



Support to the Development of Legal and Institutional Frameworks on Access to Genetic Resources and related Benefit Sharing and Traditional Knowledge in line with the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol in Venezuela

Part I: Project Information

GEF ID

Project Type

MSP

Type of Trust Fund

GET

CBIT/NGI

CBIT

NGI

Project Title

Support to the Development of Legal and Institutional Frameworks on Access to Genetic Resources and related Benefit Sharing and Traditional Knowledge in line with the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol in Venezuela

Countries

Venezuela

Agency(ies)

UNEP

Other Executing Partner(s)

Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism ? Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo (MINEC)

Executing Partner Type

Government

GEF Focal Area

Biodiversity

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Biodiversity, Supplementary Protocol to the CBD, Access to Genetic Resources Benefit Sharing, Species, Plant Genetic Resources, Mainstreaming, Agriculture and agrobiodiversity, Influencing models, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Stakeholders, Indigenous Peoples, Civil Society, Community Based

Organization, Private Sector, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, Local Communities, Beneficiaries, Gender Equality, Gender results areas, Participation and leadership, Awareness Raising, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Access and control over natural resources, Access to benefits and services, Capacity Development, Gender Mainstreaming, Women groups, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Gender-sensitive indicators, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Knowledge Generation, Knowledge Exchange

Rio Markers

Climate Change Mitigation

Climate Change Mitigation 0

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation 0

Duration

48 In Months

Agency Fee(\$)

168,766.00

Submission Date

4/16/2021

A. Indicative Focal/Non-Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
BD-3-9	GET	1,776,484.00	14,000,000.00
Total Project Cost (\$)		1,776,484.00	14,000,000.00

B. Indicative Project description summary

Project Objective

To improve the local capacities for the implementation of access to genetic resources (GRs) and traditional knowledge (TK) regimes in accordance with the Nagoya Protocol.

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
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Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
1. Developing an interinstitutional and coordinated ABS framework consistent with the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol (NP)	Technical Assistance	<p>1.1. National ABS regime rendered operational in a coordinated manner, incorporating monitoring actions and in alignment with the CBD and the NP</p> <p><i>Indicators(to be refined during PPG):</i></p> <p><i>-1 validated ABS Strategy</i></p> <p><i>-# of days needed to process and access contract</i></p> <p><i>-1 ABS digital system designed</i></p> <p><i>-# of protocols and guidelines designed</i></p> <p><i>-# of monitoring actions undertaken (includes check points activity)</i></p>	<p>1.1.1 Access and Benefit Sharing Strategy for Venezuela based on a consultative process.</p> <p>1.1.2. An institutional framework inclusive of supporting documentation and clear access procedures (i.e. PIC MAT; bioprospecting and R&D) on ABS enables in-country NP implementation.</p> <p>1.1.3. Online administrative system for ABS Agreements available for use, inclusive of a centralized database of genetic resources and national clearing house.</p> <p>1.1.4. Guidelines for users on the online administrative system.</p>	GET	631,496.00	5,401,294.00

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
2. Increasing awareness and capacity of all relevant stakeholders in advancing ABS	Technical Assistance	<p>2.1 Stakeholders from various sectors (government, academic, scientific, private, and indigenous people via the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples) empowered to negotiate, evaluate and process ABS contracts that embrace equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of GR and TK.</p> <p><i>Indicator (to be refined during PPG):</i></p> <p><i>-# of access contracts including sharing of benefits</i></p> <p><i>-# stakeholder s trained (40% women)</i></p> <p><i>-# of days needed to process and</i></p>	<p>2.1.1. National Action Plan on Capacity-Building for ABS (including sustainability elements).</p> <p>2.1.2. Multi-stakeholder capacity on ABS among providers, negotiators, evaluators and users:</p> <p>-Three Interactive training modules on ABS targeting government officials, academic researchers and entrepreneurs developed and delivered.</p> <p>- Training activities on ABS, the NP with an emphasis on TK and benefit sharing, in particular with the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples (as National Competent Authority) developed and implemented <i>in situ</i> for local communities.</p>	GET	487,075.00	4,143,706.00

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
3. Managing ABS Knowledge and Experiences at a regional level	Technical Assistance	.1 ABS management in Venezuela improved through regional networking and lessons sharing. <i>Indicator (to be refined during PPG):</i> <i>-inputs from neighboring countries used to support development of Venezuela's ABS system.</i>	3.1.1 Three regional meetings to facilitate interaction, and sharing of lessons with other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean on the implementation of ABS systems. 3.1.2 A manuscript on lessons learned from regional experiences that will guide the Venezuela ABS project and other interventions in the region. 3.1.3. Technical report on socio-economic, and gender implications of ABS in Venezuela and the LAC region. 3.1.4 Side event at COP-MOP on Venezuela's ABS experience.	GET	496,415.00	4,176,429.00

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
				Sub Total (\$)	1,614,986.00	13,721,429.00
Project Management Cost (PMC)						
	GET		161,498.00		278,571.00	
	Sub Total(\$)		161,498.00		278,571.00	
	Total Project Cost(\$)		1,776,484.00		14,000,000.00	

C. Indicative sources of Co-financing for the Project by name and by type

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Other	Universitario (Facultad de Agronomía-UCV)	In-kind	Investment mobilized	3,000,000.00
Private Sector	Finca Bromelia	In-kind	Investment mobilized	2,000,000.00
Private Sector	Finca Bromelia	Grant	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000.00
Private Sector	Asociación Civil de Ecoturismo Integral Aragua (ACEIA)	In-kind	Investment mobilized	2,300,000.00
Recipient Country Government	MINEC	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,500,000.00
Recipient Country Government	MINEC	Grant	Investment mobilized	2,200,000.00
Total Project Cost(\$)				14,000,000.00

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Investment mobilized has been categorized as financing that does not include project management and operational costs. Projects Amount Analysis of the genetic diversity of Venezuelan cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.) protected in the national germplasm banks, with a view to establishing breeding programs (FAGRO-MINEC-CNCRG). 3,000,000 "Evaluation of the Genetic Diversity of Venezuelan cacao", framed in the Network Research Project within the framework of the Chocolate Route. Maracay, Edo. Aragua (FAGRO-Finca Bromelia). 1,000,000 Guidelines for a national program for the development of Venezuelan cacao: genetic improvement (FAGRO-Finca Bromelia). 1,000,000 Promotion of the rescue of the cultural traditions of the communities of the Aragua coast (ACEIA). 2,300,000 Characterization of the types of cacao, trinitarian and foreign cocoa from Cumboto, Aragua, by means of electrophoretic patterns of isoenzymes (FAGRO, MINEC and Local Communities). 600,000 Morphological and molecular characterization of cocoa (*Theobroma cacao* L.) of the Germplasm Bank of the National Genetic Resources Center of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC). 600,000 Maintenance of the cacao collection (*Theobroma cacao* L.) of the National Center for the Conservation of Genetic Resources (MINEC). 1,000,000 Total Investment Mobilized: 9,500,000

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
UNEP	GET	Venezuela	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	1,776,484	168,766	1,945,250.00
Total GEF Resources(\$)					1,776,484.00	168,766.00	1,945,250.00

E. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

PPG Required

PPG Amount (\$)

50,000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

4,750

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
UNEP	GET	Venezuela	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	50,000	4,750	54,750.00
Total Project Costs(\$)					50,000.00	4,750.00	54,750.00

Core Indicators

Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	6,536			
Male	6,280			
Total	12816	0	0	0

Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicator targets are not provided

*?Results by federal entity and municipalities of the Aragua State?. National census of population and housing 2011. INE. December 2014. Retrieved on October 21, 2018.

