objective was to question the paradigms, mandates and conservative designs and patriarchal traditions. Regarding the fundamental activity of tamarillo or tree tomato production, each producer family designates a person to represent them in meetings, participate in the organization's decisions and in training and exhibition events. The participation of women in action, decision-making and participation is around 55%.

4.3.9. Cross-cutting Issues

166. In cross-cutting issues, USUBI, by inserting a new paradigm of production in balance with conservation in its design and execution, promoted elements of sustainable production that contribute to poverty reduction in rural areas of the ecoregions intervened (Component 2). It was also in tune with local and national needs, respecting existing livelihoods and customs, as intangible assets, actions aligned with Human Rights and Capacity Building mandates.

167. As regards tangible actions (Component 2), the Project strengthened the value chain of several products derived from the forest, from production, associativity, registration, employment, infrastructure and conservation, a set of factors that are strongly linked to poverty reduction and, in the particular case of the tamarillo crop in Jujuy, irrigation and efficient water management practices were incorporated, which reduced agricultural vulnerability to the effects of climate change on the productive system, an axis of action of the United Nations to combat climate change and desertification.

4.3.10. GEF Additionality

168.. The GEF facilitated investments that otherwise would not have been possible from other governmental or non-governmental sources alone.

169. The GEF also focused its support on the development of participatory and integrated sustainable biodiversity use management models based on the management of NTFPs, the integration of indigenous communities and a focus on the economic component based on the environmental component.

170. By building the capacity of provincial and local forest and NTFP technical teams, and supporting the participatory and integrated work of the public and private sectors and local communities, the GEF project facilitated the development, implementation and scaling up of sustainable management of ecoregions.

4.3.11. Catalytic/Replication Effect

171. The results of the project have a high possibility of scalability and replication in the different provinces. Although most of the pilot intervention is located in populated centers of the ecoregions, progress has been made at the macro level that constitutes the basis for territorial planning and strengthening, facilitating articulation processes between the national level and the provinces, within the scope of their competencies, for the common work and benefit of ecosystems and communities. It is important to mention the work and communication networks that have been promoted with the support of the CU.

172. At the provincial level, articulation and replication is evident and common, mainly in soft actions (knowledge exchange, empowerment of actions, local associativity), putting into discussion the challenges and opportunities for the sustainable use of NTFPs. Worth mentioning as a result are the community NTFP enterprises, the provincial regulations developed, the national programs, the competence outside the project, among others.

173. There are actions with the potential to facilitate replication and sustainability, such as the integration of young people in the technification of product processing, the integration of university thesis students in the area, youth microenterprises, women's leadership and management, identity ownership, socio-contextual characterization to identify pilot sites and be able to give them a gender perspective, among others.

174. This set of elements constitute fundamental lessons learned for the structuring of new initiatives.

175. Finally, the replication criteria could have a control and measurement mechanism in the nation/provinces to accompany the native communities and be sustained over time, integrating academia, the recently enacted laws (Inclusive Conservation and NTFP) to seek both national and cooperation resources to operationalize the platform generated as a legacy of USUBI.

4.3.12. Progress to Impact

The comment for the Impact of the project is High.

176. The impact is the consequence of the interaction of the threats identified in the project with the conditions of the territory and the issue being addressed. In this sense, the central pillar supporting the theme is the sustainable management of forests, the sustainability of NTFPs and the strengthening of the governance framework, whose results are positive and highly valued by the actors interviewed, who describe that the project has promoted the importance and dissemination of NTFPs, technical work in the territory, the participation of native communities, communication, the role of gender, scientific-academic integration, the exchange of ideas and experiences, elements of understanding and advice, which have

brought to the technical, academic and institutional forefront the need to increase knowledge and management of biodiversity in the ecoregions.

177. In the evaluator's opinion, a cross-learning process was generated, the strength of which lies in the empowerment of stakeholders and the increasing demand from civil society sectors on the subject.

178. At the quantitative level, the analysis of the impact indicators that make up the project's objective has the following qualification criteria:

- O.I.1) Areas of forest with sustainable use benefits: Achieved
- O.I.2) in the occurrence of key animal species at site level: Achieved
- O.I.3) Sustainable management plans that include NTFPs: Achieved
- O.I.4) Change in the Ecosystem Health Index: Achieved through adaptive management and the use of alternative/realistic measurement tools.

5. MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED

5.1. Main Findings

1	Project design

179. The USUBI project addressed a theme that sought to "revalue" traditional biodiversity knowledge and means of production. USUBI in its design has a clear, sequential and logical architecture between indicators, results and the central objective of the initiative. The project identifies a monitoring and evaluation plan, which was conceived following project cycle guidelines, is clear and consistent and includes indicators, means of verification, personnel in charge, budget and time allocated to project activities. It highlights the use of corporate tools such as interim and final evaluations, which were consistent with the thematic that USUBI proposes to address.

