

GEF-8 REQUEST FOR CEO CHILD ENDORSEMENT/APPROVAL

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General Child Project Information

Child Project Title

Integrated management and ecological connectivity of a priority landscape in the Ecuadorian Amazon headwaters

Region	GEF Project ID
Ecuador	11202
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Ecuador	FSP
GEF Agency(ies)	GEF Agency Project ID
CI	
Project Executing Entity(s)	Project Executing Type
WWF Ecuador	CSO
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	8/16/2024
Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	48
GEF Project Grant: (a)	Agency Fee(s) Grant: (b)
4,742,966.00	426,867.00
PPG Amount: (c)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (d)
150,000.00	13,500.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
5333333	19,413,667.00
Project Sector (CCM Only)	
AFOLU	

Rio Markers

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
Principal Objective 2	No Contribution 0	Principal Objective 2	No Contribution 0

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, to offer a snapshot of what is being proposed. The summary should include: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? ii) as a child project under a program, explain how the description fits in the broader context of the specific program; (iii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative,

how will this be achieved? and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

1. The GEF funded Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program (ASL) aims to improve integrated landscape management and conservation of ecosystems in targeted areas of the Amazon region. In its third phase, the program includes a project in Ecuador named “Integrated management and ecological connectivity of a priority landscape in the Ecuadorian Amazon headwaters”. This project aims to conserve, restore and promote the adoption of sustainable land management practices across 1,038,377 hectares of tropical montane forest landscapes along the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes, while enhancing Andean-Amazon habitat connectivity. This project will build on the achievements of the ASL II project “Connectivity Corridors in two priority landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon”.
2. The Eastern Ecuadorian Andes-Amazon region contains extensive forest remnants that serve as a crucial link between the Andes and the Amazon and play a significant role in connecting areas of high conservation value. The project landscape includes one of the two main Ecuadorian tributaries of the Amazon River, the Pastaza watershed.
3. The project proposes to address critical issues of biodiversity loss, deforestation and fragmentation. The primary barriers to address include ineffective management of PAs, fragmented social engagement, financial constraints, inadequate monitoring, and disjointed territorial vision.
4. The project's Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) include protecting and restoring tropical montane forests and enhancing Andean-Amazon habitat connectivity. It aims to improve the effectiveness of 577,313 hectares of PAs, promote sustainable land management (SLM) practices over 461,088 hectares, including the restoration 400 ha and mitigate -5,068,290 metric tons of CO₂eq emissions. Additionally, it will benefit approximately 56,177 people by enhancing ecosystem services and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Key results include increased management effectiveness scores for PAs, enhanced social cohesion, strengthened community engagement and tenure security, and increased access to financial mechanisms for SLM practices.
5. Its transformative approach involves integrating financial mechanisms, strengthening governance, and enhancing local capacities. The project will: (1) Improve effective conservation of biodiversity in selected PAs; (2) Strengthen landscape management mechanisms of connectivity corridors; (3) Mainstreaming SLM tools by mobilizing local and national financial mechanisms; (4) Enhancing communication and fostering collaboration at the national level and with the ASL IP at the regional level to support knowledge management that can help project achievements and lessons learned to be replicated and upscaled.
6. As a child project of the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes program, this project contributes directly to its objectives, and it's aligned with its priorities emphasizing in the ecosystemic services watersheds provide to the Amazon biome. This project will actively participate in regional coordination activities including knowledge exchanges, workshops and other relevant identified in the project implementation.

Project Objective: Conserve, restore and promote the adoption of sustainable land management practices across 1,038,377 hectares of tropical montane forest landscapes along the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes, while enhancing Andean-Amazon habitat connectivity

CI1: Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management (Target: 577,289 ha)

CI3: Area of land and ecosystems under restoration (Target: 400 ha)

CI4: Area of landscapes under improved practices (Target: 461,088 ha)

CI6: Greenhouse gas emission mitigated (Target: -5,068,290 million tons CO₂e)

CI11: People benefiting from GEF-financed investments (Target: 56,177; 27,154 men and 29,023 women)

Project Components

1. Effective conservation of protected areas and local conservation schemes

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
820,273.00	6,827,490.00

Outcome:

Outcome 1.1.: Selected protected areas (PAs) from the National Protected Areas System (SNAP) and areas under local conservation schemes (not part of the SNAP) have overcome key management deficiencies.

Indicator 1.1.: Management Effectiveness Evaluation (EEM) and Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score in criteria related to financial sustainability and monitoring & surveillance, for selected protected areas and local conservation areas.

Target: By the end of the project, at least 10% increase in EEM or METT scores from Y1 baseline, in criteria related to financial sustainability and monitoring & surveillance, of selected protected areas and local conservation areas. (Total area of 577,289 hectares)

Output:

Output 1.1.1.: Financial mechanisms for PAs and local conservation areas management, in place.

Indicator 1.1.1.: Number of financial mechanisms strengthened for effective management of PAs and local conservation areas.

Target 1.1.1.: Two financial mechanisms.

Output 1.1.2.: Nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives strengthened to increase financial flows for PAs and local conservation areas' effective management. *Indicator 1.1.2.: Number of local conservation areas with increased financial flows from NBT initiatives.*

Target 1.1.2.: Five local conservation areas with increased financial flows from NBT.

Output 1.1.3.: Sangay National Park (PNS) and Río Negro-Sopladora National Park (PNRNS) adopt the SMART tool to address key management deficiencies related to monitoring & surveillance.

Indicator 1.1.3.: Number of reports provided by the SMART platform for each national park that integrates the SMART mobile module related to surveillance & control and environmental crimes.

Target 1.1.3.: One complete annual report per national park.

Output 1.1.4 Key management deficiencies identified and addressed in five local conservation areas.

Indicator 1.1.4.: Number of management deficiencies identified and addressed.

Target 1.1.4.: At least two management deficiencies addressed per selected protected area.

2. Inclusive governance in two connectivity corridors

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,132,121.00	4,400,586.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.1: Landscape management mechanisms strengthened, to foster shared objectives in territorial development.

Indicator 2.1.: Number of hectares managed through shared objectives and mechanisms that reduce threats to mountain forests and ecosystem services.

Target: 461.088 ha managed through landscape shared objectives and mechanisms that reduce threats to mountain forests and ecosystem services

Output:

Output 2.1.1.: Local working groups in both corridors, with annual work plans formulated and under implementation with the effective participation of disadvantaged population (i.e., women and youth).

Indicator 2.1.1: Number of workplans of local working groups, that are under implementation, and that incorporate tailored actions proposed by women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups.

Target 2.1.1: At least 10 annual workplans under implementation.

Output 2.1.2: Key stakeholders actively participate in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms established for each connectivity corridor.

Indicator 2.1.2: Number of stakeholders participating in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms.

Target 2.1.2: At least 100 stakeholders participating (30% of which are woman and youth).

Output 2.1.3.: Participatory management plans for the two corridors are under implementation. *Indicator 2.1.3: Number of participatory management plans under implementation.*

Target 2.1.3: Two, one per connectivity corridor.

Output 2.1.4.: Local promoters, key local government personnel and other relevant local stakeholders trained to implement management plan actions (good governance, conservation areas management and SLM practices).

Indicator 2.1.4.: Number of people trained.

Target 2.1.4.: At least 250 (30% are women and youth).

3. Incentives for SLM practices in two connectivity corridors

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)

1,870,697.00

5,125,913.00

Outcome:

Outcome 3.1.: Key areas that promote connectivity are under sustainable land management (SLM) practices and ecological restoration.

Indicator 3.1: Number of ha under SLM practices (e.g. agroforestry, silvopasture and restoration)

Target: 600 ha under SLM practices and 400 ha of degraded lands and secondary forests under restoration.

Outcome 3.2.: Stakeholders in selected value chains have access to financial incentives for SLM.

Indicator 3.2: Number of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex) have access to incentives and mechanisms that strengthen SLM in value chains.

Target: 250 beneficiaries (40% women)

Output:

Output 3.1.1.: Local and national financial mechanisms channeling resources for SLM practices in priority areas that enhance connectivity.

Indicator 3.1.1.: Amount of in-cash contributions derived from financial mechanisms leveraged by the Project for SLM practices.

Target 3.1.1.: At least U\$ 1.000.000 mobilized.

Output 3.1.2.: Conservation agreements, individual or with second-degree associations, in place, that promote SLM.

Indicator 3.1.2.: Number of local producers and/or households involved in conservation agreements.

Target 3.1.2.: At least 100 local producers (20% women) are involved in conservation agreements.

Output 3.2.1.: Access to markets that favor added-value sustainable produced products, enhanced.