Part II. Project Justification

1a. Project Description

Introduction

Venezuela is situated in the northernmost part of South America, covering a total area of 916,445 km². Land surface covers 882,050 km², with the remaining sea area including 71,295 km² of territorial sea, 99,889 km² of continental platform and 471,507 km² of economic exclusive zone in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. Its geographical location makes it an important country in terms of ecosystem and species diversity. Venezuela has one of the largest varieties of ecosystems in the world, from deserts to the Amazon, to Caribbean beaches and Andean mountains. Venezuela is amongst the most biodiverse countries in the planet[1]. Venezuela is ranked the ninth country in the world for biodiversity, as it is home to 650 types of vegetation, 15,820 species of vascular plants, 27 climate zones, 23 types of relief and over 137,000 animal species. It is also ranked fourth for the number of species of amphibians, sixth for birds, eighth for mammals and ninth for reptiles. The country possesses 5,309 species of vertebrates; 1,464 birds, 386 mammals, 377 reptiles, 342 amphibians, 1860 freshwater fish and 880 marine fish. The number of endemic species known in Venezuela amounts to 19 mammals, 49 birds, 16 reptiles, 157 amphibians and 37 freshwater fish. The number of invertebrate species is estimated at approximately 110,000, of which the majority have not been identified taxonomically.

Ethnic and cultural diversity in Venezuela is the product of multiple elements, and the human population of the country is made up of three main groups: the indigenous, the Hispanic, and the African/Creole people. Indigenous people of Venezuela form about 2% of the total population, although many Venezuelans share some indigenous ancestry; these are predominantly located in ten states: Zulia, Amazonas, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro, Anzoátegui, Apure, Monagas, Sucre, Mérida and Trujillo. Venezuela is privileged due to its rich biodiversity and the valuable patrimony of its traditional knowledge and development of folklore as a result of the intellectual and cultural contribution of the indigenous people, as well as its relation to the new cultures that arrived from Europe, Asia and Africa.

Problem

Biodiversity resources in Venezuela present an excellent opportunity for economic diversification and social wellbeing. The country's socioeconomic characteristics are bound to the sustainable use of its genetic resources, which have the potential for bio-prospecting through proper research and development. Further, environmental services like the supply of drinking water, production of hydroelectric energy, food and pharmaceutical products, the tourism industry and protection against natural disasters depend on "adequate conservation" of biodiversity. In this context, the protection and appropriate use of the country's genetic resources and their associated traditional knowledge becomes of paramount importance. However, this has been hampered by threats to the country's biodiversity, as 341

plant species and 748 species of fauna, including 160 of the 312 species of amphibians, are currently threatened, and by specific barriers that need to be addressed to move towards proper use of genetic resources that can leverage benefits for the local and global population. Climate change is likely to worsen the state of the natural environment in years to come. In addition, problems such as destruction, degradation and fragmentation of forests and other ecosystems; introduction and establishment of invasive alien species; unsustainable use of biological diversity, and introduction of genetically modified organisms pose direct threats to certain species in the short and long term, ultimately threatening the existence and diversity of globally important genetic resources and their associated traditional knowledge. Furthermore, traditional knowledge of local/indigenous communities that is associated with genetic resources is disappearing.

The specific problem that this project seeks to address relates to fragmented institutional capacities and weak stakeholder knowledge on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing in Venezuela that prevent a unified approach to tackling the loss and unsustainable use of biodiversity that contemplates the fair and equitable distribution of benefits. The development of a legal and institutional framework on access to genetic resources and the distribution of benefits and traditional knowledge in line with the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol in Venezuela, offers an excellent opportunity to enhance institutional capacities of and promote interinstitutional cooperation among the two National Authorities with competence (ANC) in the matter: the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism and Water and the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples. Achieving coordinated action of the ANC will be fundamental to reach the full implementation of the NP in the RBV. The group of actions established in this project will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of each ANC within the scope of its competences.

The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing:

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has three objectives, namely the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) provides a legal framework for the effective implementation of the third objective of the CBD. Venezuela ratified the NP in September 2018. The successful implementation of ABS at the national level has the potential to make considerable contributions to biodiversity and thus is relevant to all Aichi Targets and the implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

ABS Legislation and Activity in Venezuela

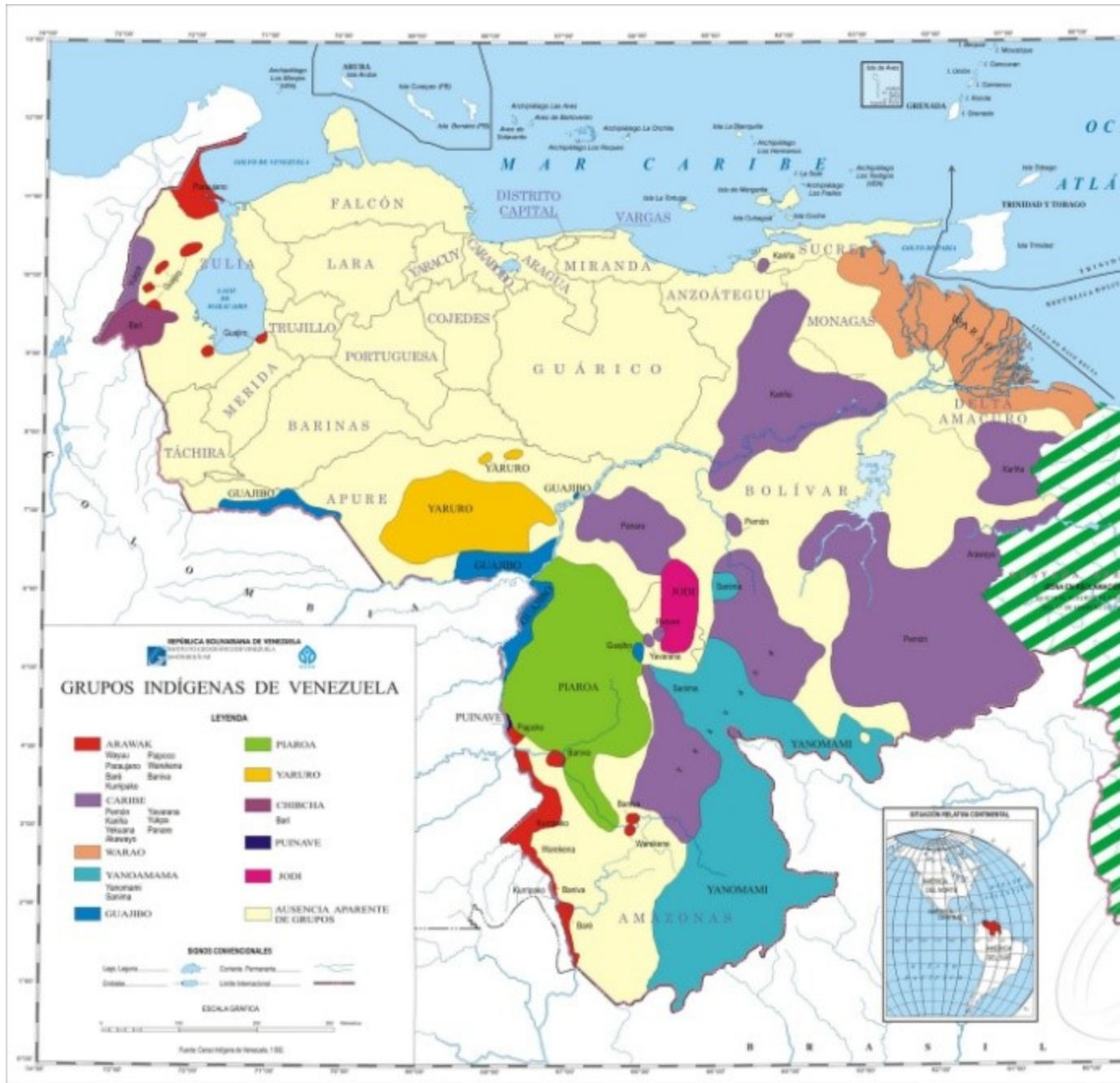
Venezuela became a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1994. Since then, the greatest attention has been directed to the first two objectives of the CBD: the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components. The third objective of the CBD, the fair and equitable distribution of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources, has traditionally received less attention. However, the country's policy and legal framework have established a certain direction in relation to the use of genetic resources and the distribution of benefits, including addressing the aspect of traditional knowledge. The Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (G.O. No 5.453, 03/24/2000) establishes the sovereignty of the Republic over genetic resources, derived products and