180. The project design was well conceived from the outset; it has very relevant baseline information, an implementation strategy, work plan, and M&E plan. In addition, although the mid-term review implementation had external complications, its objective report was an asset allowing reorienting and enhancing the project implementation.

181. Along the same lines (design), the three components proposed in the project and their indicators lead to the successful achievement of the objective, the improvement of the conservation status of forests, the financing and market for products derived from biodiversity and the development of efficient management capacities providing an enabling environment for the sustainable use of biodiversity.

182. The M&E plan in the Prodoc design includes an inception report, PIRs, quarterly and annual reports, mid-term review, final evaluation, and financial audits. Periodic monitoring of implementation progress was designed to be carried out through quarterly meetings with the implementation team, or more frequently as deemed necessary. This would allow the parties to take stock and address project-related issues in a timely manner to

ensure timely implementation of project activities.

183. The monitoring system proposes the use of standard tools such as SEARL and local monitoring (support from the provinces) to estimate the positive or negative change of sustainable biodiversity use interventions; all of these elements have quantifiable characteristics.

184. In the implementation of the TE, a target indicator (O.I.4) linked to the index of ecosystem health (ISEARL) has been identified, which is beyond the scope of the project, mainly due to the reliance on third party information. However, alternative/realistic means were sought to achieve the indicator and the difficulty was duly documented in the PIR and MTR.

185. The application of SMART criteria to the project indicators is adequate, with the exception of the indicator indicated, which overestimates the scope and timing of the project.

186. In this sense, the comment on the design is **Satisfactory** since the processes proposed promote coherency, consistency and clarity, contemplating the control point for quantifying change (theory of change) based on a broad vision both quantitative (monitoring commentary, plans, products) and qualitative (associated benefits), which are adaptable to the provincial and national context.

2	Project Implementation

187. In terms of implementation, appropriate adaptive management strategies have been utilized, considering the innovative and complex nature of the issue, the national context, the monetary uncertainty and the Covid-19 pandemic. The strategies (rings of management) and corporate tools implemented (PIRs, CDRs, MTR) were solid and aligned with the individual goals and objectives of each component, included cross-cutting issues (communications, gender, territorial linkages), and have been supervised in the governance mechanisms of the Project Steering Committee and the Project Management (MAyDS) and the UNDP Country Office.

188. In terms of effectiveness and efficiency, translated into the achievement of objectives and the use of resources, there is evidence of adequate progress of goals, activities and products after the Mid-Term Review (MTR) (Satisfactory Effectiveness) even though there are limitations that the project has not been able to overcome, mainly financial and execution timeliness (Satisfactory Efficiency). Adaptive management has led to transcendental decisions that translate into transcendental results to place the sustainable use of biodiversity and NTFPs on the institutional, productive and academic agenda.

189. It should be mentioned that the financial implementation of the project has been affected by situations beyond CU's control. The foreign exchange situation, political rotation and the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, have compromised the timing and use of financial resources impacting certain activities, which lead to a second extension of the Project. The extensión has been used effectively to transcend and consolidate the results and issues that USUBI addressed.

3	Tracking and Monitoring

190. Corporate project management tools: These were defined in the design and established in the Prodoc (inception workshop, MTR, PIR, Audits, TE). Their implementation was programmatic and although the MTR had an extended process, the assimilation of and response to its recommendations are highly signifcant for the achievement of the results evidenced in the TE.

191. Technical tools: Several quantitative indicators were defined for the achievement of the project's objective, such as: Objective Indicator 1.- Area (ha) of forest with benefits from the sustainable use of biodiversity in SMPNF Areas - Level II; Objective Indicator 2.- Changes in the presence (% occurrence) of key animal species at site level (Atlantic Forest: 40,000 ha; Yungas 60,000 ha; Chaco: 100,000 ha); Objective Indicator 3. - Percentage of Sustainable Management Plans (SMP) that include NTFPs and; Objective Indicator 4. - Change in the index of ecosystem health (ISEARL)* for the project landscapes. The latter had to be adapted to realistic measurement conditions. Overall, all indicators were met; the value added to this is the adaptation and adoption of the technical tools and their availability to interested stakeholders.

192. General: The project has used and strengthened the adaptive, timely and adequate management criteria, changes and difficulties have been duly documented in the monitoring reports and the assimilation and proposal for improvement post MTR is relieved which determined a technical and administrative execution at the date of the TE of 98%, satisfactory and consistent with the evaluation findings. General: The project has used and strengthened the criteria of adaptive, timely and adequate management. The changes and difficulties have been duly documented in the monitoring reports. The assimilation of recommendations and proposal for improvement post MTR led to a level of technical and administrative execution at the date of the TE of 98%, satisfactory and consistent with the findings of the evaluation.