Indicator 3.2.1.: Number of products that are commercialized with an added value.

Target 3.2.1.: At least 4.

Output 3.2.2.: Local producers with access to financial services (e.g., rural informal savings) to support SLM practices and/or commercialization of sustainable products.

Indicator 3.2.2.: Number of local producers (disaggregated by gender) with access to rural informal savings mechanisms or credits.

Target 3.2.2.: At least 100 local producers (30% women).

4. Communications & Knowledge management

Component Type

Trust Fund

Technical Assistance

GET

GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
468,165.00	1,513,320.00

Outcome:

Outcome 4.1: Information, tools and lessons learned on conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity, disseminated.

Indicator 4.1.: Number of stakeholders that have been provided with information, tools and lessons learned on conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity.

Target: At least 15,000 local, national and regional stakeholders (at least 30% women).

Output:

Output 4.1.1.: Strategic communication, including approaches and methodologies with cultural and gender relevance, to enhance conservation and sustainable land management.

Indicator 4.1.1.: Number of people reached by strategic communication activities.

Target 4.1.1.: 10,000 people (50% women).

Output 4.1.2 National knowledge platform strengthened to promote connectivity corridors as a key tool to landscape management.

Indicator 4.1.2.: Number of digital knowledge platforms implemented and disseminated among key stakeholders.

Target 4.1.2.: One

Output 4.1.3.: Knowledge contributions to ASL IP and other regional and national initiatives, to scale up and replicate actions that enhance Andes Amazon connectivity.

Indicator 4.1.3.: Number of knowledge contribution products delivered through Amazon Sustainable Landscape (ASL) IP and other regional and national initiatives aimed at scaling up or promoting replication.

Target 4.1.3.: At least one for each component

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
225,855.00	621,900.00

Outcome:

Outcome 5.1.: A gender-responsive and inclusive project monitoring and evaluation framework is developed and utilized to inform decision-making and adaptive project management

Indicator 5.1: # of M&E plans developed and implemented.

Target 5.1: 1 M&E plan.

Output:

Output 5.1.1.: Periodic M&E reports to CI-GEF Agency, the project Steering Committee and GEF, to inform the project's adaptive management.

Indicator

5.1.1: Number of progress reports submitted.

Target 5.1.1: at least 4 annual progress reports.

Output 5.1.2 Project independent evaluations conducted to assess the achievements and challenges of the project.

Indicator 5.1.2: Midterm and terminal evaluation reports

Target 5.1.2: Two project evaluation reports (one midterm and one terminal)

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1. Effective conservation of protected areas and local conservation schemes	820,273.00	6,827,490.00
2. Inclusive governance in two connectivity corridors	1,132,121.00	4,400,586.00
3. Incentives for SLM practices in two connectivity corridors	1,870,697.00	5,125,913.00
4. Communications & Knowledge management	468,165.00	1,513,320.00
5. Monitoring and evaluation	225,855.00	621,900.00
Subtotal	4,517,111.00	18,489,209.00
Project Management Cost	225,855.00	924,458.00
Total Project Cost (\$)	4,742,966.00	19,413,667.00

Please provide Justification

CHILD PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

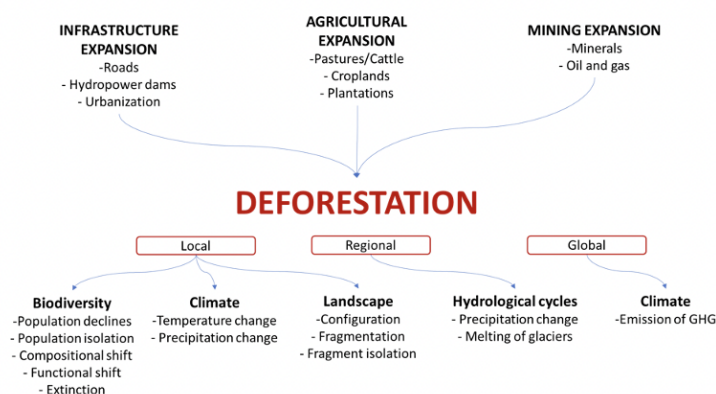
Describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Since this is a child project under a program, please include an explanation of how the context fits within the specific program agenda. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Trends and interactions between the key elements of the system and its drivers

1. The tropical Andes hotspot is Earth's most biodiverse region, especially the Eastern slopes due to the convergence of humid air masses from the Amazon and the Andean Cordillera (Myers et al., 2000; Rahbek et al., 2019; Killeen et al., 2007; Asner et al., 2017). The Eastern Ecuadorian Andes-Amazon region, forming the **Andes Amazon Transition Belt (AATB)**, serves as a vital link between the Andes and the Amazon plains, facilitating genetic exchanges and species dispersal (Hoorn et al., 2010; Clerici et al., 2019). Additionally, the Andes-to-Amazon connectivity—facilitated by rivers— is crucial in supporting both natural and human systems in the Amazon. Andean watersheds comprise a minor portion of the Amazon Basin's total area yet contribute a disproportionate amount of the Amazon's total discharge (c. 40%) and deliver major loads of inorganic sediment and organic carbon to lowlands (Laraque et al., 2009; Lujan et al., 2013).
2. Regrettably, the region has experienced rapid deforestation, with Ecuador losing nearly 2 million hectares of native forest between 1990 and 2016, one of South America's highest deforestation rates (Armenteras et al., 2017; Van der Hoek, 2017). Ecuador's Ministry of Environment (MAE, 2018) estimated annual gross rates of -0.93%, -0.82%, -0.77% and -0.74% for the 1990–2000, 2000–2008, 2008–2014, and 2014–2016 periods, respectively. While deforestation rates show a decreasing trend, they remain high. An annual decrease of 0.74% in Ecuador's forest cover represents an annual loss of c. 94.353 ha of native vegetation, the majority being natural forest. This extensive deforestation erodes the connection between the Andean Cordillera and the Amazon, fragmenting habitats and hindering biodiversity exchange (Opdam & Wascher, 2004; Haddad et al., 2015).
3. Ecosystem degradation, habitat loss and fragmentation are major causes of biodiversity decline in the Andes-Amazon region (Berenguer et al., 2021). Habitat fragmentation leads to ecosystem degradation and loss of services (Haddad et al., 2015), with isolated forest fragments facing increased human land use pressures (Almeida et al., 2019). Consequently, the resilience of remaining forests to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem services will depend on habitat quantity, connectivity, and the impacts of other human-induced factors like climate change.
4. Preserving the AATB is crucial for climate resilience as species migrate to colder habitats due to warming lowlands (Feeley & Silman, 2011; Fadrique et al., 2018). The Andes may become a refuge for Amazonian species, potentially offsetting lowland losses (Artaxo et al., 2021). Likewise, the robust carbon-gaining capacity of Andean forests, coupled with anticipated gains from upslope species migration, can significantly contribute to post-disturbance forest recovery and increased carbon storage in the region (Duque et al., 2021). Therefore, protecting and restoring AATB forests is vital for global carbon and biodiversity conservation, especially given declining carbon sinks in the lowlands (Brienen et al., 2015; Hubau et al., 2020). Halting deforestation, particularly in the 500–1800 m asl elevation band, is imperative.
5. Deforestation and forest degradation in the AATB are driven by a complex interplay of global, regional, and local factors, including governance issues and fluctuations in commodity and land prices (Nepstad et al., 2014; Brandão et al., 2020). Direct drivers include expanding agriculture, road construction, hydroelectric

dams, and mineral and oil exploitation (Fearnside, 2016; Ferrer Velasco *et al.*, 2020; Fischer *et al.*, 2021; Figure 1 in Annex E). Simultaneous actions of these drivers complicate the quantification of their individual impacts. For instance, road construction not only paves the way for urban development but also advances the 1. agricultural frontier (Naughton-Treves, 2004; Fernández-Llamazares *et al.*, 2018).

Figure 1. The direct drivers of deforestation and its direct impacts at local, regional, and global scales. Adapted from Berenguer *et al.* (2021).