intangible components. Article of the Law of Management of Biological Diversity (GO No. 39.070, 01/12/2008) establishes the provisions for the management of biological diversity in its various components, including natural or manipulated genomes, genetic material and its derivatives, species, populations, communities and ecosystems present in continental, insular, lake and river areas, territorial sea, inland maritime areas and the ground, subsoil and aerial spaces thereof, in guarantee of the security and sovereignty of the Nation. Title IX of this same Law establishes a specific article to regulate access to genetic resources. On the other hand, in the Organic Law of Indigenous Peoples and Communities (GO 38,344, 12/27/2005), the Venezuelan State recognizes and protects the existence of indigenous peoples and communities as original peoples; the Law defines the rights of peoples and indigenous communities and points out that the State will promote and develop coordinated and systematic actions that guarantee the effective participation of indigenous peoples, communities and organizations in national, regional and local affairs; and in Chapter 2, it indicates that any activity likely to directly or indirectly affect indigenous peoples and communities must be supported by prior informed consultation. Furthermore, the Law on Science, Technology and Innovation (GO 39.575, 12/16/2010) defines guidelines for research policies and strategies in science, technology and innovation, including the valuation and protection of traditional knowledge and the principles of bioethics. Recently, the country published the resolution by which the Nagoya Protocol was adopted (GO 41.476, 06/09/2018), by means of which the text of the Protocol *in extenso* is published in the Official Gazette of the Republic.

Upon the entry into force in Venezuela of Decision 391 of the Cartagena Agreement[2] on common rules for access to genetic resources (Official Gazette of the Cartagena Agreement, Year XII number 213, 07/17/1996), the former Ministry of People's Power for the Environment (MINAMB) was Competent National Authority, with its departments or associated entities, and thereby responsible for processing access/presentation requests according to their competencies for the management of the genetic resource and the area where it will be collected. With the enactment of the Biological Diversity Management Law in 2008, MINAMB assumed the responsibility of formulating, coordinating and executing policies related to the environment and natural resources, including access to genetic resources and benefits derived from them. In 2015, the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism and Waters was created (MINEC, GO 40.634, Presidential Decree 1701 dated 07/04/2018) and took over the functions of the former MINAMB that include regulating and controlling access and use of genetic resources in general, as well as defining, eliminating and auditing compliance with regulations and procedures related to the analysis and evaluation of risks, and the mitigation of impacts on biological diversity and the environment. Within the MINEC, the General Directorate of Biological Diversity (DGDB) is the entity responsible for the formulation, coordination and execution of policies related to access to genetic resources and the distribution of the benefits derived from their use. One of the country's first institutional steps in terms of ABS was the creation of the Commission for Access to Genetic Resources (CIARG) (Resolution No. 54, OG 36.172, 03/24/97), with the mission of advising the Ministry (MINAMB / MINEC) in the formulation and execution of policies related to access to genetic resources.

MINEC is the national environmental authority responsible for the application of the Law on Management of Biological Diversity in Venezuela, and as such has an annual budget assigned to various programs on biological diversity, including resources to guarantee the defense, conservation and sustainable use of the national biological diversity, through the implementation of the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples (MPPI), is the governing body of government responsible for facilitating and promoting the strengthening of the ancestral indigenous community in Venezuela, as a means of disseminating policies created collectively from the base, with the aim of strengthening native peoples, as well as multiethnic and pluricultural peoples. Venezuela is home to about 38 indigenous peoples, 28 of which traditionally inhabit Venezuelan territory and 10 come from or are located in neighboring countries such as Brazil, Colombia and Guyana (see distribution map below). As part of its mission, this Ministry will determine the ethnic groups that should be prioritized within the framework of this project. These will be defined jointly between MINEC and the MPPI during the PPG phase.



During 1996-2004, 39 requests for access to genetic resources as per the local regulations were received and 16 resulted in Access Contracts. All of these contracts have since expired. Since 2004, requests for access to genetic resources have been restricted due to (i) the system being under review with the aim of simplifying it, as well as reducing red tape, cost and time, which dis-incentivized researchers working on the subject at country level; (ii) lack of adequate instruments for protecting traditional knowledge; (iii) restructuring of the Intraministerial Commission for Access to Genetic Resources; (iv) Venezuela ceased to be part of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), thus abolishing in effect Decision 391 of the Cartagena Agreement, which in turn led to an absence of legal framework regulating public policy on

the matter. Furthermore, since 2003, framework contracts for access to genetic resources have been negotiated with the aim of approving research projects related to the use of the accessed genetic resources for commercial purposes, none of which materialized. Annex 1 contains a flowchart illustrating the current procedures for the granting of the Framework and Individual Agreements for Access of Genetic Resources in Venezuela. The framework contracts shown in Table 1 below were mainly established to cover projects on various thematic areas such as: population genetics, taxonomic, phylogeny, genetic conservation of vertebrates, invertebrates, fungi, algae, and plants, biology and conservation of species threatened with extinction; phylogenetic and animal genetic resources of agricultural interest; plant and animal genetic improvement; biomediation; cellular and molecular biology of parasites; bioassays for the study of the toxin diversity of venomous fauna; production of antibodies from toxins; metabolism, metabolic activity and biochemical pathways in marine plants, microorganisms, bacteria and protozoa, amongst others. Requests for access contracts in Venezuela have been mainly received from local universities and research centres.

Table 1. Current and Recent Framework contracts and validity

Institution	Status	Duration	Start Date	End Date
Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas (IVIC)	Valid	3 years	19/06/2014	19/06/2017
Fundación La Salle de Ciencias Naturales FLASA	Valid	3 years	25/03/2015	25/03/2018
Universidad de los Andes	Valid	3 years	11/04/2016	11/04/2019

The long term solution proposed by this project is to support conservation of Venezuela's genetic resources through the improved functioning of an ABS regime that could offer better possibilities for research and development, economic growth, biodiversity valuation and sharing of benefits from their utilization. However, the country faces a number of key barriers to achieving this objective, including: Legal and institutional framework to manage ABS is poorly coordinated, insufficiently aligned to the CBD and NP, and constrained by insufficient regulations, tools, guidelines: Venezuela has a long history of involvement in ABS issues, and the country has developed important capacities to safeguard and manage its genetic resources through various legislative instruments, resources and institutions. However, substantive gaps remain that prevent the country from applying proper ABS measures. The legislative and administrative framework for ABS issues in Venezuela is fragmented, with various pieces of legislation governing environmental issues among which ABS elements are included. The fragmented nature of environmental legislation leads to inefficiencies, dispersed and unclear authority, and a general lack of monitoring and enforcement of existing legislative provisions. In addition, there is no overarching policy or ABS strategy in the country, and existing regulations and processes have yet to be fully aligned with the Nagoya Protocol and the Convention on Biological Diversity (Venezuela ratified the NP in September 2018 and became Party to it in January 2019^[3]). Despite the country's

experience in signing access contracts, these have been done under a fragmented system, which has resulted in contracts that do not necessarily incorporate all the elements that should be present as per the recommendations of the NP (i.e. elements on PIC, MAT and the distribution of benefits). Furthermore, the existing procedure for setting up access contracts has numerous administrative steps that produce significant operational expenses in resources and time, thereby dis-incentivizing researchers from working on ABS related projects, and even prompting some parties to go ahead with programs without legal authorization. The absence of monitoring elements (i.e. checkpoints) hinders the ability of local authorities to check on compliance, and the lack of guidelines and templates for local authorities and communities (including indigenous groups) limits the willingness of local authorities to permit research and development. The ban/restriction that went into effect in 2004 on approving permits is a reflection of the authorities being uncomfortable with existing mechanisms to ensure that local biodiversity is being protected. Finally, both owners and potential users of genetic resources and traditional knowledge are struggling to find ways to cooperate and comply with national laws and regulations due to the lack of a transparent and easily accessible system for applying for access contracts or monitoring their approval status and implementation steps.