193. M&S Governance: Two levels of governance were defined in Prodoc; although the Project Steering Committee was active and played a strategic role during project implementation, there is a need to generate mechanisms for formality and follow-up of agreements and recommendations, as a good practice in future interventions, mainly in extensions, exit strategies, focused on a replicating role towards sustainability and new initiatives.

194. Monitoring by key stakeholders: the Government (MAyDS) has had a significant ownership of the project and of the topic in general. The project has adequately tuned the process (top-down) that requires the application of global regulations to provincial contexts, with capacity building being a valid instrument for the project's purpose. The Project has respected and promoted the construction spaces for each ecoregion, mainly as regards Component 2 on the form of production and creation of conditions for the value chain of products derived from biodiversity.

195. Implementing agency follow-up: There is evidence of a strategic, advisory and adaptive role that the agency has provided to the project. This role is aligned with national needs and the vision of the institutions on the subject. There have been country context situations (e.g. monetary uncertainty) that have affected the project, to which the agency has had to promote adaptive actions for the benefit of project execution, as is the case of spotcheck, support for specialized equipment purchases, PIRs, follow-up to audit recommendations, political management and presence in the territory, among others.

4	Outcomes

196. The three components of the project have made significant progress and are harmonized with the planning.

The strategy implemented by the CU (Commissioning Unit), "rings of management" described in the TE, has allowed for adequately reaching compliance with the indicators and at the same time identifying in a timely manner the indicators that have design and scope problems, proposing alternative actions that lead to the ultimate goal of compliance with all indicators and the use of resources allocated for the purpose. A summary analysis of the components is presented below:

197. Outcome 1 "Sustainable use models of native forest implemented in areas of high biodiversity value in three ecoregions" shows relevant progress and a great opportunity for the use of tools and methodologies developed at the national level or in other regions. The indicator, “Percentage of forest cover in Category II in SMPNF áreas” for the period 2012-2021 was addressed through the support of the Native Forests National Monitoring Service (SNMBN) and a project consultancy, obtaining results of forest loss rates such as: Jujuy 0.20% (SNMBN) and 1% (consultancy); Atlantic Forest-Misiones: 0.23% (SNMBN) and 0.2% (consultancy); and Chaco 0.25% (SNMBN), 5% (consultancy). Thus, the goal has been achieved.

198. Outcome 2 "Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure the economic and social sustainability of sustainable management of NTFPs from native forests", has had a comprehensive approach in the value chain and the goals of: (1) Number of products incorporated into a "Native Forest" collective brand, which has been achieved and exceeded; (2) Number of species incorporated into "Native Forest" collective brand products, which has been achieved and exceeded; (3) Change in the flow of financing (USD) for sustainable use initiatives measured by the increase in approved management plans that include the sustainable use of NTFPs, has been achieved, and; (4) Estimated proportion of average annual gross income for small producers (Family Farm Nucleii - FFN) (including women producers) as a result of the sale and sustainable use of NTFPs, has been 90% achieved.

199. Outcome 3 "Governance framework and capacity building at the national and provincial levels for the sustainable management of NTFPs of native forests landscapes at the landscape scale" shows substantial progress- The legalization and publication of two resolutions enabling Inclusive Biodiversity Conservation projects and the Non-Timber Forest Products program in Argentina are noteworthy, as is the work on important topics such as: the presentation of the preliminary draft of the "Law on Minimum Requirements for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Use of its Components" and progress has been made with a consultancy that will register the "Biodiversity Argentina" seal with the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI). This will make it possible to move forward with the implementation of the "Biodiversity Argentina" seal. Transit guides were prepared for NTFPs such as *Parkinsonia* gum, carob flour and tree tomatoes.

200. The indicator for capacity building of CSOs and provincial governments has also been achieved and surpassed, and the indicator for the number of people/authorities trained in enforcement of the forest law has been met. Therefore, the targets for the component have been met.

5	**Project Relevance**

201. The project was evaluated as **Highly Relevant** by all interviewees and is consistent with the Evaluator's comment based on the documentary information accessed. The reasons for this rating are described throughout the evaluation report and are generally based on:

202. Revaluation of traditional and organizational knowledge for the sustainable use of biodiversity products, which resulted in a high level of identity and ownership of the project's theme of sustainable use of resources.

203. Tuning the USUBI topics to local and national needs, as strategies to improve the quality of life and ecosystems, including a focus on monetary, organizational and environmental benefits for stakeholders.

204. Creation of national regulations derived from USUBI's work, such as the resolutions creating the national initiatives "Inclusive Conservation of Biodiversity" and "Non-Timber Forest Products Project Argentina".

205. Contribution to linkages with universities, NGOs and indigenous communities.

206. Processes and tools for technical training, feedback, incorporation of consultancies, which constitute tools for broader audiences for action.

207. Insertion of the criterion of environmental production, which translates into an increasing demand for new forms of ecosystem-friendly production as a means of diversifying livelihoods, conservation and improvement of quality of life.

208. Development of regulations and programs to promote the sustainable use of NTFPs, gender equity and promotion of indigenous communities, with a post-USUBI approach.

