

TERMINAL EVALUATION

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

BS Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework

Country

Ecuador

GEF ID

3405

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Government

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

MSP

Objective

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

5/26/2010

Agency Approval

5/26/2010

Implementation Start

5/26/2010

First Disbursement

3/10/2011

Expected MTR

4/15/2013

MTR Submission

3/18/2025

Actual MTR

6/30/2014

Expected Completion

6/30/2021

Actual Completion

3/31/2022

Actual TE

6/30/2024

TE Submission

3/18/2025

Final Disbursement

3/3/2023

C. Disbursements

Project Financing	Cumulative Disbursement
750000	639518.54

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main Terminal Evaluation Findings

Key findings

1. The Project was highly relevant to national and international priorities. Its objectives and strategies were aligned with policies and plans of GEF, UNEP and national 2008 Constitution mandates and public agencies roles and strategical plans. It was also aligned with existing regional agreements. The Project was designed satisfactorily with a comprehensive detail of outcomes, outputs and indicators grouped around the 4 main Project Components and based on the previous UNEP-GEF Project “Development of National Biosafety Frameworks”. Several assumptions, drivers and risks were identified in the Project design, that did not hold during the Project implementation, and became strong barriers to completely achieving the intended impact and outcomes (mainly , Art. 401 of the 2008 Constitution, that declares Ecuador being a country “free of transgenics” and prohibiting the

introduction of LMOs in the country except for “special cases as authorized by the Assembly and the Government”). The nature of the external context for the project has been mostly unfavourable, particularly for the development of high-level regulations and harmonized inter-institutional procedures that required a supporting political will.

2. An important part of the planned outputs were delivered by the project, particularly those related to technical aspects of LMOs detection, Risk Assessment and Risk Management. Manuals, guidelines, and procedures were developed with high quality and updated according to latest trends during the 2nd phase. Many hundreds of technicians and decision – makers from CNAs and other biosafety – related institutions were thoroughly trained. Laboratories for analysis and detection were identified, their installations updated for the specific task, and their personnel trained. However, due to the lack of real cases (e.g. applications to introduce LMOs in the country, for any of the CP addressed ends), this technical capacity is not being exercised in the field, and the same happens with the required administrative procedures and workflows.
3. Most required high-level norms have been developed (e.g. Plan of action for 10 years, biosafety policies and regulations, the National Environmental Code, and its Rulebook). Permanent inter-institutional coordination mechanisms were not yet formally installed by the end of the Project, although informal channels between the involved institutions do exist.
4. Some actors (mainly MAATE and partially MAGAP) engaged in the project are currently having an impact in addressing the issues arising from new biotechnologies (e.g., Synthetic Biology), building on-top of the knowledge and expertise developed during the Project.
5. The functioning of the National Biosafety Commission has been irregular during the entire lifespan of the Project. This also affected the Project Management, as (stated in the Prodoc) the Project National Steering Committee was the NBC itself.
6. Not all the CNAs and other Institutions have permanently included management and administrative costs of a national system of security of biotechnology. Only MAATE, AGROCALIDAD and MAGAP have stable positions dedicated (partially) to LMOs related biosafety tasks.
7. Public awareness and participation component development suffered also from the lack of political support and the general perception against LMOs.
8. The National Biosafety Portal, or National BCH website, is the main channel for deploying several of the intended outputs regarding Public Awareness and Participation (e.g. a national system for public participation, publication of national up-to-date biosafety information, virtual libraries of Risk Assessment, databases of experts, institutions and projects, and other technical information). At the time of this review, this Portal is not operative (the reviewer found it not operative at least since June 2023), with the consequences that all these outputs / products are not available for the general public. The reviewer communicated this finding to the NEA delegate in several opportunities during the development of this review. There is a shortage of technical human resources to update and maintain information on the National BCH. No LMOs decision-making consultation has taken place (no decision has been made) and there is no space available currently in the MAATE website for such consultations.
9. The public opinion survey developed during the 2nd Phase of the Project with IICA Collaboration in 2020 in its final conclusions briefly compared its results to the baseline Project data that had been taken from a 2008 survey, concluding that an improvement of the public perception about biotechnology can be observed, and that “there has not been a significant improvement in scientific knowledge dissemination in Ecuador”