Main causes of the environmental problem and barriers to consider (systems description)

6. In this context, the Ecuadorian government prioritized formulating the GEF-8 reposition of the project *Integrated management and ecological connectivity of a priority landscape in the Ecuadorian Amazon headwaters* aiming to conserve, restore and promote the adoption of sustainable land management practices across 1,038,377 hectares of tropical montane forest landscapes along the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes, while enhancing Andean-Amazon habitat connectivity.
7. The Eastern Andean ridge was selected as the project intervention area given its importance of landscape connectivity between the Andes and the Amazon ecoregions and the formal declaration of two connectivity corridors that articulate a management unit with the Sangay National Park (PNS, for its Spanish acronym), a UNESCO World Heritage biosphere reserve (Figure 2a-c). The project area covers 1,162,892 ha, bounded to the North by the Llanganates-Sangay connectivity corridor (CELS, hereafter) and to the South by the Sangay-Podocarpus connectivity corridor (CCSP, hereafter). The landscape crosses the Andean and Amazonian provinces of Tungurahua, Pastaza, Morona Santiago, and Zamora Chinchipe, integrating different forms of conservation, including protected areas from the National Protected Area System (SNAP for its Spanish acronym), other local conservation schemes (e.g., Conservation and sustainable use areas - ACUS), and connectivity corridors. The area is composed primarily of montane tropical forests (56%), herbaceous and shrubby vegetation (28%) and agricultural lands composed principally by shifting cultivation and pastures (Table 1 in Annex E).

Drivers of environmental change in the project intervention area

8. In the project intervention area, environmental changes and biodiversity loss are primarily driven by deforestation and forest degradation, largely resulting from the expansion of agricultural areas due to unsustainable practices. In Ecuador, the Amazon and Andean regions have experienced significant forest loss in the last 20 years.
9. Between 2001 and 2020, Ecuador lost approximately 2.34 million hectares of forest, equivalent to a 9.9% decrease in its forest cover (Global Forest Watch, 2021). This deforestation is mainly attributed to the expansion of pasture for cattle ranching, which occupies 57% of Ecuador's total agricultural land (FAO, 2019). The root causes of this expansion can be traced to several interconnected factors:
 - a. **Economic Pressures and Market Demands:** In Ecuador, the rising demand for agricultural commodities such as beef and palm oil is a significant driver of deforestation. The Andes-Amazon region, in particular, has seen a rapid conversion of forest into pastureland. Cattle ranching accounts for over 55% of the deforested land in the Ecuadorian Amazon, driven by both domestic consumption and export markets (Carrero *et al.*, 2020; FAO, 2020). Similarly, palm oil plantations have expanded, with over 270,000 hectares dedicated to oil palm production, often replacing forests (Vásquez *et al.*, 2021). These trends are fueled by global market dynamics, where Ecuador plays a key role as a supplier.
 - b. **Land Tenure and Governance Issues:** In Ecuador, particularly in the Amazon and Andean regions, weak land tenure systems and governance failures have exacerbated deforestation. An estimated 30% of the land in Ecuador's Amazon remains under unclear land tenure, leading to informal land use and land speculation (Loaiza *et al.*, 2016, 2017). This encourages illegal deforestation, as farmers and landholders often clear forests to assert ownership or sell the land at higher prices after clearing it (Jones *et al.*, 2020).
 - c. **Policy and Subsidy Gaps:** National policies and incentives for agricultural expansion, such as subsidies for livestock farming, have further intensified deforestation in Ecuador. Livestock subsidies, in particular, have encouraged pasture expansion in tropical regions like the Amazon. The lack of strong conservation policies, coupled with the demand for pastureland, has made it difficult to curb deforestation (Arima *et al.*, 2014). Recent policy initiatives, such as Ecuador's REDD+ program, aim to address these gaps, but enforcement remains a challenge.
 - d. **Socioeconomic Factors and Livelihoods:** In rural areas of Ecuador, where poverty rates are high and alternatives for income generation are limited, small-scale farmers often resort to unsustainable agricultural practices, such as slash-and-burn farming. This technique is particularly prevalent in the Amazon and is responsible for more than 50% of the deforestation in certain provinces, such as Sucumbíos and Orellana (Ministerio del Ambiente y Agua del Ecuador, 2020). With few sustainable alternatives, farmers are compelled to clear additional land as soil fertility diminishes, exacerbating forest degradation (Geist & Lambin, 2002).

e. Infrastructure Development: Infrastructure expansion, especially road building in the Ecuadorian Amazon, has also played a critical role in facilitating deforestation. New roads, particularly those associated with oil extraction and mining activities, provide access to previously remote forest areas, enabling settlers and farmers to clear land for agriculture. Between 2000 and 2015, over 150 km of new roads were constructed in the Ecuadorian Amazon, contributing to a 28% increase in deforestation along these corridors (Laurance et al., 2015; Berenguer *et al.* 2021).

10. In combination, these factors drive unsustainable agricultural expansion and are key contributors to deforestation and forest degradation in Ecuador. Addressing these root causes through integrated landscape management and sustainable land-use practices is essential for mitigating biodiversity loss and promoting environmental resilience in the country (Ding et al., 2016; Gibbs et al., 2010). Programs such as the REDD+ initiative, agroforestry projects, and land-use zoning could play a critical role in reversing current deforestation trends and protecting biodiversity hotspots such as the AATB region.

11. *Deforestation and forest degradation in the project intervention area*
Over the past 22 years (2000-2022), 65,704 hectares of native forest in the project area have been converted to agricultural land, resulting in an annual deforestation rate of 0.45%, or 3,129 hectares per year (Table 2 in Annex E). Deforestation hotspots threaten the area's integrity, particularly along the Andean piedmont near PNS, the Baños-Puyo road cutting through the Llanganates-Sangay connectivity corridor (CELS), the Guamote-Macas Road, and within the Yacuambi municipality in the Sangay-Podocarpus connectivity corridor (CCSP). Halting deforestation in these locations is crucial for maintaining ecosystem integrity and connectivity between the Andes and Amazon. Projections for 2023-2030 estimate an additional loss of 41,002 hectares, averaging 5,857 hectares annually (Table 2; Figure 3 in Annex E). In the project intervention area, forest loss led to a decrease in structural connectivity. Of the 65,704 hectares deforested in the last 22 years, 60 percent (39,422 ha) are concentrated in the range between 500 to 1,500 m a.s.l., revealing a considerable decline in landscape connectivity in the AATB, with emphasis in the Morona Santiago a Pastaza provinces (Figure 4a in Annex E). Projections for 2030 suggest that an additional 20,000 ha of the 41,000-ha estimated to be deforested in that period, will be allocated in the same elevation range (Figure 4b in Annex E).

Barriers

12. A long-term strategy for conservation of the selected landscape must consider the main barriers to face this threat in the project landscape, as described below.

a. Limited financial sustainability to effectively manage protected areas.

Protected areas (PAs) establishment and management constitute the backbone of biodiversity conservation (Geldmann *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, increasing efforts and resources have been invested in establishing PAs, the most widely implemented conservation action. Only in the last

decade has the total surface of the nationally designated protected areas increased from 17% (Cuesta *et al.*, 2017) to 21% of the country's total terrestrial surface (MAATE 2023). However, PA establishment is not sufficient for addressing the complex direct and indirect anthropogenic threats to biodiversity (Hickcox *et al.*, 2019). PAs need to be effectively managed to achieve the intended biodiversity conservation objectives, thus recognizing that management effectiveness evaluation (MEE) is essential (Leverington *et al.*, 2010).

Financial constraints often hinder the effectiveness of protected areas in achieving their conservation goals. Securing long-term financial flows is essential for the sustained conservation effectiveness of PAs and local conservation areas. Long-term funding provides stability and predictability, enabling protected area authorities to plan and implement conservation measures effectively. It allows for recruiting and training qualified staff, maintaining infrastructure and equipment, and implementing monitoring and research programs essential for adaptive management. Management effectiveness score is higher when resources are available, regardless of whether these funds come from public or private sources (Negru *et al.*, 2020). The available assessments of the management effectiveness of the PAs contained in the project intervention area (e.g., Río Negro-Sopladora, Río Zuñag) highlight the structural limitation they face due to the considerable financial gap that prevents proper implementation of their management plans.

b. Inadequate monitoring and data-driven decision-making in PAs management.

Effective management must address specific aspects, such as responses to pressures and threats, social contexts, governance types, and accountability. It also relies on resilience to changing conditions and situations, meaning PAs can benefit from adaptive management approaches (Agrawal, 2000; Prato, 2009). Adaptive management systematically acquires and applies reliable information to improve and adjust management over time (Walters, 1986). Thus, acquiring data on ground-level conditions and interventions is crucial for informed decision-making. Ranger-based monitoring tools, like SMART, are designed to fill information gaps and support adaptive management (Cronin *et al.*, 2021). Implementing such tools significantly enhances PA management by enabling the real-time collection, analysis, and utilization of data on wildlife populations, human activities, and habitat conditions, leading to better-informed decisions and more effective management practices.

