

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mid-Term Review of the UN Environment Programme /Global Environment Facility project

"Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety"

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

Sub-programme:	Environmental governance	Expected Accomplishment(s):	A biosafety legal framework is completed and operational. Institutional and human capacity for decision making and regulatory compliance in biosafety, as well as capacities for public participation in decision-making, are developed. Infrastructure for the detection and management of GMOs are strengthened.	
UN Environment approval date:	1 August 2013	Programme of Work Output(s):	Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018-2019 Subprogramme 3 – Healthy and productive ecosystems Subprogramme 4 – Environmental governance	
GEF project ID:	5290	Project type:	Medium-sized Project	
GEF Operational Programme #:	GFL-11207-14AC0003-SB-008055	Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	
GEF approval date:	24 February 2017	GEF Strategic Priority:	BD-3	
Expected start date:	2017	Actual start date:	9 August 2017	
Planned completion date:	8 August 2021	Actual completion date:	N/A	
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 4,011,714	Actual total expenditures reported as of [31/06/2020]:	USD 2,175,419.12	
GEF grant allocation:	USD 1,860,000	GEF grant expenditures reported as of [31/06/2020]:	USD 610,481.38	
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 54,714	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	USD 25,000	
Expected Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 2,072,000	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 1,564,937.74	
First disbursement:	13 September 2017	Date of financial closure:	30 April 2022	
No. of revisions:	04	Date of last revision:	June-2020	
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	N/A	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: N/A	Next: N/A
Mid-term Review (planned date):	Oct 2020-Jan 2021	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	4th quarter 2020	

Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	N/A	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	<i>Not applicable</i>
Coverage - Country(ies):	Venezuela	Coverage - Region(s):	Latin America and Caribbean
Dates of previous project phases:	<i>Not applicable</i>	Status of future project phases:	<i>Not applicable</i>

2. Project rationale

1. In accordance with the Government's national priorities, as well as with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and GEF Biodiversity Focal Area, and with special focus on the GEF strategic objective BS-3 on supporting the complete and effective implementation of the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela submitted, in February 2013 in collaboration with UN ENVIRONMENT, a proposal to the GEF Secretariat for a medium-size project for the implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The GEF Secretariat approved the project concept in August 2013 and project execution initiated in February 2017.

3. Project objectives and components

2. The overall objective of the project is to establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

3. The approved project's workplan foresees four substantive components plus an operational one related to monitoring and evaluation and project operations:

- **Component 1: Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework. Expected Outcome:** Regulatory biosafety framework is completed, adopted and integrated within the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan.
- **Component 2: Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety. Expected Outcomes:** a) the institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to LMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB; b) there is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding LMOs; and c) there is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technology to control / monitor activities with LMOs in the country.
- **Component 3: Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making. Expected Outcomes:** a) increase the level of public understanding of biosafety through operations based on participatory diagnosis; b) public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized; and c) a coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB.
- **Component 4: Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs. Expected Outcome:** equip and operate the Reference Laboratory for Detection of LMOs of the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment, the lead agency for Biosafety in Venezuela, responsible for supervision and control of LMO's in the country.
- **Component 5: M&E and project operations. Expected Outcome:** project executed in a timely manner, achieving outcomes and producing high quality outputs.

4. Executing Arrangements

4. As indicated by the GEF Operational Focal Point in its endorsement, UN Environment is the GEF implementing agency of the project and its executing partners are: UNDP, the fund management agency in charge of project funding administration, and the *Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales* of the *Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo* - MINEC (Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism - MINEC), identified as the national agency in charge of the project.

Project structure

5. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the *Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism* (MINEC) is the National Environmental Authority and the operational and technical focal point of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It coordinates the implementation of the provisions of the CBD and of the Cartagena Protocol on

Biosafety (CBP) at the national level. In this UN Environment/GEF project, MINEC, through its *Office of Integration and International Affairs*, acts as the *lead executing agency* and responsible for the decisions made in relation to the execution of the Project in accordance with the objectives and activities proposed in the PRODOC and PCA.

