

# TERMINAL EVALUATION

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## I. Overview

### A. Description

Project name

BS Consolidation of National Capacities for the Full Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Panama.

Country

Panama

GEF ID

3631

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Government

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

MSP

Objective

### B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

8/11/2011

Agency Approval

8/11/2011

Implementation Start

10/28/2013

First Disbursement

8/12/2014

Expected MTR

4/27/2020

MTR Submission

3/21/2025

Actual MTR

4/27/2020

Expected Completion

12/31/2020

Actual Completion

9/30/2021

Actual TE

5/31/2024

TE Submission

3/21/2025

Final Disbursement

11/1/2023

## C. Disbursements

Project Financing	Cumulative Disbursement
1070000	954927

## II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

### A. Main Terminal Evaluation Findings

According to the review, the project is of strategic relevance for Panama to achieve an effective application of the CPB through the development of capacities that will allow an adequate handling of LMOs, which will contribute to avoid risks to biodiversity, human health and the national economy. Considering the high biodiversity of this country and the fact that it is also the center of origin and domestication of several crops, there is an evident need for a national biosafety system to ensure the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs. The release of LMOs into the environment without adequate biosafety measures could pose a threat to native species and the consequences this could have on the environment, health and socioeconomic aspects of this country. During the TR, a number of findings were identified which are described in detail in the main body of this report, but the main findings are outlined below.

- The project approach (environmental governance, biodiversity conservation, national biosafety frameworks) was innovative and ensured good participation and appropriation from main stakeholders, especially the members of the NBC.

- The project objectives and strategies are aligned with policies and plans of GEF, UNEP t and national public institutions.

- The project was well designed, with good vertical and horizontal logic, indicators that did not meet SMART standards in all cases, a M&E plan with some limitations, good stakeholder inclusion, and some consideration of social and environmental impacts for project beneficiaries. Indicators were presented at the outcome level, which were aggregated to the objective level. Some outcomes did not fully reflect the activities to generate them.

- Administrative changes in government institutions constitute an external factor that influenced project implementation. ANAM was transformed into a ministry: MiAmbiente. The project adapted strategically to this change, but it entailed delays in project inception and challenges for its administration.

- The project contributed to strengthening the legal framework for biosafety in Panama, identified the institutions that need strengthening for the adequate handling of LMOs and contributed to Panama's compliance with its obligations under the Cartagena Protocol and to safeguarding the country's biodiversity (Outcome 1).

- A series of capacity building workshops carried out during the project strengthened institutional capacity to evaluate and manage LMOs in Panama (Outcome 2).

The project conducted training activities for competent authorities on how to establish an integrated monitoring, inspection and response system to track authorized LMOs, enforce regulations and respond to unintentional releases of LMOs. However, this system has not yet been established in Panama (Outcome 3).

The project established a website: <https://bioseguridad.gob.pa> to promote the exchange of information on biosafety at national and international level. The information on this website corresponds to that uploaded during the project, has not been updated and does not yet serve as a tool for communication and management of LMOs among the institutions in charge of handling of these organisms (Outcome 4).

The project contributed to providing information on biosafety-related issues to the general public that may contribute to public awareness, education and opinion on biosafety-related issues to some extent (Outcome 5).

The project had a serious delay in its implementation, caused by administrative problems that prevented a timely inception and later by the Covid 19 pandemic. As a result, the project had three extensions. In practice, this ensured moderately satisfactory completion of outputs and generation of outcomes. The project extensions did not affect funding and, overall, the project was cost-effective.

The sustainability and replicability of many project results is dependent on continued financial resources. There are public and private institutions committed to providing continued technical support and monitoring, but ongoing funding is needed. There is insufficient consolidation of a financial strategy and corresponding mechanisms to ensure sustainability.