Insufficient knowledge, capacity and practical experience among relevant stakeholders on processes for access and utilization of GR, fair and equitable benefit sharing, and ABS negotiation techniques: There is a need for national stakeholders in Venezuela to better understand various issues surrounding ABS, including basic concepts and understanding of ABS, GR and TK as well as the Nagoya Protocol and national laws and policies. Of particular importance is the understanding of strategies and procedures for negotiating benefit sharing between users and providers. The authorities need to engage with providers and users based on a more cohesive ABS strategy, and ensure that both parties understand the importance of sharing of potential benefits, but also the nature of both monetary and non-monetary benefits that might suit individual circumstances. Even if there is not a standard approach to define the benefits or their nature, the country will benefit from having experience in supporting negotiation processes that could eventually be used as examples of how to share benefits. In addition, a better understanding is needed of existing bioprospecting activities and their successes and failures, and outreach needs to be made to encourage the participation of more ABS stakeholders. For example, the history of access contracts in Venezuela does not reflect the reality of local research on genetic resources in the country, since the majority of signed contracts have been limited to academic research, while pharmaceutical companies and other commercial bioprospectors have yet to sign any contracts. There is also very little practical experience in the country on managing requests oriented towards the use of traditional knowledge and the potential benefits deriving from it, and thus few models that local authorities and communities can use in trying to develop agreements based on TK.

Lack of regional cooperation and information sharing on ABS: South-south cooperation on ABS-related matters could immensely benefit Venezuela's ability to deal with ABS issues at a national level. However, the lack of resources to secure these cooperation / networking opportunities greatly limits the country's possibility to learn from others and improve its own capacities. Many lessons have been learned in other countries of the region, and Venezuela could gain from their experiences as it ventures towards establishing the necessary policy, legislation and administrative frameworks for ABS. Consequently, there is a need for direct exchange and sharing of experiences with countries in the region regarding the ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS. There is also a need to

bring countries together in a regional forum to discuss and identify common transboundary and other issues related to ABS and the corresponding challenges at the national level. Since many of Venezuela's conservation landscapes and areas of high biodiversity stretch into Brazil and Colombia, and with some regional endemic species found in these areas, and possibly traditional knowledge spanning across the nations, some mechanism for coordination is needed and an understanding reached on access and benefit sharing of such resources. A cost-effective way of information exchange and networking is required among these countries.

1.2 The baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects

This project is going to build on the initiatives and investments of various actors to implement ABS measures. Over the past twenty years, Venezuela has been investing in ABS, starting from the implementation of Decision 391 of the CAN, and evolving to the revision and drafting of new legal and policy instruments that were meant to cover ABS related matters. In this context, various actors play a key role and the local investment in this respect covers actions from various sectors, including the work of the Commission for Access to Genetic Resources, which has an estimated budget for the next four years of USD 800,000 (consisting of the work of nine units^[4] that each designate two persons - principal and alternate- to take part in the process of reviewing access requests). The national competent authority on ABS, MINEC, is expected to invest approximately USD 3,000,000 in ABS related activities through the operation of its Division of Biological Diversity, which has six staff members who work at least part time on ABS, as well as expenditures related to the processing and analysis of access requests. This baseline figure also includes the costs incurred by MINEC to fulfill coordination functions related to ABS matters, including networking and cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental bodies. The estimated contribution over the next four years of other actors, such as National Institute for Agricultural Research (INIA), totals approximately USD 4,000,000. In addition, research and academic institutions, notably the Facultad de Agronomía at the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), have been involved in research activities that have led to the submission of access requests to local authorities. The latter have, in some instances, been managed under framework contracts between these research institutions and local authorities. Along these lines, the UCV plays a key role not only in the country's bioprospecting activities, but also as an experienced user of the current system (despite its limitations), and therefore will be an instrumental partner in assessing current ABS procedures and how they can be improved. The university's investment in research activities related to ABS is estimated at USD 800,000 annually.

The private sector, through companies such as Finca Bromelia, is also undertaking activities associated with the utilization of biological products such as cocoa, which may eventually evolve into research programmes on cocoa genetic resources and related access requests. The estimated investment of the private sector in this respect is of USD 3,000,000 over the next 4 years. Private companies active in the perfume industry are currently seeking links with local communities and authorities for the use of resources such as *Dipteryx odorata*; however, this has not yet led to any process of utilization of genetic resources as such, and there is uncertainty as to whether or not a formal request will come in the near future. Local authorities will continue to monitor these cases and ensure that local regulations are met,

although the limited knowledge and capacity for monitoring ABS permits and/or illegal uses limits the country's ability to carry out these tasks in a truly effective manner.

1.3 The proposed alternative scenario, GEF focal area strategies, with a brief description of expected outcomes and components

The alternative scenario proposed through this project is aimed at improving local capacities for the implementation of access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge in accordance with the Nagoya Protocol. The project will strengthen capacities in two areas: 1) technical and administrative capacities to enable a functioning national ABS framework that will allow Venezuela to effectively implement the provisions and obligations set out in its national legislation and the Nagoya Protocol (NP); and 2) awareness raising to secure the buy-in and support of all stakeholders that have a role to play in Access and Benefit Sharing (i.e. local authorities, private sector, academia, local communities, custom officers, etc.). Through this approach, the project will seek to tackle the lack of a clear framework to assess the potential value of the country's genetic resources for its economy and development. Furthermore, the project will facilitate better understanding of the value of traditional knowledge associated with the use of genetic resources and the key role it could play for local and indigenous communities livelihoods and the country in general. Targeted sharing of ABS knowledge and experiences at the regional level will further strengthen institutional capacity building and support efforts to develop a national ABS regime with clear and flexible processes. All activities will be carried out through a gender-sensitive approach.

Component 1: Developing an interinstitutional and coordinated ABS framework consistent with the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol (NP)

Outcome 1.1 National ABS regime rendered operational in a coordinated manner, incorporating monitoring actions and in alignment with the CBD and the NP

The project will undertake a review of local ABS policy and legislation, tools and capacities through stakeholder mapping, gap-analysis and a stocktaking/needs assessment of the policy and legislative framework. This will also include a review of current procedures and documents used in the past to process requests. This will be done in parallel to the review of regional lessons learned that will be undertaken under Output 3.1.2, as well as the assessment of historic and current bioprospecting activities under Output 2.1.1. Based on this information, the project will develop a harmonized ABS strategy for Venezuela, which will serve as a single tool to define the country's position on ABS as well as the governing bodies and instruments. The strategy will include a plan for implementing the recently-ratified Nagoya Protocol. In particular, the project will support the implementation of the NP through its integration into national legislation and administrative systems. Based on the stocktaking/needs assessment, the project will look at the issuing of a Law specifically dealing with ABS to bring together all the different elements of ABS legislation into one legal instrument. Administrative changes will also be addressed as needed by the Strategy and implemented by the project as far as funding allows.