6. The **UNDP** acts as the *fund management agency* and assists MINEC in managing project funds. The UNDP is responsible for: *a) reviewing ToRs, the consultants' selection process, contracts, as well as procuring personnel and equipment; b) executing all payments related to project activities; c) preparing the first version of the quarterly expense report to be discussed with MINEC and shared with UNEP (in this context MINEC must provide details about the co-financing data and activities as required by the report); d) ensuring that the payment to consultants is based on outcomes received; e) participating in M&E activities; and f) participating in the Monitoring Committee.*

7. **UN Environment** serves as the *GEF implementing agency* and it is responsible for: *a) supervising the project; b) monitoring the execution of activities; c) the revision and approval of financial and progress reports; d) releasing of funds; and e) the provision of technical support.*

8. Additionally, the project structure foresees a *Project Management Unit (PMU)*; and an external *Steering Committee*.

9. The *Project Management Unit (PMU)* is responsible for the daily execution of the project, including all duties of reporting, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the monitoring of all contractual tasks. It is located at MINEC and will consist of *a) the National Project Coordinator (NPC) working full time on the project; b) the Project Administrative Assistant; c) at least one part-time person from the executing agency to support the project processes; d) other personnel as needed; and e) a representative of the UNDP as fund management agency.*

10. The *PMU's roles include: a) ensuring the execution of the Project, including all technical aspects; b) ensuring project governance and oversight of GEF investment financial resources in collaboration with the third party that will manage project funds at the local level (UNDP); c) providing staff time and experience to guide and advance the project (at least one part-time person dedicated to the project + administrative support); d) providing project reports in accordance with the supervision plan in collaboration with a third party that will manage project funds at the local level (UNDP); e) sharing all project achievements and outputs with all relevant stakeholders and UN Environment; f) ensuring that consultants and project partner organizations deliver their reports according to their contracts and on time; g) organizing the Steering Committee meetings and act as its secretariat; h) general management and implementation of the Project's M&E framework, to evaluate project performance; i) management of the flow of information from the field to project collaborators, and preparation of periodic monitoring reports;*