The institutional sustainability at the NBC level has been strengthened and constitutes a positive enabling environment for sustenance of results. At the national level, although there is an expressed institutional interest to support the onward progress of impact at scale, coordination and collaboration between institutions is not optimal, due in part to the fact that biosafety is not a priority on the agenda of the institutions. There is no staff dedicated exclusively to this topic and there are no specific institutional units/areas in charge of the appropriate handling of LMOs in Panama.

The Project was managed professionally with high quality, committed staff. Good teamwork. Initial hiring was delayed, but eventually resolved.

The project governance relied on a Project Steering Committee that was limited to NBC members and UNEP representative with occasional input from other biosafety-related institutions.

UNEP backstopping, particularly by the Task Manager, was effective and welcomed by the project team and partner institutions.

Participation and cooperation with key stakeholders were maintained throughout project implementation. Inclusion of other partners at the national level was a challenge.

The project did not have a clear gender strategy, but in practice it did involve and empower women and youth.

## **B. Stakeholder Engagement**

The project's design and institutional arrangements explicitly encouraged stakeholder participation and coordination. Efforts were made to build cross- sector linkages and participatory dynamics that are essential to ensuring maximum impact by the project. The engagement of key stakeholders represented by NBC members and intersectoral committee members was high and contributed greatly to the results and impact of the project. The participation of other stakeholders varied. Some research institutes, such as IDIAP and ICGES, were interested in participating and getting involved in project activities and in biosafety issues. The relationship

with the academic sector was weak; some university representatives, mainly from the University of Panama, took part in project activities but did not get involved in the project, even though their participation would have been valuable given the project's topic and how academia can contribute to biosafety issues related to modern biotechnology, such as the analysis of LMOs. Neither was it possible to engage stakeholders such as Panama Canal Authority (ACP) and the National Customs Authority (ANA), despite the efforts made. According to the information obtained from the documents analyzed and the interviews, officials of these institutions are not interested in working on biosafety-related issues, nor is it part of their mandate. The role played by these two institutions in the transit of LMOs is important and this is undoubtedly a pending issue that the project did not achieve and that should be worked on in other initiatives related to biosafety. It is important to emphasize that in this project, the continuous participation of key stakeholders contributed to achieving the project goal: to strengthen the national biosafety framework in Panama and contribute to the country's effective compliance with the CPB.

### **C. Gender Equality**

Gender mainstreaming was a weak point of the project. In project design there is hardly any mention of gender aspects or challenges. Something is described in section 3.11 where this text is found: "From the perspective of project operations, equal employment opportunities will be given to men and women. Project activities and training will not discriminate against any particular group or gender, while target groups such as youth or private companies will receive special attention in the development of the communication strategy and awareness raising materials".

The Project lacked a specific aim or strategy to promote positive changes in attitudes, behaviours and power relations between the different stakeholders, disaggregated by gender, age or race. It did not have specific gender expertise, nor social indicators and hardly collected gender disaggregated data. It can therefore be said that there was a lack of formal gender vision and strategy in the project design but that in practice the participation of women in the project committees and activities carried out was high and, in most cases, exceeded the percentage of men. This is reflected in some PIRs. For example, PIR 2021 describes in certain detail the actions carried out to tackle gender mainstreaming. For instance, it is reported: "The project has attempted to monitor gender balance and representation in its institutional strengthening, capacity building and overall project management and knowledge creation efforts"; "The project's communicational campaign for the promotion of awareness, education and public participation in matters related to biosafety has integrated a gender sensitive approach by using inclusive language for written communications as well as visual and audio materials". This shows the raising of awareness during project implementation to include this topic.