From 2020, the MAATE (Ministerial Agreement No. MAAE-2020-09) formalized the adoption of the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) for the entire National System of Protected Areas (SNAP). The agreement mentions the Undersecretariat of Natural Heritage as the technical unit responsible for executing the necessary technological infrastructure aspects for its implementation. Additionally, it outlines the tool's objectives aimed at managing, organizing, and generating spatial information for the monitoring and surveillance programs and biodiversity management of the management plans of the SNAP. Currently, SMART is used in ten protected areas and will progressively expand to the whole PAs system as more key stakeholders like parks

staff get trained on it. However, none of the PAs that are part of the project intervention area, except for the PNS. In the PNS, a preliminary implementation of the tool started in late 2021 and requires further development (see Baseline section for details). These conditions limit the possibility of integrating real-time information supporting adaptive management that translates into increased effectiveness.

c. Fragmented Social Engagement and Ownership

The fragmented social and community engagement around connectivity corridors is a multifaceted problem. These corridors, spanning vast areas and linking diverse territories, present a challenge due to their extensive and scattered nature. This dispersion inhibits effective communication and coordination among communities, hindering the establishment of a shared sense of belonging. The lack of ownership and engagement in the management initiatives of these corridors further compounds the issue. Local communities are reluctant to participate actively in maintenance and promotion without a strong sense of ownership. This unwillingness is increased by insufficient awareness and understanding of the corridors' significance, not only for biodiversity but also for the economic and social well-being of the regions. Furthermore, a culture of low involvement in organizational and sustainable development initiatives exacerbates the challenge. Local communities need to establish a meaningful connection with PAs, primarily due to inadequate information regarding their benefits and importance. Significant socio-economic and environmental limitations, including insecurity, resource exploitation, and escalating poverty levels, amplify this disconnect. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) in 2023, the parishes in the project's study area exhibit significant poverty indices due to unsatisfied basic needs. For instance, in the parishes of Azuay province, the poverty rate due to unsatisfied basic needs reaches 48%. This percentage rises to 61.8% in Loja, 75.6% in Morona Santiago, 69.7% in Pastaza, 57% in Tungurahua, and 73.8% in Zamora Chinchipe. This data underscores the significant socio-economic challenges these communities face, emphasizing the urgency of implementing comprehensive interventions to address these needs. Overcoming this barrier requires concerted efforts to foster cohesive community engagement, enhance awareness, and address the underlying socio-economic challenges.

d. Disjointed vision of the territory to enable integrated landscape planning and management.

A disjointed vision of the Andean-Amazon landscapes constitutes a significant barrier, largely stemming from two interrelated aspects: (1) Limited coordination and articulation among different levels of government and sectors; (2) Lack of coherence among cross-sectoral policies. Despite country efforts to embed biodiversity conservation and sustainable use objectives in the management of the production landscapes outside of PAs through support to an array of policies, strategies, and practices that engage a multiset of actors from public and private sectors, no institutional regulatory framework comprehensively addresses biodiversity mainstreaming in land use planning instruments. The absence of effective mechanisms to promote collaborative efforts

and foster dialogue has meant a lack of coherence among policy implementation to achieve land use planning that integrates SLM practices.

Existing institutional and legal frameworks do not address biodiversity conservation in all sectors nor consider its effects on maintaining ecosystem services outside PAs. Agricultural policies have traditionally emphasized short-term increases in production and productivity without including a systemic, sustainable management vision. This condition drives land degradation processes that affect biodiversity, food security, and rural communities' resilience while contributing to GHG emissions from the AFOLU sector. It also prevents recognizing the socioeconomic benefits of maintaining essential ecosystem functions and services. In addition, no multi-actor mechanisms have yet been established for cross-sectoral work, promoting a shared and joint approach to prevent, reduce, and reverse degradation processes. Collaboration between sectors remains limited or ineffective, especially in the critical sectors of environment and agriculture. In practice, promoting agricultural productivity is usually addressed separately from maintaining ecosystem services provision (i.e., water regulation and maintenance of soil fertility) and natural habitat preservation. This lack of synchronization leads to conflicting policies, impeding effective and sustainable territorial management. Another critical difficulty arises from the weak articulation between national policies and local implementations by Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs). Local governments frequently lack the necessary resources, information, or technical support to align their actions with national guidelines. Moreover, differing priorities, driven by immediate local needs rather than long-term strategies, exacerbate this disconnection. The absence of effective platforms for dialogue and coordination between government levels further fragments efforts for territorial management, limiting biodiversity mainstreaming in local planning instruments. These challenges create a fragmented landscape of territorial management, where actions are misaligned, hindering the achievement of sustainable management that integrates environmental conservation with economic and social development. Overcoming this barrier demands a thorough review and strengthening of coordination and communication mechanisms among all stakeholders, ensuring that policies and actions are coherent and effectively directed toward territorial sustainable development.

- e. Unclear land tenure in key areas leads to deforestation, diminishing landscape connectivity. Land use patterns and tenure powerfully influence ecosystem preservation and the services they provide to people. Tenure security is a vital factor affecting landholders' property and forest use investment decisions. Tenure security shows that securing property rights can slow deforestation or hasten agricultural expansion, depending on the local context (Holland et al., 2014; Buntaine et al., 2015).

At the same time, strengthening land tenure for local people is linked to social and human development, and research and investments in improving land tenure security have increased

dramatically in recent years (Holland *et al.*, 2014). Land tenure security is a pivotal factor that underpins the potential for success of many multilateral policy initiatives such as REDD+, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national and local-based incentives [e.g., REDD for Early Movers (REM), Socio Bosque Program (PSB, for its Spanish acronym), Programa Ecuador Carbono Cero (PECC), rural property tax exception]. Ongoing incentive policy instruments in Ecuador have promoted regularizing land tenure rights to target REDD+ goals and reduce conflicts with protected areas (Jones *et al.*, 2020).

The lack of clarity in land tenure can be attributed to several factors, such as the absence of formal property records, conflicting property titles, or the coexistence of formal and informal legal systems regulating land tenure (Cruz, 2010). In many instances, particularly in rural areas, land tenure is based on informal agreements, local traditions, or community practices, making it difficult to establish who has legitimate rights over the land and how disputes can be resolved fairly and effectively (Jones *et al.*, 2020).

The lack of clarity in land tenure can have significant socio-economic and environmental repercussions. For example, it can hinder access to credit and financial services for land investments, limit landowners' ability to fully utilize natural resources, and increase the risk of conflicts and tensions among different groups of land users (Cruz, 2010). This situation also has a differentiated impact based on gender. There is a notable disparity in land ownership between women and men in Ecuador. Only 27% of landowners are women, while 73% are men (INEC, 2023). In the case of provinces in the Amazon Region, the gap is even more comprehensive, with women accounting for only 11.8% of land ownership (ProAmazonía, 2020). This gap in land ownership reflects deep inequalities in access to natural resources, women's ability to make decisions about land use, and the adoption of SLM practices.

f. Lack of incentives for adoption of SLM practices

Small rural producers engaged in family farming economies face significant challenges, including limited farm profitability, and heightened vulnerability to market shocks and natural disasters. These factors collectively impede their access to financial services and mechanisms for managing financial risks, such as insurance (Markelova *et al.*, 2009). Compounding these challenges is the scarcity of credit lines within the country that explicitly promote SLM for small rural producers. Small farmers encounter barriers in accessing both extension and financial services in the project intervention areas. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) 2023 data, only 5.2% of agricultural producers can access services through private, public, or community-oriented banks. This lack of access to financial capital is a critical bottleneck, alongside labor constraints and land tenure insecurity, inhibiting the adoption of SLM practices among small producers. While there is a growing interest among financial institutions in integrating sustainability criteria into their operations, formal financial services still need to be expanded in

rural areas. Moreover, these services predominantly rely on conventional approaches, thus failing to adequately address the unique needs and challenges small rural producers face.

Over the past decade, the Central Government launched national economic incentive programs to curb the high deforestation rates across the country. Two key initiatives, the National Forest Restoration Program (PNRF for its Spanish acronym) focusing on conservation and the Reforestation Program geared towards commercial objectives, were promoted by the MAATE and Ministry of Agriculture (MAG), respectively. However, these programs were designed and implemented independently, lacking shared guidelines, and targeting divergent objectives, leading to implementation according to separate institutional frameworks. Despite interventions spanning various hectares, both programs encountered challenges related to management models, fiscal resource limitations for sustaining investments, and, in some instances, a need for continuity in actions by beneficiaries. These experiences underscore the weak institutional framework prevailing in the country, hindering the execution of coordinated actions under a unified plan or with more robust inter-institutional coordination mechanisms that can sustain incentive mechanisms to support the adoption of SLM practices.