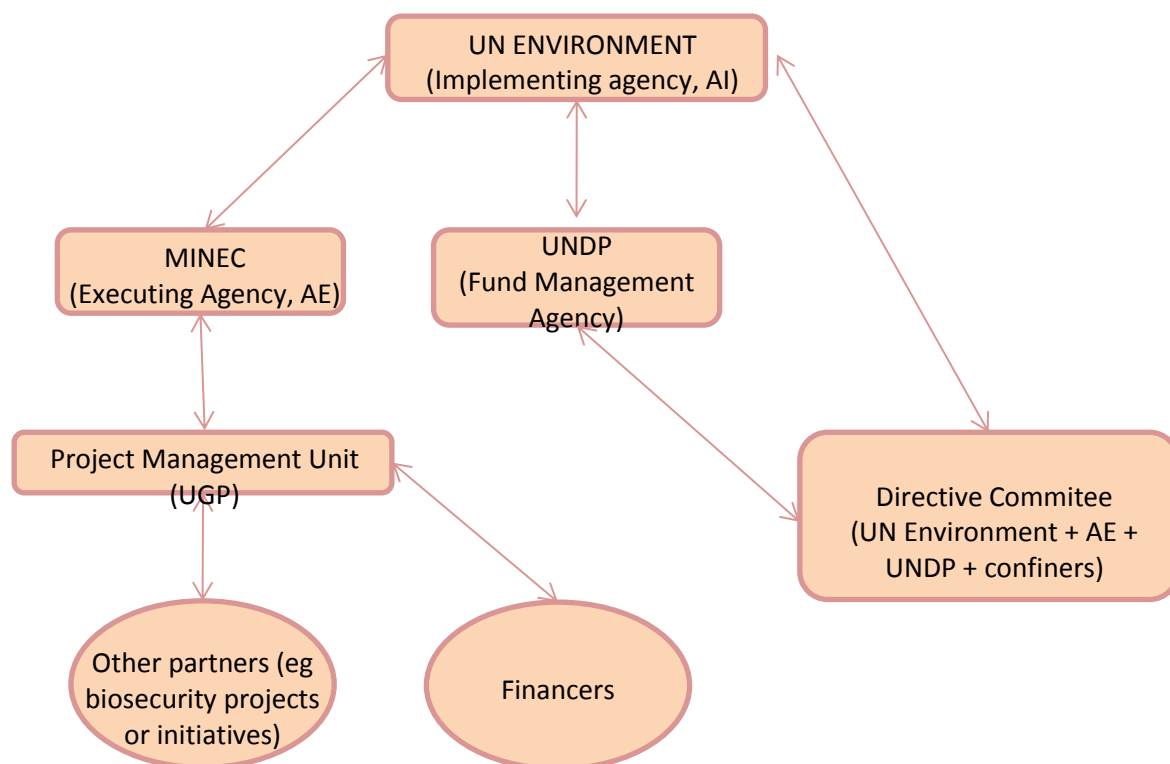
The *National Project Coordinator (NPC)*, identified by the MINEC within the personnel of its *Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica* (General Directorate of Biological Diversity), is responsible for the daily coordination of the project activities and liaise with all project's stakeholders. *NPC's roles include: a) supervising the consultants and transfer proof of their technical outcomes to the General Directorate of the Project (represented by the MINEC's Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales, and assisted by the Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica) which in turn will transmit them to UNDP for the necessary payments; b) uploading in ANUBIS all the products of the consultancies, meeting minutes and any other document that proves the progress of the project, in close collaboration with the General Directorate of the Project; c) participating in M&E activities; d) reviewing consultants' outcomes and products according to their ToRs; e) reviewing the first version of the expenditure reports submitted by UNDP, complementing the information and including the data on co-financing; f) uploading the signed reports on ANUBIS; g) preparing progress reports; and h) leading the meetings of the General Directorate of the Project.*

11. The external Steering Committee *will be chaired by* the MINEC, and will be in charge of project supervision and general orientation. It will meet at least annually or according to the needs of the project.

Collaborators of the project:

12. Associated organizations, ministries, scientific institutions, etc. will participate in the project, in order to provide specialized knowledge in knowledge management, periodic updates of biosafety activities in the country, support the project with solid field data on biosafety issues, and establish links with stakeholders.

13. The detail of the project structure is shown in the following diagram:



5. Project Cost and Financing

14. The project falls under the GEF Medium-size Project category (GEF-MSP), with an overall project budget of USD 3,932,000, made up of a GEF allocation of USD 1,860,000 and co-financing support of USD 2,072,000 from various partners and agencies of the Government, both in cash and in-kind. The table below presents total estimated project cost at design, broken down per component and per funding source.

Table 2. Total estimated project cost

Project Component	GEF Trust Fund (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)
<i>1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework</i>	234,000	500,000
<i>2. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework</i>	369,500	400,000
<i>3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.</i>	153,686	400,000
<i>4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.</i>	849,814	700,000
<i>5. M&E and project operations</i>	98,000	
Subtotal	1,705,000	2,000,000
Project management Cost	155,000	72,000
Total project costs	1,860,000	2,072,000

6. Implementation Issues

15. The project has experienced significant delays in terms of execution of some project activities, due to the following reasons: factors external to the project associated with macro-economic measures, delays in funds disbursement and, as of recent, the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been delays in funds disbursement and procurement of equipment by the fund management agency, which, together with the macroeconomic context, translated into a slow financial execution of the project as already reported in all PIRs. In August 2018, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela announced a "major monetary and economic reconversion" (in: Decree on the State of Economic Emergency, Official Gazette No. 41,478 of 09/10/2018), which substantially led to a sharp decrease in the salaries of the project consultants and triggered the Project Management Unit (PMU) and UN Environment to negotiate a solution with UNDP as the fund management agency. Taking into account the macroeconomic situation and after a long negotiation process with UNDP headquarters, the consultants' contracts were cancelled and later reissued with a change in the currency of payment from Bolivars to US dollars. This led to a long period of close to no execution of GEF funds in the 2018-2019 financial year.