209. The interviewees (anonymity and confidentiality) mentioned that the topic existed spontaneously in the ecoregions, but without the presence of the USUBI project, the topic and the revaluation of practices and processes that constitute the intangible capital of the project would not have been consolidated. During the TE, the strength of the technical team stands out, who has placed the work of sustainable use of biodiversity on the radar of providers, processors and institutions. This is a result of an adequate articulation, empathy and capacity of the territorial units and the CU.

210. **Contrast findings vs. interviews:** Most of the stakeholders interviewed and under the criteria of anonymity and confidentiality, indicated that "although the knowledge of the sustainable use of biodiversity and forests was latent, USUBI generated the platform to place the topic in the political, productive and academic agendas, on the sustainable use of biodiversity and tangible benefits of conservation" which determines the rating issued by the evaluator.

5.2. Conclusions

211. The project is relevant to the Republic of Argentina and mainly to the Atlantic Forest, Dry Chaco and Yungas ecoregions, which have the greatest floral and faunal diversity in the country and are also among the most diverse in the world. The USUBI theme reflects national priorities to revalue traditional practices of sustainable use of biodiversity and NTFPs, integrate regulatory aspects, associativity and value chains, to reduce pressure on areas of ecosystemic importance, applying an entreprenuerial vision and benefits for communities that protect and nurture the forest, mainstreaming conservation in their daily lives.

212. The key stakeholders, mainly from the national counterpart (MAyDS) and CU worked on the "exit strategy and post-closure actions for the Project May 2022". However, this strategy can be complemented with criteria of presence and identity, appropriate to the conditions and customs of the indigenous peoples with whom USUBI worked, which require accompaniment to achieve a transition and ownership of the actions. Also, the use of the capacities developed, and the insertion of the work achieved in the new NTFP and inclusive conservation regulations, should be considered as the basis of the strategy, and as a milestone to transcend post-project.

213. In the same line (exit strategy): communication and dissemination of results should be maintained, the migration of knowledge management products to an expanded repository as a reference for other initiatives in the country and the region. It is considered appropriate to integrate the knowledge networking approach, first among the actors of the ecoregions and then to a wider public, due to the existing demand for information and the achievements of the project, as derived from the interviews conducted.

214. The national counterpart demonstrates a high degree of ownership, which is evident in the creation of normative bodies related to NTFPs. The challenge lies in operationalizing the USUBI approach under an institutional framework, taking advantage of the capacities developed and the increasing demand that exists in the area of climate change adaptation, circular economy and bioeconomy, of which USUBI's experience in management and territoriality could be considered exemplary.

215. In this last period of project management, post MTR, substantial changes were employed for achieving project outcomes, the theories applied such as rings of management, theory of minimums, political management and effective decentralization constitute an opportunity for new initiatives, therefore the systematization of these conceptual aspects of the project, as tools and good practices, is encouraged.

5.3. Recomendaciones

#	TE Recommendations	Entity Responsible	Time frame
A	Category 1: For the design of future projects		
A.1	The project addressed the revaluation of traditional ways of utilizing forest and biodiversity products, which end up being innovative and complex topics, but have managed to permeate the political, productive and academic spheres as a recognition of their importance for the diversification of livelihoods, alternative income and ecosystem conservation. These efforts have resulted in the generation of national programs linked to the USUBI theme. In this sense, the promotion of institutionalism is recommended as an opportunity to operationalize the recently enacted resolutions on Inclusive Conservation and Non-Timber Forest Products, by first building alliances with the territory (governance) and then seeking resources, due to the demand for knowledge on the subject in the region and the characteristics of	Ministry of Environment and Sustainabile Development (MAyDS),	Medium term

#	TE Recommendations	Entity Responsible	Time frame
	productive vocation of the Republic of Argentina, which can be considered a stronghold between the balance of production and conservation of non-traditional products in this area.		
A.2	It is recommended as good practice to apply SMART criteria to the objective and outcome indicators during the life of the project. This is important given the temporality in project approvals that may change/vary the original design context, with the aim of objectively documenting (SMART) the changes beyond the control of the stakeholders. These can also be complementary tools to the corporate ones (PIR, MTR) to reorient or strengthen the interventions.	UNDP	Medium term
A.3	The circumstances of project execution are particular to each country, therefore, the support and experience of the implementing agencies are valuable in terms of processes. The case of USUBI post Mid-Term Review demonstrates the effectiveness of corporate tools. Strategic dissemination of the tools among stakeholders such as MAyDS and other key stakeholders is recommended for ownership and creation of support for the interventions and the achievement of results. Establishing and formalizing spaces for dissemination/knowledge is a good practice that can be replicated in future initiatives.	UNDP	Medium term
B	Category 2: Monitoring Strategy		
B.1	The USUBI initiative resulted in the creation of two national programs with a bright outlooks for becoming significant: Inclusive Conservation and Non Timber Forest Products. It is recommended that the implementation of the programs be monitored, in the first instance on the number of replications and adoptions in the provinces, and in the medium term through the use of indicators that can be based on what was developed by USUBI, linked to registered products, management plans, forest cover, whose methodological potential can be considered by the stakeholders. A third instance can be linked to monetary and non-monetary flows, around which the USUBI processes have developed expertise.	MAyDS	Long term
C	Category 3. Exit strategy		
C.1	An exit strategy has been designed by the Project, and to foster owership of the work done, the integration of aspects regarding value and management with the native communities is recommended. Also as part of the exit strategy, having a systematization document can guide other initiatives that share the challenges and complexities that USUBI addressed and	PIU	Short term