- g. Key stakeholders for the management of connectivity corridors have limited access to science-based information, tools, and experiences to support corridors' effective management. Ecological or connectivity corridors have increasingly been implemented as conservation strategies in Ecuador (Freire et al., 2022). Currently, there are three formally recognized by MAATE, and three more are being designed. However, their establishment and management are still in the process of consolidation, their application has been inconsistent, and there is limited scientific research on their effectiveness, as well as a limited availability of management tools. Similarly, there needs to be more coordination with various local stakeholders to ensure their social and administrative viability and the design of management models that guarantee their sustainability in the medium and long term.

A landscape vision for defining connectivity areas must be based on the premise that no potential corridor is isolated from its surrounding landscape (Anderson & Jenkins, 2006). Therefore, every corridor proposal, regardless of its scale, must consider existing information about the environment, connectivity possibilities, and the ecological, social, and political viability of its connectivity proposal. Any corridor creation process must include generating and managing information about ecosystems, biodiversity, and threats (Chester & Hilty, 2010; Graham & Mulongoy, 2006). This foundational knowledge can distinguish between an efficient and inefficient connectivity strategy. Insufficient knowledge about the biodiversity of the area of interest can lead to connecting 'empty habitats' (Bennet, 1999). Similarly, incorrect identification of connectivity structures (e.g., natural corridors, gallery forests, habitat patches) can result in inefficient ecological connectivity and a consequent waste of resources.

In Ecuador, land use decisions are predominantly shaped by political, economic, and market considerations, often neglecting the incorporation of science-based information and learning experiences critical for fostering innovation and achieving impactful outcomes. This deficiency in integrating scientific insights hampers making informed decisions regarding connectivity corridors' design and management. The absence of a science-based platform exacerbates this challenge, hindering the establishment of a robust learning community where stakeholders can exchange knowledge and best practices. Access to accurate scientific data and experiential learning opportunities is necessary for decision-makers to develop effective strategies for sustainable land use.

The baseline scenario

13. The analysis of the baseline or so-called scenario without the GEF project over the next four years presented below summarizes the ongoing or planned actions that the government and other key stakeholders will undertake in the coming years to address the barriers towards the consolidation of two connectivity corridors that preserve and enhance the connectivity in the AATB of the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes. The baseline scenario includes an analysis that portrays how the conservation corridors will be in the absence of the GEF investment for each of the proposed strategies. This section includes an appendix summarizing ongoing projects in the project intervention area (Appendix 1).

14. This proposed project will build on the achievements and experiences gained through the ASL II project, *"Connectivity Corridors in Two Priority Landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon,"* implemented by WWF and executed by Conservation International Ecuador. Building on this foundation, the new project will incorporate key lessons learned, particularly regarding the creation and strengthening of multilevel governance platforms, which were instrumental in fostering collaboration between national, regional, and local stakeholders. These platforms facilitated effective decision-making and resource management, ensuring that ecological connectivity efforts were well-coordinated across various governance levels. By reinforcing these governance structures, the project aims to promote a more inclusive and participatory approach to conservation, aligning local community needs with national biodiversity conservation goals.

15. Furthermore, the project will integrate the experiences of the SLM practices developed under ASL II. These practices, which focus on integrating biodiversity conservation with productive land use, have proven effective in maintaining ecosystem services while improving livelihoods. By scaling up these practices across new regions, the project will aim to reduce deforestation and forest degradation while fostering resilient agricultural systems. Additionally, the project will place a strong emphasis on knowledge management, ensuring that successful approaches and methodologies are documented, shared, and disseminated both nationally and regionally. This will create a scalable model for ecological connectivity, contributing to Ecuador's broader conservation objectives and serving as a replicable framework for other Amazonian countries under the GEF7 Amazon Sustainable Landscapes

(ASL) Program. Through these integrated efforts, the project seeks to amplify conservation impact, promote sustainable development, and contribute to the long-term preservation of biodiversity in the Andes-Amazon interface.

a. Effective conservation

16. Although both corridors, CELS and CCSP, have been officially recognized by MAATE, and many of the most important forest remnants inside the corridors are within some national or local protection figures, there are still significant limitations in their management models to ensure ecological, social, and political viability. Specifically, in the CELS, 15 private reserves have been created or strengthened with the support of WWF and its partner EcoMinga, constituting the corridor's core areas. However, many of these reserves face significant financial limitations, resulting in management deficiencies that hinder effective management (METT score from 2021). Currently, the private reserves lack a financing gap analysis to ensure efficient management. EcoMinga currently invests U\$250,000 per year to cover the management and administration costs of their reserves (seven out of these fifteen). The estimated cost to cover the yearly expenses of large reserves (larger than 100 ha) is U\$ 25,000 to 35,000, while the average cost for a small reserve (smaller than 100 ha) is U\$ 12,000 to 15,000. Additional investments of \$15,000 to \$20,000 for large reserves and \$5,000 to \$7,000 for smaller ones are needed to address identified deficiencies by METT assessments.
17. Nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives currently support 20 local private reserves encompassing 7,907 ha of montane forests within the CELS, generating average annual incomes of U\$ 6,814 in 2022 and 6,246 U\$ in 2023. There is potential to increase this income through business models and alliances. These financial deficits present a clear opportunity for GEF investment to secure long-term supplemental funding and address crucial management deficiencies. The recently launched Carbon Cero Program by MAATE has aroused interest from the owners of the reserves. This program has the potential of channeling monetary compensation for carbon sequestration in the CELS. Without GEF investment, these reserves may struggle to meet requirements for PECC or similar financing mechanisms, exacerbating their financial and management challenges.
18. In the CCSP, local conservation areas are funded by the Regional Water Fund (FORAGUA), which manages resources from environmental fees on drinking water consumption, private contributions, and international cooperation. FORAGUA aims to conserve, protect, restore, and recover environmental services and biodiversity in Southern Ecuador's local municipal conservation and sustainable use areas (ACUS). Municipalities that join FORAGUA establish ordinances to create ACUS and impose water use fees to finance local conservation, sustainable land management, and restoration projects. These fees are collected monthly by municipal governments and transferred to an independently managed trust by the National Financial Corporation.
19. Ninety percent of the collected funds, estimated at \$900K per year by 2023, finance local watershed management activities guided by annual investment plans with FORAGUA's technical support. The

Technical Secretariat of FORAGUA also manages additional resources from national and international cooperation, and public and private institutions to strengthen each municipality's investment plans. However, there are limited resources to assess management deficiencies in each ACUS, hindering the identification of key management improvements to enhance conservation effectiveness. Additionally, some local conservation areas do not receive FORAGUA resources because their municipalities are not part of the mechanism. Therefore, GEF funds are crucial to strengthening the FORAGUA mechanism, significantly impacting its replication and scalability.

20. The Protected Areas Fund (FAP-Ecuador), administered by the Environmental and Sustainable Investment Fund (FIAS) as of 2024, supports the long-term financing of the operating expenses required to protect biodiversity contained in the SNAP. This equity fund generates returns destined to finance the basic operating expenses for the execution of management plans of the Protected Areas (PA). Currently, the FAP finances 42 out of the 56 areas of the State Subsystem, which represent 98.8% of the surface area under the responsibility of the MAATE. However, many PAs, specifically those created after 2017, face severe financial constraints that limit their management effectiveness, including the PNS and Río Negro-Sopladora National Park (PNRNS). Both parks' latest management effectiveness evaluation (PNS 2022 and PNRNS 2020) evidence important limitations regarding their Monitoring and surveillance Programs, Biodiversity management and budget allocation and adequacy. In 2021, the FAP invested U\$ 75,000 to support the PNS to cover operating expenses such as maintenance of infrastructure and vehicles. No information is available for the PNRNS. Without the GEF investment, both national parks will lack the capacity to strengthen their monitoring & surveillance programs. Falling to do so will exacerbate the problems both parks face in their lower sections regarding deforestation fronts, illegal timber, hunting and poaching, and expansion of agricultural lands.
21. The MAATE, in collaboration with WCS, has promoted the SMART tool's adoption in several protected areas of the SNAP. The PNS has implemented the SMART system across all three sections of the park, collecting data on threats, biological records, and patrols since 2021. However, surveillance in critical zones of the lower section of the PNS needs strengthening. Enhancing the tool's capabilities to detect and respond to threats in real-time and improving its management for PNS officials to document environmental crimes effectively is essential. This can be achieved through comprehensive training and support for the tool's use. Additionally, park staff need to be trained on SMART Mobile to optimize reporting via cell phones. Developing a scalable national manual for SMART Mobile is necessary, as is improving the management model of external servers to enable real-time updates and optimize tool management. Currently, the PNRNS lacks the SMART tool. GEF investment could reinforce the surveillance and monitoring programs of both parks, which are crucial for maintaining the ecological integrity of the project intervention area and the connectivity between the Andes and Amazon regions.