16. This long negotiation extended until April 2019. Thus, rendering the fund management agency from move forward with the hiring of the nine project consultants requested by the PMU; a process that took 16 weeks to complete and was finally achieved in mid-July 2019. Among other difficulties, all consultancies outcomes were correlated, and required a parallel advance of them all.

17. Also, the procurement process to buy part of the laboratory equipment has been very slow (approximately 60 weeks), and the equipment, as of today, has not yet reached the country. While delays have far preceded the Covid-19 crisis, the pandemic has affected delays in the past months. This delay directly affected the execution period of various activities and specifically influenced the delivery outcomes of 2 consultants in charge of installing the equipment, set it into operation and carry out maintenance plans. This obviously also affected the overall project schedule. In addition, the PMU expresses a particular concern about possible planned obsolescence of the equipment (due to the time elapsed between the contract request and the time of its arrival in the country) which could add even more difficulties, for example in locating spare parts, among others.

18. Since new equipment acquisitions are required, procurement process needs definitely to be improved and mitigation measures have been sought in collaboration with the fund management and the implementing agencies. These measures are expected to have a positive impact on the reduction of the procurement times and aim to a faster implementation of any future acquisition plan in order to set up the total equipment and the improvements in the infrastructure of the laboratory, as foreseen by the project document and without further delays.

19. It is also worth to mention that, in further complicating the project's acquisition process, UN Environment and UNDP financial procedures are substantially different. In particular, while UN Environment authorizes further disbursement of funds only when 30% of the financial execution is completed, the UNDP commits all funds at the

time of the initial contract making those funds unavailable even in case of a major delay in the implementation. These differences have caused significant distress in the project execution to the Project Management Unit, especially when considering the late arrival of the teams for the reasons mentioned above.

20. Another important element that has strongly delayed the fund management is the pandemic that has been experienced in the world since December 2019, and felt in Latin America in March 2020, which affected the work plan envisaged in the project in many areas such as workshops, subsistence payment, business meetings, laboratory equipment, among other activities.

21. Despite all of the above, the project continued to execute through MINEC human resources and other co-financing. On the one hand, GEF funds allowed for the production of excellent quality products and with national funds the Ministry continued with the General Coordination of the Project, ensuring the harmonization of its components. In addition, the work of the team of consultants, all highly committed, allowed the project to achieve a great advance in the percentage of implementation with outcomes of excellent quality by the consultants, who dedicated themselves full time to their activities.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

7. Key Review Principles

22. Review findings and judgements should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the review report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

23. **The “Why?” Question.**As this is a Mid-term Review particular attention should be given to identifying implementation challenges and risks to achieving the expected project objectives and sustainability. Therefore, the “Why?” question should be at the front of the consultants’ minds all through the review exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultants need to go beyond the assessment of “*what*” the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “*why*” the performance was as it was. This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

24. **Baselines and counterfactuals.** In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, the reviewers should consider the difference between *what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. It also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the reviewers, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the reviewer to make informed judgements about project performance.

25. **Communicating review results.**A key aim of the review is to encourage reflection and learning by MINEC, UN Environment and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. There may be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The National Project Coordinator will plan with the consultant(s) which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation. Draft and final versions of the Main Review Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the National Project Coordinator and a copy of the final version will be submitted to the UN Environment Evaluation Office.

8. Objective of the Review

26. In line with the UN Environment Evaluation Policy¹ and the UN Environment Programme Manual², the Mid-Term Review (MTR) is undertaken approximately half way through project implementation to analyze whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required. The MTR will assess project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes and impacts, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN

¹ <http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPevaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

² http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf. This manual is under revision.

Environment, UNDP and MINEC. Therefore, the review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation (especially for the remainder of the project).