Based on the aforementioned activities, the project will also update or create new tools that could be used by local authorities to carry out ABS procedures. Among the tools to be developed are PIC and MAT templates to ensure primary users and stewards of biodiversity directly benefit from

bioprospecting activities, which will be based on existing templates but tailored to Venezuela's system. Protocols for users and providers of genetic resources will also be produced using available materials developed by the CBD, IUCN, UNEP, and others. The project will develop protocols for Indigenous People and Local Communities (ILC) regarding their engagement in ABS, taking into account gender sensitivities associated with the use of genetic resources in the country.

The project will develop a single, automated ABS application system, which would lead to more efficiency and help reduce confusion among relevant agencies and applicants. Based on this, an interinstitutional online administrative system will be developed to become a national ABS management tool inclusive of a centralized database of available information on national genetic resources as well as acting as national ABS clearing house. The functions of this system will be to facilitate information for users on the process to request access to GR, and to support the work of national authorities on ABS by serving as a repository of information and as an interactive platform for processing requests. The platform will serve as a single access point for universities, entrepreneurs, the general public and any other actors with regard to access contracts, sharing of benefits, bioprospecting, research and development, etc. The online administrative system would include creating an applicant's portal that gives clear information on the progress of applications in the procedure, provides the name and contact details of the relevant person at each stage of the procedure, and generates automatic emails notifying applicants when a stage in the procedure has been approved or providing written information on issues requiring resolution. Guidelines on the use of the online administrative system targeting the potential users of the system will be produced and training provided.

In relation to the monitoring of ABS activities, the project will establish checkpoints along the different stages of use of GRs and TK, and develop monitoring guidelines for local authorities. During the PPG phase, options for where to establish the checkpoints will be assessed. During the implementation of the project, interaction with other countries (through Component 3) will allow Venezuela to learn from successful regional experiences (i.e. Peru on how it is establishing checkpoints through another GEF project). Guidance on the establishment of checkpoints will form part of the ABS strategy.

Component 2: Increasing awareness and capacity of all relevant stakeholders in advancing ABS

***Outcome 2.1** Stakeholders from various sectors (government, academic, scientific, private, and indigenous people, through the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples) empowered to negotiate, evaluate and process ABS contracts that embrace equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of GR and TR.*

Under this component the project will develop a National Action Plan on Capacity-Building for ABS, which will serve as a guide for capacity building actions (beyond the outputs of this component) that the Government and local stakeholders can utilize in order to ensure the sustainability of results that will be produced under this project. Likewise, the Action Plan will serve to ensure that ABS elements are captured in other initiatives that will lead to future opportunities to gain expertise or to improve the management of ABS related issues.

As the first steps under the National Action Plan on Capacity Building for ABS, the project will foster the development of interactive training modules on ABS related issues, which will cover aspects of national and international legislation, how to process access requests under the revised system, as well as key practices and the importance of GR and TK. The target audiences for these trainings will be government officials, researchers and entrepreneurs. Each module will be developed for a particular target group so as to cover the information needs of that particular sector. The material will also be gender sensitive, ensuring that when the importance of genetic resources is discussed, it is also linked to the important gender differences that can emerge from their utilization. The number of participants from each sector and how many training sessions can be held based on the available finances will be determined during the PPG.

The project will also provide assistance through workshops and field activities to users and providers of genetic resources and traditional knowledge by strengthening their negotiation techniques to ensure that future access contracts take into account the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their utilization. The workshops will target possible users, such as organisations involved in research and development (i.e. Central University of Venezuela, National Institute for Agricultural Research, and private sector companies such as Finca Bromelia) as well as providers, such as representatives of government institutions as well as local community and or indigenous people representatives where they have rights over the land and resources. Using materials and examples gathered from previous access contracts in and outside the country, the project will facilitate the identification of key elements that could lead the negotiation for sharing of benefits, based on the activities proposed for the use of the genetic resources (i.e. research, commercial purposes, etc.). In selecting the examples that will be used to advance the negotiation skills of the target audiences, the project will take into account gender differences and will therefore highlight the need for benefits that could suit both women and men as per their different uses of GR and possession of TK.

In summary, the project seeks to strengthen the capacity of key actors (government officials, academics, researchers, the private sector (Finca Bromelia), and indigenous peoples through the Ministry of Popular Power of Indigenous Peoples) in relation to access to genetic resources and the traditional knowledge associated with these resources, in addition to developing skills in the use of procedures and tools of the national ABS system. In the case of the public sector and national authorities, the capacity building efforts will focus on increasing the understanding of the Nagoya Protocol, as well as on the proper application of national regulations. The project will also offer support to take advantage of previous experiences and offer technical support to strengthen negotiation skills to achieve ABS and TK agreements with the Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples.

The project will also develop and implement a Nagoya Protocol / ABS awareness raising campaign, which will (whenever possible) make use of existing informative materials on ABS, and develop additional materials tailored for the local needs, when needed. The awareness campaign will be directed to a wide range of stakeholders in the ABS process, including scientific, public, private, technical, general public and local and indigenous communities and other owners of TK. This intervention will be based on the use of diverse communication media, including radio-spots, brochures, information sheets, e-news, open forums, etc. The campaign will also be gender sensitive, taking into account the different roles that men and women could have in the use of GR and TK. The main elements of the awareness

raising strategy will be identified during the PPG phase, and a basic methodology will be proposed based on a detailed stakeholder mapping exercise.

Component 3: Leveraging ABS knowledge and experiences at a regional level

***Outcome 3.1:** ABS management in Venezuela improved through regional networking and lessons sharing.*

This component will improve Venezuela's capacities to manage ABS by fostering networking opportunities with other countries of the region and sharing lessons learnt. The project will facilitate three regional meetings to discuss ABS related issues with countries of the LAC region and in particular with those who are also undertaking projects on ABS (GEF or non-GEF), which could lead to a productive exchange of information, good practices, experiences, etc. These activities will be coordinated with the support of UN Environment so as to benefit from the agency's experience with other GEF-funded ABS projects. Countries from the region with advanced ABS systems and/or experience will be identified and contacted during the PPG phase to request their support in participating in the knowledge management activities of this project. Because ABS is an issue that could include access to resources that are present in more than one country, coordination with neighbouring countries will be key to understanding how access permits will be managed and how to carry out overall monitoring of access. The project will identify a cost effective way to share information and to network with other countries in the region through this information exchange and networking opportunity. The project will also develop a manuscript on lessons learnt by countries of the region (those participating in the regional meeting hosted by Venezuela) that will be beneficial for the development of Venezuela's ABS system as well as those of other countries. Socio-economic considerations and gender issues related to ABS will also be assessed and discussed during the regional forum, resulting in a technical report on the socio-economic and gender implications of ABS in Venezuela and the LAC region that will be incorporated into the products of Component 1 (ABS strategy and tools). To further the component's focus on knowledge sharing, a side event will be coordinated by the project at the next COP-MOP meeting. This event will be aimed at sharing Venezuela's experience in ABS related matters and will include a summary of the challenges faced to implement a functional national ABS system, the needs identified and the pathways that the country has taken to address some of those needs. This event will offer not only the possibility for Venezuela to share its experience, but also an opportunity for other countries and partners to share their experiences while enabling discussion of the topic. Inputs from this event will also support Venezuela's efforts towards implementing ABS measures and defining the best approach for the country.

1.4 Alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies

The project is directly aligned to the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area strategy, in particular to BD-3-9 'Further development of biodiversity policy and institutional frameworks through the Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and benefit sharing,' and directly relates to the core activities that the GEF will support as mentioned in the strategy: (i) Stocktaking and assessment; (ii) Development and

implementation of a strategy and action plan for the implementation of ABS measures; (iii) Development (or revision) of national measures to implement and enforce the Protocol; and (iv) Building capacity among stakeholders (including indigenous and local communities, especially women) to negotiate between providers and users of genetic resources. The project will also contribute directly to Aichi Target 16, which states; "By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation."