10. Regarding Project Efficiency: the Project was delayed several times and its implementation ended up extending from 4 to almost 12 years. Despite delays, most of the planned activities were implemented under an adapted budget. Administrative and financial management had an increment of cost, due to extended amount of audits, UNDP service charges, funds transfer operations. UNEP resources had to be allocated (Task Manager, Fund Manager, Administrative Assistance and other related staff and services) for 12 years management instead of 4. At the same time, the management, administrative and technical resources mobilized by the Government and Stakeholder Institutions did have to be significantly increased during implementation.
11. Regarding Sustainability: Biosafety Unit in MAATE is recognized as a reference, sustained technical authority in the field of Biosafety in the country. However, the lack of enough assigned personnel may pose a high risk on the capacity to operate, manage, and coordinate a National Biosafety System. The involvement of other institutions has decayed over the years, and the inter-sectorial coordination is yet to be formalized and functional. When developing this review and interacting with several actors from different Institutions, the reviewer perceived an important lack of interest in the subject of LMOs biosafety, a consequence of more than 15 years of the Constitutional restrictions being in place in the country. The political and public negative perception of LMOs status, with the hard restrictions mandated in the 2008 Constitution regarding LMOs, results in a very strong barrier against further development of a national integrated and operational biosafety system to address LMOs decision – making.
12. The Intended Impact, “Incremented level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health and focusing, in particular, on transboundary movements”, has been limited: there exist now in Ecuador the technical human resources and procedures to deal with specific aspects of LMO transboundary movement, but no harmonized legislation and inter-institutional procedures are formally in place.

Adaptive management has been applied to complete the Project in a particularly adverse context, creating a partnership with IICA in 2018 and, later, especially during COVID-19 pandemic the last 2 years of the project.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

The MTR was performed in April 2013, when the planned Project finalization date was December 2014. The Project was extended to December 2015, then it was closed in 2016. A second PCA was signed in July 2018 in order to develop the pending activities and execute the remaining funds. Stakeholders had active participation until the end of the 1st Phase. During 2nd phase the stakeholders participation was mostly related to training and technical activities, with limited active Project steering role.

C. Gender Equality

The Project was designed in 2008-2010, and no explicit mention about gender was included in the Project Document. However, due to the very nature of this project, gender balance is implicit, both regarding the target public for the expected outcomes (the whole population of Ecuador) and because all technical and capacity building were attended by a balanced audience. Ecuador laws that are applicable as framework for the Project design explicitly address gender equality and human rights.

D. Knowledge Management

i. Communication and Public Awareness

The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and
b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether

existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate

The project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions should be reviewed. This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval.

Question: What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions? (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)

Response: The Project Knowledge Management relied on the development of several technical manuals, guidelines, protocols and procedures related to the LMOs decision – making process, and also on building updated databases of biosafety / biotechnology experts, institutions and projects, along with up-to-date national information on biosafety matters. An important channel for making all this knowledge is the National BCH Portal, or National Biosafety website www.bioseguridadecuador.gob.ec, part of MAATE website. This portal has been upgraded and maintained for many years, but during this review it has not been available publicly.

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(\$)
Beneficiaries	Ministry of Environment	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			467708.54
Beneficiaries	Ministry of Environment	Grant	Investment mobilized			595643.27
Beneficiaries	Ministry of Agriculture MAGAP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			11283.2
Beneficiaries	Ministry of Public Health MSP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			23104
Beneficiaries	National Secretariat of Science and Technology	Grant	Investment mobilized			1764176.13
Beneficiaries	National Secretariats	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			22394.88
Beneficiaries	Coordinator Ministries	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			13648

Beneficiaries	Agency of Agriculture Quality Insurance (AGROCALIDAD - MAGAP)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			104126
Beneficiaries	National Institute of Agriculture Search (INIAP)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			14459.4
Beneficiaries	Ministry of Production (MIPRO)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			13131.88
Recipient Country Government	Customs (SENAE)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			14674
Civil Society Organization	Academic Sector	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			135262.6
Civil Society Organization	IICA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures			63905.55
Total Co-financing				0.00	0.00	3,243,517.45

Comments

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
			Medium/Moderate

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

The project envisaged the development of mechanisms for citizen participation during its execution that would balance cultural and gender factors, as needed. The reviewer could not find any evidence of these mechanisms being in place. Socio-economic analyses as part of the LMO risk assessment and risk management processes were considered in the Project design and were developed in project activities.

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category

M and E Document

Title

3405 Validated Terminal Review Report

Document Category

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Title

3405_2024_CF_UNEP_Ecuador BS