### **D. Knowledge Management**

As shown by the satisfactory achievement of the outputs in Component 4: 'Generation of national biosafety information,' the reviewer considers that the outcome: 'Access to information on LMOs and how they should be managed provides regulators and stakeholders with the information they need to carry out their functions,' was partially achieved. Based on the analysis of the outputs that contribute to achieving the outcome of this component of the project, it can be seen that the project made efforts to make relevant information on biosafety available to the institutions in charge of LMO management in Panama and also to the general public, thus contributing to a well-informed society on this issue. The information on the portal created within the project corresponds to the information uploaded during its timeframe, and has not been updated since then, therefore does not yet serve as a tool for communication and management of LMOs among the institutions in charge of handling these organisms. The Portal exists, but it is an information exchange center that is not currently used by the institutions involved in biosafety in Panama, nor is it in the minds of the persons interviewed, who are aware of its existence but do not use it.

Outcome 5 (Public awareness, education, and participation in biosafety-related issues are strengthened, which improves the quality of the debate on biosafety) within project component 5: 'Promotion of public awareness,

education and public participation in matters relating to biosafety' was moderately achieved during project implementation according to the reviewer's analysis. According to the activities reported in the PIRs and in the final report, it can be seen that work was done on public awareness related to LMOs. Outreach materials were produced, and a public awareness campaign was launched in some locations in Panama City. The agency hired for this campaign reported high number of visitors to the developed exhibition, but there was no assessment as to whether the different sectors of the public have increased their knowledge about LMOs and have a better understanding of this topic as a result of this campaign. The outputs established within this component in the project design are vaguely formulated, which makes it difficult to analyze them and therefore how they contributed to the achievement of the outcome of this component of the project. In general terms, it can be concluded that the project worked on this component but that the impact of the outreach activities on the knowledge and education of the general public remains to be evaluated. During the interviews conducted by the reviewer on her visit to Panama, it was found that the interviewees had scarce information about the outreach videos produced as part of the project or the awareness-raising campaign carried out. While it is true that these products were not directed to the project's main stakeholders, the reviewer was surprised by the lack of knowledge about the implementation of these activities among persons of the institutions that were part of the project's steering committee.

### III. Core Indicators

#### IV: Co Financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO(\$)	Materialized at MTR(\$)	Materialized at TE(\$)
GEF Agency	ANAM	Grant	Investment mobilized	170000	51114	19534.76
GEF Agency	ANAM	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	307700	124071	307700
Recipient Country Government	SENACYT	Grant		5000		
Recipient Country Government	SENACYT	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	82400		82400
Recipient Country Government	MIDA	Grant		5000		
Recipient Country Government	MIDA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	82000		82000
Recipient Country Government	AUPSA	Grant		5000		

Recipient Country Government	AUPSA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	82700		82700
Recipient Country Government	ARAP	Grant		5000		
Recipient Country Government	ARAP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	82700		82700
Recipient Country Government	INDICASAT	Grant		5000		
Recipient Country Government	INDICASAT	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	81700		81700
Recipient Country Government	MINSA	Grant		5000		
Recipient Country Government	MINSA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	80800		80800
<b>Total Co-financing</b>				<b>1,000,000.00</b>	<b>175,185.00</b>	<b>80,800.00</b>

Comments

## V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

### Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
		Low	Low
		Low	
		Not available at this stage	
		Not available at this stage	
		Low	

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

The project M&E plan was well implemented. There was no specific M&E officer, but monitoring was the responsibility of the Project Coordinators, who were in charge of the oversight, gathering of information and production of reports, in coordination with the EA (MiAmbiente and ROLAC). The reviewer examined the periodic progress reports, project implementation reviews (PIR) and found them informative. The PIRs included informative narratives on project progress and detailed reporting on indicators, risk rating and stakeholder engagement. The PIRs reported well how project monitoring informed adaptive management and changes were reported to the IA and EA. The ProDoc included a monitoring plan without a risk management, however during the execution of the project the coordinator in charge of reporting the different periods included this component in the respective PIR and it could be noted that it was adequately applied in the monitoring of the project and satisfactorily reported in the PIRS.

## VI. ANNEX

### Uploaded Document

Document Category	Title
M and E Document	Validated Terminal Review Report
Document Category	Title
M and E Document	Final Cofinance Report