b. Strengthening local governance mechanisms within the CELS and the CCSP

22. In the past five years, both conservation corridors have been conceived, designed, and officially recognized by MAATE. This recognition requires local stakeholder coordination platforms with inclusive and equitable participation to build a shared vision for landscape-level land use planning. Organizations like WWF and NCI have promoted collaborative work among stakeholders with common activities and interests in each corridor. These stakeholders have established working groups that are in their early stages of collaboration. The GEF investment will strengthen the existing working groups but also help establish multi actor, multi-level coordination platforms in both corridors through an inclusive governance approach, ensuring social and political viability of these mechanisms.
23. The Sustainable Tourism Network includes 20 ventures, that have worked together and received support on sustainability standards, business plan development, market outreach, and integrating tourism routes into broader connectivity corridor initiatives. The CELS Research Network brings together local scientists and national universities (e.g., Politécnica Nacional, USFQ, IKIAM) to develop a common research agenda to inform management decisions and support CELS conservation. Efforts are also underway to establish a sustainable production association. However, there isn't a governance model developed for the corridor, nor have these groups established spaces to share visions and reach agreements for a landscape level management. In the CCSP, a governance model has been developed with the support of NCI, based on forming working groups composed of institutions and local stakeholders who collaboratively propose and implement actions to address priority needs in the territory. These working priorities are organized into five thematic axes: 1) Territorial Management and Governance, 2) Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Productive Alternatives, 3) Education, Training, and Communication, 4) Research and Biodiversity Monitoring, and 5) Actions for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. In this model, the thematic axes and their specific working priorities should constitute the Action Plan of the CCSP, which should be periodically reviewed to assess the efficiency in managing and addressing the territory's needs. By 2024, these models have not been fully implemented and there is heterogeneous progress in the different axes with some important steps in the research and biodiversity monitoring, whereas others such as the sustainable and climate-resilient productive alternatives have no progress. In this sense, as in the case of CELS, it is important to strength the different working groups, as they currently have limited planning and coordination instruments to address issues related to the corridor strategic vision and objectives. The GEF investment could strengthen these groups by supporting the development of a landscape-scale vision, viewing the connectivity corridor as a single management unit, and fostering a shared vision among different sectors and stakeholders. Additionally, strengthening the Technical Secretariat of the CCSP to speed up the proper functioning of the working groups is key
24. In the CELS, the three provincial and some municipal local governments have not established a working group, although they have participated in coordination spaces around land use planning. Efforts have focused on strengthening local stakeholder capacities by providing technical tools for integrating the Corridor into land use planning. A cooperation agreement with local autonomous decentralized

governments (GADs) at the provincial level (Pastaza, Tungurahua, Morona Santiago) has been signed to incorporate the CELS into their territorial vision. Likewise, these provincial governments act as the core promoting group for the corridor management platform. Further, WWF has supported the development of new land use plans (PDOTs, for its Spanish acronym) by creating a toolkit for local governments to assist them in incorporating the CELS into their territorial planning, holding workshops with GAD technicians to identify local needs, and defining joint projects to be included in the PDOTs' annual operational plans. In the case of the CCSP, 16 municipalities have already included the conservation corridor in their PDOTs. Moreover, 12 municipalities have created municipal conservation and sustainable use areas (ACMUS, for its Spanish acronym) that often constitute key remnant areas that connect the SNAP PAs (e.g., Podocarpus, Yacuri). The ACMUS within the Corridor reinforces the articulation of municipal land use planning instruments with the landscape approach promoted by the CCSP corridor.

25. Ministerial Decree 019 establishes guidelines and technical criteria for designing and establishing the country's connectivity corridors. It mandates developing a management plan for each corridor, involving key stakeholders and guided by the MAATE. Currently, MAATE is developing these guidelines with emphasis on integrating multi-level planning instruments. These guidelines are expected to be finalized by the start of this project, outlining minimum requirements and preferred approaches to establish a management framework for each corridor. With the GEF investment, both corridors will develop their management plans based on participatory process anchored to the working groups and multi-stakeholder platform and lead by the local governments.
26. WWF has developed various training programs for actors in the CELS. EcoMinga technicians received training in SMART and METT tools for protected area management. GAD technicians at all levels of the territorial organization were trained in developing PDOTs using a specialized toolkit. The tourism network received financial training on business plans and tourism package development, while small producers were continuously trained in added value, organic fertilizer production, and agroecological techniques.
27. In the CCSP, informal and formal education programs lay the groundwork for a more ambitious training initiative. In collaboration with NCI, the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) developed a continuous education course, 'Conservation and Management of Water Sources,' for municipal governments and public companies facing technical capacity challenges in water and ecosystem management (<https://formacionpermanente.utpl.edu.ec/escuela-del-agua>). This course, which has trained 187 municipal technicians with 278 hours of instruction, is currently on hold due to a lack of resources but could be reactivated and expanded with GEF investment.
28. Universidad Nacional de Loja (UNL) offers a master's program in tropical landscape restoration, training over 60 natural resource technicians since 2022 (<https://unl.edu.ec/posgrados/maestria-en-restauracion-de-paisajes-tropicales>). Additionally, the Prefecture of Loja (GAD Loja), through the

Directorate of Productive Development and in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), plans to implement agricultural field schools (ECAs). These schools will combine the knowledge of producers and technicians to modernize agricultural and livestock farms and improve the genetics of bovine, ovine, caprine, and guinea pig livestock. Training for agricultural and livestock technical personnel in rural extension techniques and adult education is scheduled for September 2024. These initiatives provide a strong foundation for the GEF investment in enhancing continuing education processes while strengthening the human capital of the multi-actor platforms in both corridors.

Incentives for sustainable land management practices

29. Pilot initiatives have been implemented in the CELS with sustainable livelihood strategies and soil and forest management practices that promote the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and associated environmental services. The Ecuadorian Center for Agro Services (CESA, for its Spanish acronym) in a strategic alliance with WWF promoted the adoption of SLM practices at the farm scale in the CELS through the promotion of agro-business in 47 hectares of 76 families of local producers. These actions have improved soil health and fertility, increased agricultural yield within the same land parcel, and reduced agrochemical dependency, improving farmers' health and quality of life. Further, CESA supported value chain by providing market access to local producers within the CELS, allowing commercialized products with added value to generate an improved income. The 76 local producers in the CELS are in the way to establish an association and are currently operating a rural informal savings and loans mechanism. Regarding land tenure regularization, EcoMinga oversaw the resolution of land tenure disputes in 14 properties due to disagreements over land tenure rights among neighbors. These properties, covering 513 hectares, were successfully resolved. Currently, EcoMinga is working on regularizing the land tenure of seven additional properties covering 418 hectares.
30. In the CCSP, in recent years, FORAGUA has signed 150 conservation agreements, enabling the provision of incentives and compensations. Through these agreements, cooperation funds have supported 14 landowners in the sustainable production of soursop, blackberry, passion fruit, coffee, and pitahaya as pilot farms to explore sustainability alternatives for the ACMUS within the corridor. However, currently, operations are only ongoing in El Pangui municipality as a pilot in six farms due to funding limitations as SLM practices have been implemented with external cooperation in agreement with FORAGUA. There has been no investment from the water fee in these themes. In addition, FORAGUA carried out restoration activities in seven ACMUS, achieving the restoration of 1,056 hectares since 2020, of which 650 hectares are under restoration through assisted natural regeneration, and the remaining 406 ha are silvopastures. In the CCSP, incipient processes of association are linked to small producers supported by FORAGUA in Zamora. Additionally, these small producers lack mechanisms to add value to their products and have no access to markets that demand sustainable products. Associativity in this sector of the study area is limited and determined by commodities such as sugar, coffee, and pitahaya, among others.

31. The GEF investment is crucial for replicating and scaling up the interventions promoted in both corridors. Without this investment, it is unlikely that the sustainable land management practices will be promoted at the landscape scale needed to achieve impacts in reducing deforestation and maintaining connectivity between the Eastern Mountain range and the Amazon. Similarly, strengthening the association processes and creating enabling conditions for credit access and tenure regulation are critical factors for scaling up restoration and transitioning to favorable production systems to maximize environmental and social benefits.