1.5 Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline

In the baseline scenario, Venezuela will continue to strive to improve existing ABS instruments, and through the work of the Commission for Access to Genetic Resources and MINEC, to support users and providers in the processing of applications and in carrying out negotiations. However, despite the importance of these initiatives, the current fragmentation and outdated provisions in the ABS regulatory framework means they will not result in a comprehensive and effective national ABS regime that can unleash the potential of Venezuela's genetic resources, ensure that monetary and non-monetary benefits derived from these resources are shared equitably, and conserve the biodiversity associated with the country's biological and genetic resources.

With the incremental support of the GEF, Venezuela will be able to complement its own efforts with new initiatives to strengthen legal, regulatory and policy frameworks by tackling overlaps and redundancies and bringing them into alignment with the CBD and NP; to improve institutional capacity and expertise in dealing with access and benefit sharing; to involve and build the capacity of "untapped" ABS stakeholders to participate in access contracts, most notably ILCs; and to ensure the harmonised application of ABS measures at a national level. The changes expected from this project will improve the baseline and will have an effective and positive impact on the implementation of ABS principles in Venezuela, in accordance with the CBD and Nagoya Protocol.

In addition, Component 3 of the project has been designed to facilitate the sharing of experiences between Venezuela and other countries of the region. This is expected to be cost-effective since important information can be shared during networking opportunities, and Venezuela will implement this project with a solid understanding of challenges and/or successful experiences from other countries, which will add to the incrementality of this intervention. Component 3 activities will specifically engage countries undertaking other GEF and non-GEF ABS projects, thereby ensuring that Venezuela's investment through this project will not be a stand-alone effort; it will both complement national actions towards the establishment of an ABS regime and build-in regional experiences and complementary investments of the GEF and other countries.

1.6 Global environmental benefits

The project will complement Venezuela's efforts to maintain and preserve its genetic resources. In particular, through a properly-working ABS regime, the project will help to emphasize the value and importance of genetic resources. This is particularly relevant for megadiverse countries, which have the

responsibility of being depositories of the most important gene banks on the planet. In this context, an effective and efficient access regime to genetic resources and equitable benefit sharing will promote research and development along with biodiversity conservation.

By creating a more effective and clear administrative system for ABS, the country will foster the engagement of users and providers of genetic resources in a transparent and effective manner. This will create a suitable environment for genetic resource protection and conservation, as well as their utilization, which is key to obtain global benefits in areas such as environmental, health and nutritional issues. A more conscious / coordinated use of the same, and the proper sharing of benefits, will improve the environmental conditions in Venezuela.

Moreover, through an improved ABS system and greater knowledge and awareness of the importance of the proper use of GR and associated TK, monetary and non-monetary benefits will be obtained in various sectors, recognizing that bioprospecting can contribute to both development and biodiversity conservation. Thus, by promoting proper access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of benefits, the global environment will benefit from the safeguarding of natural resources and associated TK, and from 'building a case' for the value of biodiversity in a megadiverse country such as Venezuela. Likewise, advances in the implementation of the CBD's third objective favour the global environment by upholding the notion that biodiversity benefits should flow in support of those that conserve it.

1.7 Innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up

The establishment and/or strengthening of an ABS system is on its own not innovative, since it is a global phenomenon. However, the current project attempts to be innovative for Venezuela in promoting an integrated cost-effective approach to manage ABS. Venezuela has already made significant progress in establishing a local ABS system, first through Resolution 391 of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), and eventually through a more tailored system for the country. Venezuela now faces the challenge of simplifying its ABS processes in a way that fulfils national requirements while also ensuring alignment with the Nagoya Protocol. The innovative approach for Venezuela will be to expand the range of stakeholders involved in ABS issues (e.g. to include more local / indigenous communities, local authorities, and private sector partners), while at the same time providing hands-on training/learning opportunities for users and providers on how to use the local ABS tools, such as access contract templates, the new ABS information platform, etc. The knowledge management activities of Component 3 are also innovative for the country, since they will open dialogue and sharing of experiences with other countries in the region and enable Venezuela to consider good practices or lessons learned by other countries. The regional networking will also enable the establishment of synergies that will support the country to implement ABS in a cooperative way and learn from the experiences of others.

The local investment in ABS in previous years as well as the co-financing committed to this project shows the interest of proponents in ensuring project success and continuity of results. The information platform that will be hosted by MINEC is an example of how the project results (i.e. streamlining of processes) will be sustained over time. In addition, the interactive training modules will be made available on the ABS information platform, thereby ensuring their continuous use after the life of the

project by many other possible interested parties or trainees. The project has also earmarked resources for knowledge management as a strategy to ensure that the importance of the project and its results are widely understood by key stakeholders at all levels, thereby contributing to sustainability. There is an explicit commitment to sustain the administrative systems needed to run the NP after the project. As stipulated in the Law on Management of Biological Diversity (GO 39.070 of 01/12/2018), MINEC, in its capacity as national environmental authority, has provisions in its budget to maintain ABS-related matters. Furthermore, MINEC executes the integrated application project of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Compensation and the Convention on Biological Diversity, among other actions related to ABS and TK.

In terms of replication and possibility for scaling up, the project will improve the local ABS system in Venezuela with a view towards implementing the Nagoya Protocol and can be seen as the basis or first step for further developments which could include issues such as improved monitoring, links to the ABS clearing house of the CBD, etc. The ABS strategy that will be developed under this project will also constitute one of the first building blocks for additional ABS actions in the country, considering that it will provide information on what is needed, what can be done, with whom should the country network, and how ABS can be better linked with other thematic areas and the operations of relevant authorities. Once the authorities have put into practice the knowledge and tools gained through this project, there will be an opportunity for more specific ABS interventions and resolutions such as those dealing not only with research permits but also with commercial applications derived from the use of genetic resources.

[1] <http://www.biodiversitya-z.org/areas/26>

[2] The Andean Community (CAN) is a trade bloc of four countries ? Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay are associate members while Panama, Mexico and Spain are observers. The regional integration in the Andean countries began with the signing of the Cartagena Agreement (by Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador and Peru) in 1969 creating the Andean Pact and a Common Market. Venezuela joined the Pact in 1973 but withdrew in 2006.

[3] <https://www.cbd.int/information/parties.shtml#tab=2>

[4] General Direction of Environmental Education, General Direction of Environmental Education and Community Participation, General Direction of Culture and International Cooperation, General Direction of Legal Consultancy, General Direction of Environmental Quality, General Direction of Watersheds, General Direction of Surveillance and Environmental Control, Administrative Office of Permissions and National Institute of Parks (INPARQUES)

1b. Project Map and Coordinates

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.

PROGRAM/PROJECT MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES

The state of Aragua has an area of 7,014 km², which represents 0.76% of the national territory, bound to the North by the Caribbean Sea; to the South by Gu?rico state; to the East by Vargas, Capital District and Miranda states and to the West by the Carabobo and Gu?rico states. Its capital is the city of Maracay and its main cities are Turmero, El Lim?n, La Victoria, Cagua and Villa de Cura.

The Ocumare municipality of Costa de Oro, is one of the 18 municipalities that are part of the Aragua state, has an area of 340 km² and a population of 13,847 inhabitants (2011 census). Its capital is Ocumare de la Costa and is located northwest of the state Aragua and whose coordinates are 10 ? 25'42 "N 67 ? 44'28" W, is made up of at least 30 towns, among which the following have been targeted for this initiative: Trilla, Aponte, Cumboto and Cuyagua.