9. Key Strategic Questions

27. In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the review will address the **strategic questions** listed below. These are questions of interest to UN Environment and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

- a) How has the project been implemented from an institutional point of view?
- b) How have different aspects of the project structure been approached? Is the project well structured?
- c) To what extent have project activities / objectives been achieved?
- d) What are the main lessons learned so far?
- e) "What are the main recommendations to address current challenges and avoid project limitations going forward?"

10. Evaluation Criteria

28. All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria and a link to a table for recording the ratings is provided in Annex 1). A weightings table will be provided in excel format (link provided in Annex 1) to support the determination of an overall project rating. The set of evaluation criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the achievement of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance. The reviewer(s) can propose other review criteria as deemed appropriate.

A. Strategic Relevance

29. The review will assess, in line with the OECD/DAC definition of relevance, 'the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor'. The review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UN Environment's mandate and its alignment with UN Environment's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. *Alignment to the UN Environment Medium Term Strategy³ (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW)*

The review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW.

ii. *Alignment to UN Environment /GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities*

Donor, including GEF, strategic priorities will vary across interventions. UN Environment strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building⁴ (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries. GEF priorities are specified in published programming priorities and focal area strategies.

iii. *Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities*

The review will assess the extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented. Examples may include:

³UN Environment's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UN Environment's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UN Environment's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes.

⁴<http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf>

national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc.

iv. *Complementarity with Existing Interventions*

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project mobilization, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UN Environment sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UN Environment's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: stakeholders' participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity and country ownership and driven-ness.

B. Quality of Project Design

30. The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. This overall Project Design Quality rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item B. In the Main Review Report a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage is included.

Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage): stakeholders participation and cooperation and responsiveness to human rights and gender equity, including the extent to which relevant actions are adequately budgeted for.

C. Nature of External Context

31. At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval). This rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable and unexpected external operating context, the overall rating for Effectiveness may be increased at the discretion of the Review Consultant, MINEC and Task Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

32. The review will assess effectiveness across three dimensions: achievement of outputs, achievement of direct outcomes and likelihood of impact.

i. ***Achievement of Outputs***

The review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs (products and services delivered by the project itself) and achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any *formal* modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, a table should be provided showing the original formulation and the amended version for transparency. The achievement of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their usefulness and the timeliness of their delivery. The review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: preparation and readiness and quality of project management and supervision⁵.

ii. ***Achievement of Direct Outcomes***

The achievement of direct outcomes is assessed as performance against the direct outcomes as defined in the reconstructed⁶ Theory of Change. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result

⁵In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UN Environment to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UN Environment.

⁶ UN Environment staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an evaluation will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-

of project outputs. As in 1, above, a table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of direct outcomes is necessary. The review should report evidence of attribution between UN Environment's intervention and the direct outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UN Environment's contribution should be included.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: quality of project management and supervision; stakeholders' participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity and communication and public awareness.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of longer term effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from direct outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long term impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project evaluations is outlined in a guidance note available on the EOU website, <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach> and is supported by an excel-based flow chart called, Likelihood of Impact Assessment (see Annex 1). Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from direct outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

33. The review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects. Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards.⁷

34. The review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role or has promoted scaling up and/or replication⁸ as part of its Theory of Change and as factors that are likely to contribute to longer term impact. Ultimately UN Environment and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-term or broad-based changes. However, the review will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the high level changes represented by UN Environment's Expected Accomplishments, the Sustainable Development Goals⁹ and/or the high level results prioritised by the funding partner.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: quality of project management and supervision, including adaptive project management; stakeholders participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity; country ownership and driven-ness and communication and public awareness.

E. Financial Management

35. Financial management will be assessed under three broad themes: completeness of financial information, communication between financial and project management staff and compliance with relevant UN financial management standards and procedures. The review will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output level and will be compared with the approved budget. The review will assess the level of communication between the National Project Coordinator and Fund Management Agency as well as with the Implementing Agency as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach. The review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UN Environment's and GEF's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: preparation and readiness and quality of project management and supervision.

dating 2013 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the evaluation.