#	TE Recommendations	Entity Responsible	Time frame
	managed.		
D	Category 4. Financial sustainability		
D.1	The USUBI project has made a significant contribution to the value chain of forest and biodiversity products. Being time-dependent, the market link will require more time and perseverance. It is recommended that the institutional stakeholders accompany the organizations so as not to weaken the remarkable work of various stakeholders, who often require institutional support and presence for the recognition of their work	MAyDS, UNDP	Long term

5.4. Lessons Learned

Outcome 1. Sustainable use models of native forest biodiversity in areas of high conservation- value in 3 ecosystems
Lesson learned: In the design of projects, quantitative indicators are usually used that are mainly based on information from national censuses and official provincial information (high dependence on information providers and third parties). In addition, given the federal context with jurisdictional, political and administrative autonomy, this type of indicators are complex to collect due to the dependence on other actors. Outcome indicators such as Percentage of Category II Forest Cover, or the ISEARL ecosystem health status indicator, are referred to here.
Good practice: Application of SMART tools and evaluation of the relevance of indicators, not with the objective of eliminating them, but to seek alternative and realistic reporting methods that have coherency with the available and official information available to the territories (provinces). Furthermore, in the design, it is important to consider that national censuses have tended to be carried out every ten years due to limited technical and financial resources; therefore, the creation of evaluation channels, support from academia and documentation constitute good practice in project management.
Outcome 2. Markets and financing mechanisms to ensure economic and social sustainability of Sustainable Management of NTFPs of the native forest
Lesson learned: Non-timber forest product value chains are market-driven by supply and demand.
Good practice: Integral intervention in the development of the entire NTFP value chain, creating the enabling conditions, mainly in terms of formality (records) and associativity that post project, give stakeholders continuity and access to markets.
Outcome 3. Governance framework at national and provincial levels for sustainable management of NTFP of native forests landscapes
Lesson learned: Capacity building processes in projects with a strong presence in the territory depend on the continuity of stakeholders and authorities under the particular political and economic contexts of the provinces.

Good practice:
Institutional (national) leadership, delegation and effective territorial decentralization, with capable and trustworthy teams that are in tune with the reality of the territory and the project proposal. In addition, the presence and institutionality of stakeholders such as CU, UNDP, MAyDS and academia provide support and legitimacy to the interventions, under a trust-based approach.

216. The important lesson learned is the availability/implementation of corporate tools in project management from the start of the project, which includes the construction of indicators under a SMART scheme with means of documentation (repositories), the identification of critical knots and improvement proposals.

217. The strengthening of stakeholders at the local level through presence and identity is considered a good practice, allowing for feedback that serves participatory activity planning (bottom-up), which has been made possible by having solid teams in the ecoregions, which on a daily basis use concepts of networking, community and identity, elements that facilitate communication among stakeholders and the translation into empowerment and success in the management of projects with a strong presence in the territory.

6. Annexes

Annex 1. Consultancy Terms of Reference
Annex 2. GEF funding and co-financing for UNDP-supported projects
Annex 3. List of persons interviewed
Annex 4. List of reviewed documents
Annex 5. Evaluation questions matrix
Annex 6. TE Evaluator/Consultant code of conduct and agreement form

Annex 1. Consultancy Terms of Reference

ANEXO I

Términos de Referencia
Evaluación Final "Incorporación del uso sostenible de la biodiversidad en las prácticas de producción de pequeños productores para proteger la biodiversidad en los Bosques de Alto valor de conservación en las ecorregiones Bosque atlántico, Yungas y Chaco"

INTRODUCCIÓN

De acuerdo con las políticas y procedimientos de M&E del PNUD y el FMAM, todos los grandes proyectos-y aquellos medianos-de PNUD, financiados por el GEF, requieren pasar por una Evaluación Final (EF) al término del proyecto. Estos Términos de Referencia (TdR) establecen las expectativas para la EF del proyecto, implementado a través de PNUD/Ministerio del Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible. El proyecto fue aprobado por el GEF en enero 22, 2015, y el documento de proyecto local se firmó en mayo 18, 2015. El proceso de EF debe seguir la orientación descrita en el documento 'Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects' (http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/UNDP-GEF-TE-Guide.pdf).