2. Stakeholders

Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Yes

Civil Society Organizations Yes

Private Sector Entities Yes

If none of the above, please explain why:

In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement

Numerous stakeholders participate in the development of this initiative in various ways. Several government institutions provide important support, as described in the table below; however, other interested parties also have an important participation. An example is the universities, in particular the Faculty of Agronomy of the Central University of Venezuela, with which the project should support the execution of certain training and awareness activities in universities and public institutions. Civil society's active participation will be key as it serves as a link with local populations and raises public awareness regarding the economic opportunities of ABS and positive social impacts. It is also expected to enrich and contribute to the design and implementation of a coherent legal framework. In particular, the proponents have identified Universities, Local Communities, Indigenous communities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Private Sector and the general public, and have held several meetings in which these actors have shown interest in the initiative.

The following table indicates the various stakeholders involved in the project and their respective roles:

Stakeholders	Implementation Role
Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism and Water (MINEC)	MINEC will be the focal point for CBD and Nagoya Protocol on ABS. Will also drive, facilitate and coordinate project implementation among all involved entities. Will serve as project executing agency.
General Directorate for Biological Diversity. through the National Center for the Conservation of Genetic Resources	The General Directorate for Biological Diversity will be the specific department within MINEC in charge of the execution of project activities.
Intra-ministerial commission for access to Genetic Resources (CIARG)	CIARG will contribute in areas of competence related to ABS and the processing and review of applications for access contracts. CIARG will be part of the training programs, awareness raising campaign and analysis of local capacities, and will act as a key advisor in the development of the online system.
Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples	As part of its mission, this Ministry will determine the ethnic groups that should be prioritized within the framework of this project, which will be developed jointly between MINEC and the MPPI during the drafting of the PPG. The project will network with the communities indigenous and they will be part of the activities related to Outputs 2.1.2
Private / Public Universities and research institutions (Faculty of Agronomy and Center for Research in Agricultural Biotechnology CIBA)	Support in execution of certain training and sensitizing activities in universities and public institutions. Source of experts for capacity building activities.

Local Communities (La Trilla, Aponte, Cumboto and Cuyagua)	The project will network with the communities and they will be part of the activities related to Outputs 2.1.2 and 2.1.5
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (communal councils in Trilla, Cumboto and Cuyagua).	CSOs will play an active role in liaising with local populations and raising public awareness with regard to ABS economic opportunities and positive social impacts. They are also expected to enrich and contribute to the design and implementation of a coherent legal framework
Private Sector (Finca Bromelia)	As a key partner, the private sector, most notably through leading and committed representatives, will be involved in all project milestones ? contributing to awareness-raising within the private sector, identifying suitable genetic resources, resource providers and value chains. Finca Bromelia will provide support and also participate in this project?s training activities as well as the hands-on experiences described under Output 2.1. They may become a potential user of genetic resources in the future since they are currently active in the use of some biological material that could eventually turn into the use of genetic resources for research and development.
Providers of genetic resources: local / rural communities, indigenous population, farmers, women?s cooperatives	Facilitate and contribute to the compilation and assessment of ABS-related traditional knowledge, raise awareness of local indigenous communities involved in ABS matters, and spread necessary capacities through training of trainers modalities.
UNEP	UNEP will be the implementing agency of the project and will provide overall technical support and supervision of project activities, as well as processing the cash advances and addressing monitoring and evaluation issues.
UNOPS ? Centre for Coordination of Regional Activities, Latin America and the Caribbean	UNOPS will act as Fund Management Agency, thus operating through an exclusive operational and fiduciary role with no technical baring on the project. Given the macroeconomic context in Venezuela, UNOPS is one of the few development organizations with systems in place to hedge against severe exchange fluctuations.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis).

The project will mainstream gender issues throughout its implementation. Some examples on how gender has been taken into account in project design are:

? The project?s institutional capacity building, stakeholder training efforts and communication and awareness campaign will be gender sensitive, taking into account the different roles that men and women could have in the use of GR and TK. This means that awareness materials and key messages will be structured in a way that they can highlight the benefit of ABS systems for both men and women, and in

particular with emphasis on the importance of fair benefit sharing among community members.

? Under Component 3, a technical report on socio-economic, and gender implications of ABS in Venezuela and the LAC region will be developed. This is expected to highlight the differentiated roles that men and women may have on ABS, and to integrate these considerations into the development of the country's ABS strategy and tools.

Funds to implement these activities and to track gender indicators will be allocated in the project budget.

Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes

closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;

improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or Yes

generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.

Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?

Yes

4. Private sector engagement

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.

Finca Las Bromelias is a small cocoa producing private enterprise. Located in a ranch in the Las Vegas area of Cumboto, Aragua state, Finca Las Bromelias cocoa production extends over 4 hectares. The ranch has 10 years of field work experience that began as a project to produce organic food for the owners and quickly became a space to honor their cocoa production heritage. The Finca now serves as a productive research center, carrying out research related to improving the national production of cocoa, taking into account the traditional knowledge of communities to increase the production of crops based on the selection of trees according to their phenotypic characteristics. The Finca carries out genetic material verification in collaboration of entities such as the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC), National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA), the National Institute of Integral Agricultural Health (INSAI) and the Central University of Venezuela (UCV-FAGRO). The unique characteristics of Ocumare-61 cocoa from Finca Las Bromelias were certified by the Agricultural

Biotechnology Research Center (CIBA) of the Faculty of Agronomy of the UCV with the support of MINEC's technical staff, who granted a Certification of Genetic Origin to the Finca-produced cocoa in 2016.

The project will foster public-private collaboration to identify the genetic origin (access to genetic resources) of selected trees based on local producer experience (associated traditional knowledge) from the following communities: La Trilla, Aponte, Cumboto and Cuyagua. Furthermore, it will work with these local communities to train them on traditional knowledge and fair and equitable distribution of the benefits arising from its use among academic and private actors who use these resources (users) and the country that provides them (provider).

5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the Project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the Project design (table format acceptable)

Risk	Mitigation measure
Lack of coordination between the various actors to effectively participate in the project due to the fact that not all of them have the same capacities (technical, financial and operational)	Relevant authorities will be integrated from the design phase of the project through to the end in order to establish their respective roles and responsibilities and secure their commitment and participation through formal mechanisms. Moreover, benefits associated with active participation in the project and fulfilment of relevant ABS roles and responsibilities will be pointed out to different actors as a strategy to ensure buy-in and support to the project. An awareness-raising campaign will start during the PPG phase to inform all relevant actors and authorities about the importance of the project.
Staff participating in the project may be transferred to other positions, resulting in a loss of effective capacity to implement the ABS system in Venezuela.	Participation of technical personnel with fixed positions will be ensured in MINEC, the Executing Agency, as well as in other relevant Ministries, with the purpose of maintaining institutional memory and the capacity to execute the project. Representatives to the Steering Committee from the various institutions will be fixed-term staff in relevant organisations. In addition, the use of UNEP's ANUBIS system as a project management tool will serve as a repository of project information and contribute to institutional memory in the case of staff turnover in both local partners and UNEP.
Decision-making is centralized by a few government staff/ institution	Different levels of commitment / involvement will be established within the project structure, in an attempt to minimize centralization of information on a single person or department. To do this, support structures, advisory groups, work committees, etc. will be created. This will be complemented with the generation of training tools and sessions to share the project information.