⁷Further information on Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards (ESES) can be found at <http://www.unep.org/about/eses/>

⁸Scaling up refers to approaches being adopted on a much larger scale, but in a very similar context. Scaling up is often the longer term objective of pilot initiatives. Replication refers to approaches being repeated or lessons being explicitly applied in new/different contexts e.g. other geographic areas, different target group etc. Effective replication typically requires some form of revision or adaptation to the new context. It is possible to replicate at either the same or a different scale.

⁹A list of relevant SDGs is available on the EO website www.unep.org/evaluation

F. Efficiency

36. In keeping with the OECD/DAC definition of efficiency, the review will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. Focussing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The review will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

37. The review will give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency. The review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UN Environment's environmental footprint.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness); quality of project management and supervision and stakeholders participation and cooperation.

G. Monitoring and Reporting

38. The review will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART¹⁰ indicators towards the achievement of the projects outputs and direct outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender or groups with low representation. The review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for mid-term and terminal evaluation/review should be discussed if applicable.

ii. Monitoring Implementation

The review will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. It will also consider how information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

iii. Project Reporting

UN Environment has a centralised Project Management System for GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation projects called Anubis, in which project managers upload six-monthly status reports against agreed project milestones, quarterly expenditure reports and all relevant information to project execution (ProDoc, annual work plan and budget, ToRs, main products, procurement plans, etc). This information will be provided to the Consultant(s) by the Project Management Unit and, where necessary, the Task Manager. Projects funded by GEF have additional requirements with regard to verifying documentation and reporting (i.e. the Project Implementation Reviews, Tracking Tool and CEO Endorsement template¹¹), which will be made available by the National Project Coordinator and Task Manager. The review will assess the extent to which both UN Environment and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: quality of project management and supervision and responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. disaggregated indicators and data).

H. Sustainability

39. Sustainability is understood as the probability of direct outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved direct outcomes. Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the

¹⁰SMART refers to indicators that are specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-specific.

¹¹The Consultant(s) should verify that the annual Project Implementation Reviews have been submitted, that the Tracking Tool is being kept up-to-date and that in the CEO Endorsement template Table A and Section E have been completed.

project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct outcomes may also be included. The review will ascertain that the project has put in place an appropriate exit strategy and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The review will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of project direct outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the review will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

Some direct outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other direct outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new resource management approach. The review will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where the direct outcomes of a project have been extended into a future project phase. The question still remains as to whether the future project outcomes will be financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

The review will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: stakeholders participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined); communication and public awareness and country ownership and driven-ness.

I. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance

40. *These factors are rated in the ratings table, but are discussed as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above.*

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project. The review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. (Project preparation is covered in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).

ii. Quality of Project Implementation and Execution

Specifically for GEF funded projects, this factor refers separately to the performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UN Environment, as the implementing agency.

The review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); communication and collaboration with UN Environment colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive project management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UN Environment. The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity

The review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UN Environment's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equity and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular, the review will consider to what extent project design (section B), the implementation that underpins effectiveness (section D), and monitoring (section G) have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

v. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. The review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices. This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. This ownership should adequately represent the needs and interests of all gender and marginalised groups.

vi. 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 gender 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.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

41. The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

42. The findings of the review will be based on the following:

(a) **A desk review of:**

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia GEF, UN ENVIRONMENT, UNDP, and MINEC approved project and revision documents and annexes; PIRs;
- UN ENVIRONMENT and UNDP guidance documents for GEF-MSP Mid-Term Review (e.g. templates, tables and guidance notes)
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Work plan and budget, including annual revisions(Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as quarterly Expenditure Reports; half-yearly Progress Reports; and any other financial reports, procurement plan(s), progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
- Project outputs including, inter alia: ToRs and final reports of consultancies and subcontracts, reports of meetings, trainings, workshops and consultations inclusive of lists of participants, publications, list of purchases/acquisitions and their rationale/justification, evidence of any technical Products finalized; BCH,