Knowledge management and communication

32. In the CELS a communication campaign to promote the corridor among citizens was implemented in 2022, based on an image (i.e., logo) developed by WWF and key stakeholders. Also, WWF has engaged local governments, MAATE and other local organizations to develop joint communication materials and media content around the CELS. In the CCSP, also an image was developed, and a web page was created with key information of the corridor. Digital materials and videos of the corridor have been presented in symposiums, workshops. Lastly, three books about the corridor's biodiversity have been produced and disseminated.
33. National Connectivity Corridors Group was created in 2023 to establish synergies and expand knowledge and experiences on ecological connectivity in Ecuador. One of the objectives of this national group is to establish and strengthen a community of practice that generates recommendations and technical inputs to national and local stakeholders. The group implemented Webinars and the First National Connectivity Corridors Symposium in 2024. This Group also seeks to improve management systems in existing corridors and the state's (central government and GADs) decision-making capacity to secure ecological connectivity in critical areas, as well as facilitate the integration of the private sector and academia in connectivity corridors' co-management mechanisms. This Group will provide support to strengthen the management of both connectivity corridors.
34. The ASL Regional Project aims to strengthen capacity and coordination for improved integrated landscape management and conservation in the Amazon. Through knowledge management, it promotes face-to-face and virtual activities, including online courses, studies, specific workshops, and study tours, to provide program beneficiaries with opportunities to learn and share knowledge. These events provide a platform for stakeholders to share experiences, discuss challenges, and identify solutions collectively. Similarly, the ASL regional project encourages South-South cooperation as an essential strategy. This involves facilitating direct exchanges between countries in the Amazon Basin to learn from each other's successes and challenges in implementing sustainable landscape management practices. The investment of the GEF project will guarantee knowledge contributions to ASL IP to scale up and replicate actions that enhance Andes Amazon connectivity.

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole, including how it addresses priorities related to the specific program, and how it will benefit from the coordination platform. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Theory of Change (ToC)

1. The project ToC aligns with the ASL III Program and is built upon the threats, underlying drivers of environmental change, barriers, and baseline presented under section A. It is based on the logic that the ecological integrity of ecosystems depends on the landscape permeability and structural connectivity between the existing PAs and other landscape forest remnants, can be maintained if critical tropical mountain forest remnants are preserved and effectively managed, and land use change is reduced in the wider landscape, consequently the Andes-Amazon connectivity in the Ecuadorian Eastern Andean ridge, is enhanced.
2. Strengthening the effective management of conservation areas inside and outside the national protected areas system requires securing long-term financial flows and addressing other key management deficiencies. Assuming that, existing local water funds and national financial mechanisms (e.g. Zero Carbon Program) are maintained over time, the project will articulate and increase financial flows towards local conservation schemes to overcome management deficiencies.
3. One of the most important management deficiencies is the lack of updated spatially explicit information to support protected areas management. A comprehensive data management platform to spatially monitor and surveillance can improve management effectiveness. In close collaboration with MAATE the project will guarantee the full implementation of the SMART tool in two national parks: Sangay and Río Negro-Sopladora.
4. An articulated civil society and key stakeholders with a shared vision are essential to achieve effective governance that enables biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Assuming that national and local authorities have the political will and other key stakeholders share a common interest in articulating actions towards sustainable landscape management that maintain the Andes-Amazon connectivity, the project will strengthen existing coordination mechanisms. Facilitating dialogue among stakeholders to integrate landscape management practices into cross-sectorial land use planning, and development programs is crucial. Developing local and national capacities, collaboration, and leadership is imperative to driving conservation processes. Strengthening local capacities enables stakeholders to effectively participate in multi-stakeholder and inclusive coordination mechanisms, leading to effectively managed connectivity corridors with shared visions and articulated actions.
5. To reverse land use changes, local producers must adopt SLM practices. These practices deliver economic benefits through optimized rangeland production, restore unproductive degraded areas,

and conserve small forest fragments within farms. Assuming that target local producers are willing and able to adopt SLM practices and market conditions will remain favorable for the economic viability of sustainable value chains, the project will assist the establishment of conservation agreements among local governments and water funds with local producers to promote forest conservation and SLM practices in key areas of both ecological corridors. Integrated landscape management through conservation agreements with landowners constitutes a primary strategy to integrate environmental benefits and rural development. By promoting the adoption of SLM practices, the project aims to reduce the pressure on forested areas and enhance ecological connectivity in the Andes-Amazon interface. SLM practices such as agroforestry, silvopastoral systems, and restoration of degraded lands improve agricultural productivity on existing lands, which reduces the incentive for expanding agriculture into forested areas. These practices also create a mosaic of land uses that serve as stepping stones for wildlife movement, improving habitat connectivity across landscapes that have been fragmented by unsustainable land use. As farmers and local communities adopt SLM, ecosystems are restored and maintained, increasing the permeability of the landscape for species and supporting biodiversity conservation. This approach directly addresses the root causes of deforestation by offering sustainable alternatives to land conversion, fostering long-term stewardship of the land.

6. In parallel, developing sustainable value chains will incentivize local communities and producers to adopt and maintain SLM practices. By integrating SLM into production systems and linking these practices to markets that value sustainably produced goods, the project creates economic incentives for forest conservation. Value chain development enhances access to markets for products like shade-grown coffee, cacao, and sustainably managed livestock, while improving access to financial services and resources. This economic empowerment encourages the continuation of SLM practices, which not only supports local livelihoods but also strengthens ecological connectivity. By aligning conservation goals with economic benefits, the project creates a positive feedback loop, where the adoption of SLM practices leads to forest conservation and enhanced landscape connectivity, contributing to the long-term resilience of the Andes-Amazon interface. Additionally, the project design for Components 2 and 3 incorporates criteria that account for the dynamic nature of deforestation and climate change. This approach ensures the delivery of long-term environmental benefits, even in the face of uncertain future scenarios. Lastly, the project will foster robust and equitable associativity among local producers creating competitive conditions to adopt better practices and access value-added markets, assuming market fluctuations do not hinder the profitability of sustainable value chains promoted by the project.
7. Lastly, if knowledge management is adopted then conservation practices aimed at preserving the Andes-Amazon connectivity will be scaled up. If practitioners and decision makers use available information to guide policies design and implementation, the project will integrate its findings and tools into the ASL IP and national initiatives. Additionally, the project will support national and regional knowledge platforms to mainstream lesson learned, and science into conservation measures, promoting innovation and increasing impact (Figure 6).

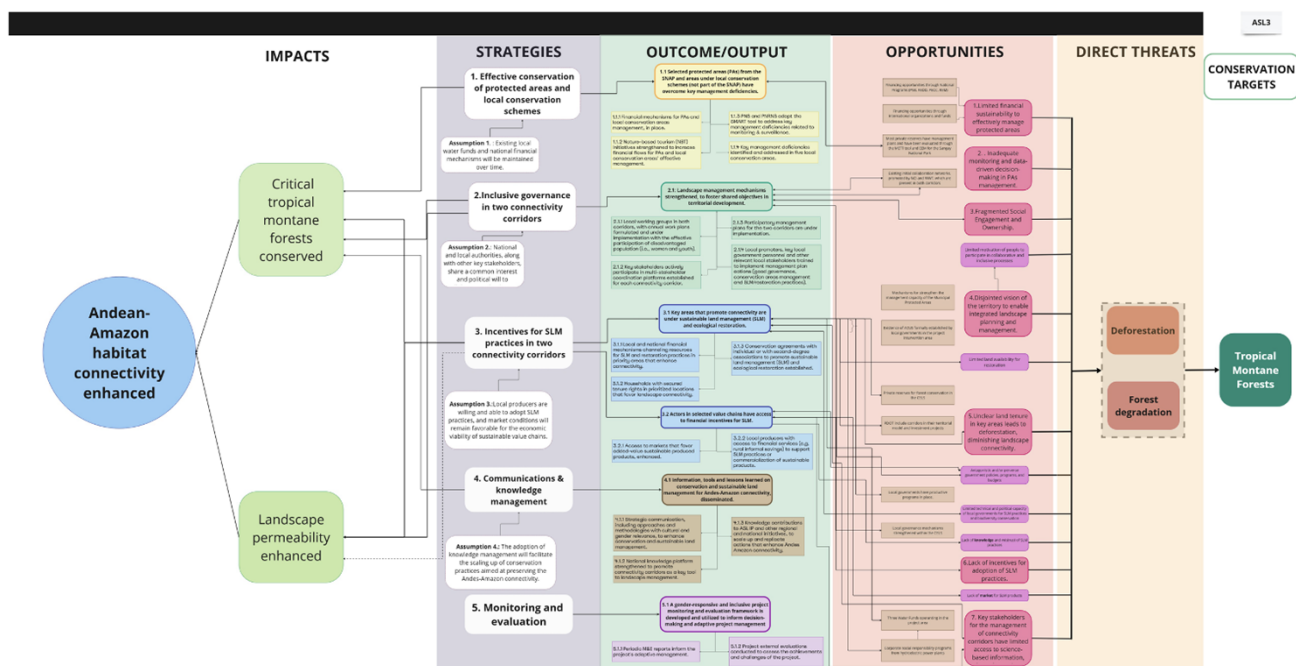


Figure 6. Causal chain diagram of the project *Integrated management and ecological connectivity of a priority landscape in the Ecuadorian Amazon headwaters*, ASL III Impact Program.