OBJETO DE LA CONSULTORIA

El informe de EF evaluará los resultados del proyecto frente a lo que se esperaba lograr, y proveerá las lecciones que podrán tanto mejorar la sostenibilidad de los beneficios de este proyecto, como ayudar a mejorar la programación general del PNUD. El informe EF promueve la rendición de cuentas y la transparencia, y evalúa el alcance de los logros del proyecto.
La evaluación final se realiza en función de la finalización del plazo del Proyecto y se encuentra contemplada tanto en el Plan de Evaluación del PNUD Argentina como en los planes de evaluación del GEF.

ALCANCE/ ACTIVIDADES DE LA CONSULTORIA

La EF evaluará el desempeño del proyecto frente a las expectativas establecidas en el Marco lógico / Marco de resultados del proyecto (véase el Anexo A de TdR). La EF evaluará los resultados de acuerdo con los criterios establecidos en la Guía para las EF de los proyectos implementados por el PNUD y financiados por el FMAM
(http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/UNDP-GEF-TE-Guide.pdf).
La sección de Resultados del informe de EF cubrirá los temas enumerados a continuación. Un resumen completo del contenido del informe EF se proporciona en el Anexo C de los TdR.

El asterisco "[*]" indica criterios por para los que se requiere una calificación.
Hallazgos

- Diseño/Formulación del Proyecto
  - Prioridades nacionales y motivaciones del país
  - Teoría del cambio
  - Igualdad de género y empoderamiento de las mujeres.
  - Estándares sociales y ambientales (salvaguardas)
  - Análisis del marco de resultados: lógica del proyecto y estrategia, indicadores
  - Supuestos y riesgos

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Annex 2. GEF funding and co-financing for UNDP-supported projects

Name: Global co-finance															
Project title:	Mainstreaming sustainable use of biodiversity in production practices of small producers to protect the biodiversity of high value conservation forests in the Atlantic Forest, Yungas and Chaco														
Project number:	GEF 5383 PNUD ARG/4829														
Project executing partner:	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS)														
Project reporting period:															
From: may-15															
To: may-22	UNDP		JUJUY PROVINCE		MISIONES PROVINCE		SALTA PROVINCE		MAyDS		Ministry of Agriculture		TOTAL	
SOURCE	US$		US$		US$		US$		US$		US$		US$	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
TYPE														
Cash	500.000	-	550.000	606.892,47	400.000	1.578.722,84	75.000	563.392,85	19.337.400	19.614.353,79	2.000.000	-	22.862.400	22.363.361,95
In-Kind	-	-	-	-	150.000	-	475.000	-	200.000	-	-	-	825.000	-
TOTAL COSTS	500000	-	550000	606892,47	550000	1578722,84	550000	563392,85	19537400	19614353,79	2000000	-	23687400	22363361,95

Annex 3. List of persons interviewed

CU	Function	Contact
Sandra Sharry	Consultant - Project Coordinator	
Florencia Gómez	Former Project Director	+54 9 11 6432-5200
Betania González	Director of Biodiversity	
Juan Pablo Moro	Consultant – DNBI Technician	
Liliana Wlasiuk	Consultant – DNBI Technician	
Javier Slutsky	Consultant - Administrative coordinator, accounting and financial manager.	
Elizabeth Candelino	Consultant – Technical Secretary	
Silvana Peker	DNBI Technician	
David Rabinovich	Technician in journalism - Administrative	
Natalia Oyola	University Technician in Environmental Management - Administrative	
UNDP	**Relationship with the project**	**Contact**
Matías Mottet	Project officer - UNDP	matias.mottet@undp.org
María Eugenia Di Paola	Director - Environment - UNDP	maria.eugenia.di.paola@undp.org
Alexandra Fischer	UNDP Regional Panama	alexandra.fischer@undp.org
Dry Chaco	**Relationship with the project**	**Contacto**
Celeste Nogales	Gender consultant	celestenogales@gmail.com
Marcelo Pérez	Ecoregional Coordinator	mmperezpadilla@yahoo.com.ar
Gustavo Dada	Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development of Salta - Articulation of the Province with the Project	gustavodada@ymail.com
Griselda Gerbi	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development - Coordination with other programs	ggerbi@ambiente.gob.ar
Antonio Palavecino	Biodiversity Consultant USUBI Project	antoniopalavecino07@gmail.com
Eduardo Bertea	Tepeyac Civil Association	
Silvia Molina de Bertea	Tepeyac Civil Association	
Hugo Jaimez	Chief of the community of La Cortada	
Venecio Valdiviezo	President of the community of La Cortada	
Rosalía Arias	Craftswoman	
Yungas	**Relationship with the project**	**Contact**
Rodolfo Solá	Jujuy Technical Team - Technical	ricardo.sola12@gmail.com
Eugenia Giamminola	National University of Jujuy - Agreement Letter Coordinator	eugeniagiamminola@gmail.com
Elber Ríos	Covay Valle Grande Cooperative	3886655602