- project Website and a list of other internet locations (e.g. websites or social network platforms) where information about the project have been provided);
 - Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.
- (b) **Interviews** (carried-on via internet) with:
- UN Environment Task Manager (TM);
 - Project management team;
 - UNDP: relevant staff involved with the project;
 - UN Environment Programme Management Assistant
 - Project partners and relevant resource persons, including participants to workshops or training/public initiatives, consultants, involved scientists, and representatives of project-related government agencies, industry and commercial sector, local NGOs and other project targeted areas.
- (c) **Other data collection tools**
- Short videos, to be discussed with the Project National Coordinator, supporting the documentation provided (e.g. laboratory equipment and procedures, public participation mechanism, etc.)

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

43. The review team will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for links to all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically in the form of a powerpoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
- **Draft and Final Review Report:** (see links in Annex 1) containing an executive summary that can act as a stand alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

44. **Review of the draft review report.** The review team will submit a draft report to the Project Management Unit and Task Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Project Management Unit will share the cleared draft report with key project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the PMU for consolidation. The PMU will provide all comments to the review team for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

45. The Project Management Unit and Task Manager will prepare a **quality assessment** of the first and final drafts of the main review report, which acts as a tool for providing structured feedback to the review consultants. The quality of the report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in template listed in Annex 1.

46. At the end of the review process, the PMU will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals.

12. The Review Team

47. For this review, the review team will consist of a Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the National Project Coordinator, Carliz Diaz, in consultation with relevant authorities at MINEC and the Task Manager. The Consultant will liaise with the National Project Coordinator on any procedural and methodological matters related to the review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility to obtain documentary evidence, plan online meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The National Project Coordinator and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the review as efficiently and independently as possible.

48. The consultant will be hired for 2 months spread over the period from 01/10/2020 to 31/01/2021 and should have: an advanced university degree in agricultural or environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political, social or scientific area; a minimum of 3 years of technical / evaluation experience of biosafety projects, including of evaluating large, regional or global programmes; a broad understanding of international

cooperation mechanisms and, multi-lateral environmental agreements with special focus on the activity of the Convention of Biological Diversity and its Biosafety protocols (i.e. Cartagena and Nagoya); fluency in Spanish along with excellent writing skills in English; team leadership experience and, where possible, knowledge of the UN system, specifically of the work of UN Environment. Experience in managing partnerships, knowledge management and communication is desirable.

49. The Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the National Project Coordinator and Task Manager, for overall management of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Evaluation Deliverables, above. The consultant will ensure that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

50. Details of Evaluation Consultants' Team Roles can be found on the Evaluation Office of UN Environment website <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach>

13. Schedule of the Review

51. The table below presents the tentative schedule for the review.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the review

Milestone	Deadline
Inception Mission (virtual)	01 October 2020
Kick-off meeting (via internet)	2nd week of October 2020
Inception Report	mid - November 2020
Telephone interviews, surveys etc.	20 October - 30 November 2020
Preliminary Findings Note	6 December 2020
Draft report to Task Manager	15 January 2021
Final Main Review Report	31 January 2021

14. Contractual Arrangements

52. Review Consultants will be selected and recruited by the Fund Management Agency under the direction of the National Project Coordinator on a "fees only" basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UN Environment/UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

53. Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Task Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

54. Schedule of Payment for the [Consultant/Team Leader]:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment	Date
Approved Inception Report	30%	15-November 2020
Approved Draft Main Review Report	30%	15 January 2021
Approved Final Main Review Report	40%	31 January 2021

55. The consultant may be provided with access to UN Environment's Anubis system and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the review report.

56. In case the consultant are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the National Project Coordinator and Task Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UN Environment's quality standards.

57. If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the National Project Coordinator in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by UN Environment to bring the report up to standard.