Socio-economic changes in the country constrain or hamper project achievements	To avoid any risk associated with possible changes in the socio-economic conditions in the country, the project is contemplating a tri-partite mechanism for its implementation, which will allow flexibility of operations and management of the project resources in an efficient way. In this sense, MINEC will be the overall responsible for the project's execution and delivery of results, but it will share the financial and administrative duties with a third party who will act as fund management agency (UNOPS Centre for Coordination of Regional Activities).
Lack of support for the project due to the difficulty some stakeholders may have in understanding complex ABS issues.	The project will carry out a communication strategy that will target various stakeholders. This strategy will be developed and rolled out during the first six months of implementation, to secure support of and effective involvement of all relevant actors. In addition, during the PPG phase, face to face meetings with key actors will take place, in order to explain the project, secure their support and ensure their needs are contemplated in project activities.
COVID-19 Pandemic impacts PPG execution and possibly quick-start of activities	Whilst it is expected that pandemic-related adversities will have been normalized by project start, there is a chance it may still impact consultations, most notably with indigenous groups, during the project preparation grant (PPG) phase and, potentially, at the very beginning of the project. Close bilateral coordination with indigenous group leaders over the phone to ensure their voices are fully captured until community-wide consultations can take place will be foreseen.

6. Coordination

Outline the institutional structure of the project including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the project level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.

This project is intended to establish synergies with other ongoing initiatives in ABS, which will be implemented at the same time. UNEP is the implementing agency of various GEF-ABS projects in the region, which will facilitate the interaction between this project and these other initiatives. Some of the initiatives with which the project will establish synergies with are:

? *Access to and Benefit Sharing and Protection of Traditional Knowledge to Promote Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in Guatemala?*. The project's objective is to develop policy and legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms for access and benefit sharing (ABS), in order to strengthen biodiversity conservation, promote rural development and support climate change adaptation.

? *Strengthening Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) in the Bahamas?*. This project's objective is to create and apply the enabling conditions for fair and equitable access and effective benefit sharing. This project will also have pilot cases with which to share experiences during project implementation.

? *Advancing the Nagoya Protocol in the countries of the Caribbean?*. This project seeks to create basic ABS related capacity in various Caribbean countries with the aim of advancing their actions towards the eventual ratification of the Nagoya protocol.

? *?Effective Implementation of the Access and Benefit Sharing and Traditional Knowledge Regime in Peru in accordance with the Nagoya Protocol?*. A recently approved project that is also aimed at strengthening the national capacities in ABS in alignment to the NP. Synergies with this project will be especially key, since a lot of networking and sharing of information could take place between the two initiatives maximizing the use of resources.

? *?Implementation of the national Biosafety Framework in Venezuela?* aimed at strengthening capacities towards the implementation of the Cartagena protocol, and to contribute to biodiversity conservation in the country.

? The FAO-GEF project *?Sustainable Forest Land Management and Conservation under an Eco-social Approach?*. This project seeks to support government institutions and community organizations in the application of innovations in information management, incentive schemes, participatory governance, forest-related community empowerment and multiple mechanisms for the recovery of degraded areas.

The project will also take advantage of and build on projects that were implemented previously from which this initiative could benefit (i.e. from outputs generated by these projects). This is the case with the GEF-funded project *?Strengthening the Implementation of Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing Regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean,?* implemented from 2011-2014 in cooperation with UNEP and under coordination of IUCN-South. The experiences from this initiative provide valuable lessons on the exchange of information and contributions to strengthening national capacities for the development of regulatory frameworks, such as tools for Prior Informed Consent and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits.

7. Consistency with National Priorities

Is the Project consistent with the National Strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions?

Yes

If yes, which ones and how: NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, INDCs, etc

- National Action Plan for Adaptation (NAPA) under LDCF/UNFCCC
- National Action Program (NAP) under UNCCD
- ASGM NAP (Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining) under Mercury
- Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) under Minamata Convention
- National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) under UNCBD
- National Communications (NC) under UNFCCC
- Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) under UNFCCC
- National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) under UNCBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD
- National Implementation Plan (NIP) under POPs
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)
- National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (NPFE) under GEFSEC
- Biennial Update Report (BUR) under UNFCCC
- Others

The project supports Venezuela's National Plan 2013 - 2019 (G.O. No. 6.118 Extraord. 04/12/2013), which states in its fifth historic goal that the plan will contribute to the preservation of the planet based on a harmonic relationship between man and nature, guaranteeing rational, optimal and sustainable use and exploitation of natural resources. Access and benefit sharing speaks directly to this goal, particularly to optimal use of genetic resources.

Additionally, the project is aligned with the National Strategy for Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan, in the sense that it adopts a multidisciplinary approach to establish legal frameworks and regulations, as well as administrative procedures that allow access to genetic resources and benefit sharing, in conformity with the Nagoya Protocol on ABS. Specifically, the strategy discusses under Principle #2 issues related with the use of genetic resources, the right of indigenous peoples to grant access to genetic resources and the importance of the country's biodiversity (and genetic resources) for research and development (reference to items 2.1 and 2.2 of Principle 2). The project also is consistent with eligibility criteria and the Fund's priorities, since it will help the Government of Venezuela in preparing to implement the dispositions and obligations defined in the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing. Moreover, the project will facilitate private sector participation and related initiatives focused on investing in conservation, sustainable use of genetic resources *in situ*, and support for the means of subsistence of communities.

8. Knowledge Management

Outline the knowledge management approach for the Project, including, if any, plans for the Project to learn from other relevant Projects and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

The knowledge management approach for this project is a learning-by-doing approach, since the improvement of the current ABS capacities will require new skills and certain level of familiarity with the tools and modifications to the system that will be developed and implemented. In addition, the community engagement in particular for issues related to traditional knowledge will provide the various stakeholders (communities, local authorities, providers and users of GR, etc.) the opportunity to learn about various issues and gain experience in negotiation techniques and the sharing of benefits derived from the use of GR. The project will also develop a communication and awareness raising strategy, which is considered key to get the buy-in of key stakeholders who will play a key role on ABS issues but who may not be fully aware of what this implies. An entire component has been dedicated to this as part of the project's knowledge management strategy. Systematization of information and lessons learned will be done throughout the project implementation period, and in particular through activities under Component 3, where the project will open up opportunities for regional networking and sharing of lessons learnt.

Members of the steering committee and all institutions and organizations with responsibilities relevant to the sustainable use of GR and TK in the country will be given reports and key information. Likewise, the executing agency (MINEC) will have the support of UN Environment for the dissemination of information and communication related issues. This support will be provided not only by the Task Manager, who has technical knowledge on ABS, but also through the support of other UN Environment

staff based at the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean who are engaged in ABS matters in this region.

9. Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

Provide information on the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project/program based on your organization's ESS systems and procedures

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification*

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Low			

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

Provide preliminary information on the types and levels of risk classifications/ratings of any identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project (considering the GEF ESS Minimum Standards) and describe measures to address these risks during the project design.

Find attached SRIF document

Supporting Documents

Upload available ESS supporting documents.

Title	Submitted
SRIF CRC VEN ABS_2021 01 13	

Part III: Approval/Endorsement By GEF Operational Focal Point(S) And GEF Agency(ies)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter with this template).

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Miguel Serrano	GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministry of People's Power for Ecosocialism	8/11/2020

ANNEX A: Project Map and Geographic Coordinates

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project intervention takes place

PROGRAM/PROJECT MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES

The state of Aragua has an area of 7,014 km², which represents 0.76% of the national territory, bound to the North by the Caribbean Sea; to the South by Gu?rico state; to the East by Vargas, Capital District and Miranda states and to the West by the Carabobo and Gu?rico states. Its capital is the city of Maracay and its main cities are Turmero, El Lim?n, La Victoria, Cagua and Villa de Cura.

The Ocumare municipality of Costa de Oro, is one of the 18 municipalities that are part of the Aragua state, has an area of 340 km² and a population of 13,847 inhabitants (2011 census). Its capital is Ocumare de la Costa and is located northwest of the state Aragua and whose coordinates are 10 ? 25'42 "N 67 ? 44'28" W, is made up of at least 30 towns, among which the following have been targeted for this initiative: Trilla, Aponte, Cumboto and Cuyagua.