José García	IPAF Technician	3884096329
Cecilia Iriarte	National Parks Administration - Calilegua National Park Intendant	3886549386
Sabrina Lazcano	Jujuy Technical Team - Administration	sabrilazcano@hotmail.com
Aimé Oyharzabal	Jujuy Technical Team - Gender	aimeoyharzabal@gmail.com
Nadia Paco	Jujuy Technical Team - Weavers - Irrigation	nadia_paco17@yahoo.com.ar
Irma Lamas	Covay Valle Grande Cooperative	2975274743
Cecilia Jezieniezki	GEF Project for Environmental Planning of the Territory - Technical Consultant	3875080500
Bosque Atlántico	**Relationship with the project**	**Contact**
Alan Benítez Vortish	Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources of the province - Undersecretary of ecology and sustainable development	3764368484
Fernando Niella	National University of Misiones - Letter of Agreement Consultant - Former Secretary of Science and Technology FCF	3751403494
Gesica Suárez	Forest Biodiversity Consultant	gesicadenise@gmail.com
Jessica Díaz Pacheco	Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources of the province – General Director of ecology	3764679865
Fabio Malosh	Ministry of Ecology and Renewable Natural Resources of the province - Chief Park Ranger Salto Encantado	3755490559
Patricia Rocha	National University of Misiones - Agreement Letter Consultant - FCF Laboratory Director	3751520963
Emanuel Grassi	IMIBIO Biodiversity Missionary Institute – Specialized Consultant - Director	1161854289
Marcia Hellou	INTA – Institutional Partner – Technician	3755243055
Nelida Richardt	New Hope Cooperative - President	3751598949
Mirna Korniechuk	Miracles of the Jungle Organization - Responsible	3757409894
Mariela Bobadilla	Gender consultant	bobadillamariela3@gmail.com
Verónica Zurakosky	Dreaming Women Civil Association Seed Nursery - Responsible	
Marianela Scharchinger	Seed Nursery - Responsible	3755642396

Anexo 4. List of documents reviewed

Key Project Documents

- Project Identification Format (PIF)
- Project Document PRODOC
- Original Detailed Work Plan of the project (CEO endorsement)
- Project Annual Operating Plans
- Plan de iniciación del PNUD
- UNDP Country Program Document (CPD)

Project management documents

- Boot Workshop
- Annual Project Reports to UNDP
- Project Implementación Reviews (2018, 2019, 2020 y 2021)
- Quarterly Operational Reports
- Audit reports
- Financial due diligence Spot Check
- Minutes and documents of the Project Steering Committee
- Field visit report
- Social and Environmental Screening Template
- Contacts of the Project Management Unit
- Mid-Term Review Report (MTR)
- Management response to MTR recommendations
- Supervision mission reports

Project Products

- Technical brochure 2020 - USUBI Selva Paranaense
- Native Fruits - El Monte and its Flavors
- Medicinal plants
- Yateí Honey
- Ornamental fish
- Native Orchids
- Edible mushrooms
- Labels of new jams (Jaboticaba and Pitanga) from the town of Andresito, Misiones.
- Labels of new vinegars (Guembe, Aratikú and Mbutia) from the town of San Pedro, Misiones.
- Label for the new sweet and sour dressing from Ubajay from the town of San Pedro, Misiones.
- 2021 Catalog of Biodiversity Products of the Paraná Jungle Ecoregion.
- List of Biodiversity Products USUBI Misiones 2021
- Posters: Conservation Management of Native Seeds.
- Posters: Yateí honey.
- Tamarillo 2021 Trifold Brochure.
- Labels from Tamarillo, Cooperativa CoopyJuy and Coop. Covay (Jam; Hot sauce; Ketchup).

- Tamarillo cookbook and recipes.
- Triptych Brochure Carob Flour 2021.
- Carob Flour Recipe Book.
- Llana honey label.
- Honeys from Chaco Salteño (in process).
- Booklet on the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Dry Chaco (in process).
- Project for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (USUBI) - UNDP ARG 15/G53-USUBI
- USUBI 2021 brochure.
- TRIPTYCH USUBI 2021 (Project Institutional Brochure).
- POSTCARDS USUBI 2021.
- Catalog of Biodiversity Products USUBI 2020.
- List of Biodiversity Products USUBI 2020.
- Biodiversity recipe book (in process).
- Book of Stories, Poems and Legends of Biodiversity (in process).
- Chronicles of the USUBI Project (in process).
- Native Fruits Manual (in process).
- Preliminary draft of "Law of Minimum Requirements for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Use of its Components"
- Inclusive Biodiversity Conservation Project
- Non-Timber Forest Products Project
- Summary list of formal meetings, workshops, etc., with date, place, topic and number of participants.
- List / map of project sites, highlighting suggested visits