Annex 1 : Tools, Templates and Guidance Notes for use in the Review

The tools, templates and guidance notes listed in the table below, and available on the Evaluation Office website (<https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach>), are intended to help National Project Coordinator and Review Consultants to produce review products that are consistent with each other and which contribute to UN Environment results reporting. This suite of documents is also intended to make the review process as transparent as possible so that all those involved in the process can participate on an informed basis. It is recognised that the review needs of projects and portfolio vary and adjustments may be necessary so that the purpose of the review process (broadly, accountability and lesson learning), can be met. Such adjustments should be decided between the National Project Coordinator, Task Manager and the Review Consultant in order to produce review reports that are both useful to project implementers and that produce credible findings.

Document	Name
1	01_MTR_Evaluation_Criteria_04.11.19.doc
2	02_MTR_Criterion_rating_descriptions_matrix_09.12.19.docx
3	03_MTR_Evaluation_Ratings_Table_ONLY_04.11.19.docx
4	04_MTR_Weightings for Ratings_14.01.20.xlsx
5	05_MTR_Project_Identification_Table_ONLY_4.11.19.docx
6	06_MTR_Inception Report_Structure & Contents 12.12.19.doc
7	07_MTR_Main Review Report_Structure & Contents_12.12.19.doc
8	08_MTR_Quality_of_Project_Design_Assessment_OPTIONAL_09.12.19.doc
9	09_MTR_Stakeholder Analysis_Guidance Note_20.11.19.doc
10	10_MTR_Gender_Methods_Note for Consultants_20.11.19.docx
11	11_MTR_Financial Tables 09.12.19.doc
12	12_MTR_Likelihood of impact 22.11.19.xlsm
13	13_MTR_In Report Template_Presenting_Recs and LL_25.06.20.docx
14	14_MTR_Recommendation_Impl_Plan_Template_19.09.19.docx
15	MTR_GEF_Cover Page Prelims and Style Sheet Main Review Report .doc
16	MTR_GEF_Tools Description_15.04.2020.docx
17	PENDING. Review_Possible Evaluation Questions 11.07.19.docx
18	PENDING. Review_Use of Theory of Change in Project Evaluation.docx
19	Process 1_List of Documents needed for Reviews_09.12.19.docx
20	Process 2_MTR_Assess Quality of the Mid Term Review Report_10.09.19.docx

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN TÉCNICA

EVALUACIÓN TÉCNICA (ET) – 70%		PUNTUACIÓN MAXIMA
Formación Académica		
Ingeniería agraria, agronómica, genética o afín: 10	20	
Grado de Especialización en biotecnología: 20		
Experiencia profesional en el área de gestión e información de tecnología en temas y/ proyectos del Convenio sobre Diversidad Biológica (Secretaría de la Convención sobre Diversidad Biológica (SCBD))		
1 a 2 años de experiencia: 15	25	
Más de 2 años de experiencia: 25		
Con conocimiento/experiencia comprobable del programa en los temas del programa del Centro de Intercambio de Información sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología		
1 a 2 años de experiencia: 10	15	
Más de 2 años de experiencia: 15		
Con conocimiento de la realidad del país y en sus desafíos en materia de conservación de la biodiversidad		
1 a 2 años de experiencia: 3	5	
Más de 2 años de experiencia: 5		
Con conocimiento/experiencia comprobable vinculada a Proyectos Regionales para América Latina y el Caribe, PNUMA-FMAM en Bioseguridad		
Entre 1-4 años de experiencia: 5	10	
Más de 4 años experiencia: 10		
Con conocimiento/experiencia comprobable en el área de manejo de programas de Bioseguridad		
Entre 1-3 años de experiencia: 05	10	
Más de 3 años experiencia: 10		
Propuesta técnica: Metodología y plan de trabajo propuestos en respuesta a los términos de referencia		
Correspondencia de la propuesta con los TDR. Planeación detallada de actividades.	15	
Débil: 0		
Aceptable: 12		
Sobresaliente con aporte de valor agregado:15		
TOTAL		100