Annex 5. Evaluation questions matrix

Evaluation Criteria - Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF focal area and to environmental and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?			
1. To what extent are the intervention objectives of the project consistent with the requirements of the beneficiaries, the needs of the country, global priorities and the policies of partners and donors? 2. To what extent has the project adapted to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time? 3. To what extent is the project consistent with the GEF operational programs or strategic priorities upon which the project was funded? 4. To what extent are the objectives of the intervention still adequate given the changes in circumstances experienced in Argentina throughout the life of the project? 5. From the point of view of the government counterparts, and from the project, have regulations or policies been developed that are favorable to conservation and payments for ES from the project? 6. Are you familiar with GEF tools such as METT? 7. What practices developed by any of the activities have contributed or can contribute to strengthening the others in the framework of the project? 8. Does the project complement other strategies or projects applied in the same territory and thematic area?	PRODOC	Recopilación primaria, virtual	Estándar EF
Effectiveness: To what extent have the project's intended results and objectives been achieved?			
1. To what extent were the Project objectives achieved? 2. To what extent were the expected results of the Project intervention achieved? 3. Were substantive institutional changes achieved that incorporate expected project outcomes and objectives? 4. What were the internal and external factors that have influenced the achievement or not of the results? Have other unforeseen effects been achieved? 5. How have the instances that make up the Project contributed to increasing the visibility of the actions? 6. The institutions that have been involved, if you are familiar with them, what levels of consensus have they reached among themselves and with civil society? 7. I) Do you know the coordination spaces established for this project? In your opinion, have they worked?			
Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently in accordance with international and national norms and standards?			
1. Have the resources been used properly? 2. To what extent were the project outputs achieved with these resources? 3. Have the budgets and schedules initially established in the document been respected? 4. Are possible sources of co-financing as well as leveraged and associated financing identified? 5. Are financial controls included? 6. Is due diligence demonstrated in the management of funds, including regular audits? 7. Is the existing team at central, provincial, local level adequate for project management? In general, what is the cost-effectiveness of the project in terms of the resources invested and the results achieved?			
Sustainability: To what extent are there economic, institutional, social or environmental risks to sustain the project results in the medium and long term?			

1. To what extent has a sustainability-exit strategy been implemented or developed, including capacity building of national and local partners? 2. To what extent will existing policies and regulatory frameworks support the sustainability of benefits? 3. Are the beneficiaries committed to continue working on the objectives of the project after it ends? 4. What has been the degree of participation and appropriation of the objectives and results by the beneficiary population in the different phases of the project? 5. What has been the support and participation of the institutions involved? 6. Has there been institutional strengthening? 7. Will the institutions involved continue to support the results of the project? 8. Has there been any effect on community organization in general that can ensure sustainability? 9. Are the costs for the maintenance and follow-up of the actions carried out suitable for the local context? Is it possible that it will be assumed by the key actors and beneficiaries? What institutions of the national government would assume functions assumed by the project today? Is it already established?			
Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to the conservation of ES, are there clear mechanisms that have been adopted by local and national authorities?			
1. What impact has the project had in terms of social, environmental and conservation? What key results has the project generated (i.e. significant improvements in the state of natural resources, substantive progress in achieving these impacts)?			
Gender equality and women's empowerment: How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?			

Annex 6. TE Evaluator/Consultant code of conduct and agreement form

The evaluators/consultants:
1. They must present complete and fair information in their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses, in such a way that the decisions or actions carried out are well founded.
2. They must disclose the full set of findings along with information on their limitations and make it available to all those affected by the evaluation who have an express right to receive the results.
3. They will use to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They will have to offer maximum notice time, limit time demands, and respect people's right not to get involved. Assessors must respect the right of individuals to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced back to its source. Assessors are not required to assess individual persons, but must maintain a balance between assessing management functions and this general principle.
4. On occasion, conducting assessments will uncover evidence of crime. Such cases should be discreetly reported to the appropriate investigative body. Assessors should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is even the slightest doubt as to whether and how to communicate these issues.
5. must be sensitive to beliefs, uses and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all interested parties. In line with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to issues of discrimination and gender equality. they must avoid offending the dignity and self-esteem of those with whom they come into contact during the evaluation. Knowing that there is potential for the evaluation to negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate the purpose of the evaluation and its results in a manner that is respectful of the dignity and self-esteem of those involved.
6. They are responsible for their performance and (the) product(s) they generate. They are responsible for a clear, precise and balanced written or oral presentation, as well as the limitations, conclusions and recommendations of the study.
7. use sound accounting procedures and be prudent in the use of evaluation resources.

EF Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the UN System Code of Conduct for Evaluators:

Consultant Name: Diego Gonzalo Quishpe Landeta

Name of Consulting Organization (when necessary): _____

I affirm that I have received and understand and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluators.

Signed in Quito, Ecuador. to May 25, 2022

Firma: _____