Project Components

- The project objective is conserve, restore and promote the adoption of sustainable land management practices across 1,038,377 hectares of tropical montane forest landscapes along the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes, while enhancing Andean-Amazon habitat connectivity.
- Aimed at overcoming barriers that impede the conservation and sustainable use of the project intervention area, the project is divided into five sequentially linked components. **Component 1** mandates the strengthening of the management of a mosaic of conservation areas by overcoming key management deficiencies. **Component 2** aims at strengthening effective governance of both connectivity corridors by fostering dialogue among key stakeholders to integrate landscape management mechanisms and cross-sectorial planning. **Component 3** promotes sustainable land management practices and restoration of key areas that increase landscape connectivity. **Component 4** calls for the insertion of project findings and tools by regional and national initiatives to scale up and replicate actions that enhance Andes Amazon connectivity while providing tools for adaptive project management for effective and efficient implementation. **Component 5** supports decision-making and adaptive project management.
- The project builds on previous efforts led by WWF and its partners (e.g., NCI, EcoMinga) to consolidate both connectivity corridors (see Appendix 1 for details on ongoing activities). These earlier initiatives provided a strong foundation for the design and official establishment of the connectivity corridors, positioning them as critical landscapes for maintaining connectivity between the Andes-Amazon

bioregions through forest conservation and sustainable land use. The proposed strategies are conceived to enhance and strengthen these ongoing activities, ensuring the long-term, effective management of the corridors.

11. By aligning with the strategies outlined in the project's components, the project aims to integrate existing efforts into a comprehensive framework that addresses current challenges while building on past achievements. The focus on SLM practices, multiscale and inclusive governance, and improving the effectiveness of protected area management will significantly enhance ecological connectivity and biodiversity conservation in the Andes-Amazon interface. Additionally, the project design for Components 2 and 3 incorporates criteria that account for the dynamic nature of deforestation and climate change. This approach ensures the delivery of long-term environmental benefits, even in the face of uncertain future scenarios.
12. Lastly, the proposed strategies were discussed and carefully prioritized with the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition (MAATE) and local stakeholders during workshops held in the project intervention area during the project design phase. This inclusive and collaborative approach ensures that the strategies are well-aligned with the needs, priorities, and realities of all stakeholders involved. By consolidating ongoing activities and fostering strong partnerships, the project aims to deliver robust outcomes that will help consolidate the integrity and functionality of the connectivity corridors over the long term.

Component 1: Effective conservation of protected areas and local conservation schemes

This component seeks to overcome critical management deficiencies to improve the effective conservation of globally significant biodiversity at selected national protected areas (PAs) and local conservation schemes, including securing financial sustainability and the adoption of a comprehensive monitoring system for monitoring & surveillance activities. These two activities constitute the major barriers faced locally to increase management effectiveness and both PAs and local conservation schemes as reported in the available METT and EEM assessments and validated during workshops with local stakeholders in project formulation. Not all areas currently have the METT completed and since this is a participatory process with local stakeholders the EA will work on this in Y1 of implementation. Together, the proposed outcome and outputs of this Component account for 577,289 ha of terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness (Core Indicator 1 – Sub indicator 1.2). This Component will engage the following key stakeholders: (a) Landowners of private reserves; (2) Nature and Culture International (NCI); (3) Municipal governments of local conservation areas (ACUS); (4) MATTE - Directorate of Protected Areas and Other Forms of Conservation (DAPOFC); and (5) Nature-Based Tourism initiatives. Women participation in decision making, capacity building and economic benefits will be targeted in outputs 1.1.2 and 1.1.4.

Outcome 1.1: Selected protected areas from the SNAP and areas under local conservation schemes (not part of the SNAP) have overcome key management deficiencies.

Indicator: *Management Effectiveness Evaluation (EEM) and Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool*

(METT) score in criteria related to financial sustainability and monitoring & surveillance, for selected protected areas and local conservation areas.

Target: By the end of the project, at least 10% increase in EEM or METT scores from Y1 baseline in criteria related to financial sustainability and monitoring & surveillance, of selected protected areas and local conservation areas. (Total area of 577,289 hectares).

This outcome aims to improve management effectiveness by tackling funding deficiencies in the two selected private reserves of the SNAP subsystem (i.e., Río Zuñag, Candelaria) while strengthening monitoring and surveillance programs that support data-driven management actions in two national parks, Sangay National Park (PNS) and Rio Negro-Sopladora National Park (PNRS). Likewise, the project will focus on addressing key management deficiencies in selected private reserves and local conservation areas (Conservation and sustainable use areas, ACUS) within the two connectivity corridors: Llanganates-Sangay Connectivity Corridor (CELS) and Sangay-Podocarpus Connectivity Corridor (CCSP). These reserves constitute core areas essential in maintaining the connectivity between the national parks and the Andes-Amazon interface in the Eastern Ecuadorian ridge. This approach will be complemented with the promotion of effective governance that enables biodiversity conservation and sustainable use by integrating landscape management practices land use cross-sectorial planning, and development programs of local governments (Component 2) **leading to an overall increase in management effectiveness of the selected PAs and conservation areas were the project will focus its interventions.** The outcome has the following outputs:

Output 1.1.1 Financial mechanisms for PAs and local conservation areas management, in place in place.

Indicator: Number of financial mechanisms strengthened for effective management of PAs and local conservation areas.

Target: Two financial mechanisms.

Financing water catchment area conservation and restoration in Ecuador presents a significant challenge (Wiegant et al., 2022). In response, several Ecuadorian communities have pioneered decentralized financing mechanisms called water funds, rather than resorting to private markets or centralized state management (Kauffman, 2014). These funds, supported by users and external sources, invest in conserving and restoring ecosystems and promoting sustainable land management in upstream areas (Bremer et al., 2016). They also facilitate collaboration among stakeholders at different levels to improve water regulation functions and establish ecological connectivity at the landscape scale.

The project will strengthen and mobilize initiatives currently underway to secure financial flows towards local conservation schemes and overcome management deficiencies. **Specifically, the project will strengthen the Technical Secretariat of FORAGUA in the CCSP currently administrating private and public funds for the management of local conservation areas. Municipalities that are constituent part of FORAGUA established ordinances creating municipal ecological reserves (i.e., ACUS) and imposed fees on water use to finance local conservation and restoration projects. These fees are collected monthly by municipal governments and**

transferred to the FORAGUA trust fund managed independently by the National Financial Corporation. Ninety percent of the collected funds (estimated at U\$ 900K/year by 2023) are allocated to finance local watershed management activities, guided by annual investment plans prepared with FORAGUA's technical support. Once approved, the trust disburses funds to finance the outlined activities.

Although FORAGUA is an important financial mechanism in place for the CCSP, Francisco Gordillo, its Technical Secretary identifies two important barriers to guarantee an effective management of local conservation areas in the CCSP: (1) the available funding is not enough to finance all the annual investment plans, and (2) it is not covering all Municipalities and ACUS from the CCSP (Based on interview for the development of this project proposal). As the executing agency, WWF will sign a grant agreement with FORAGUA to channel GEF resources and deliver technical assistance to FORAGUA to strengthen overall the financial mechanism through the inclusion of new municipalities that contains critical areas within the CCSP and to complement the implementation of ACUs annual investment plans. It is important to mention that GEF resources will be managed by FORAGUA through a separate account, to ensure it is not capitalized as part of the Trust Fund and they are spent during the project lifetime for the purposes stated in this document and associated annual workplans developed by WWF as lead EA during implementation phase. Complementary, WWF will cover the time of NCI to provide additional technical support to guarantee a successful implementation as co-financing for this project. The GEF funding will be available to FORAGUA through a subgrantee signed between WWF as lead EA and FORAGUA as delivery partner.

Likewise, the project will focus on preparing the reserves in CELS to access to the new financial mechanism Ecuador Carbon Zero Program (PECC) promoted by MAATE.

This output includes the following activities:

- a. Conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine the financial requirements for effectively managing the selected PAs.
- b. Develop financial plans and budgets that align with the conservation goals and management priorities of the three selected PAs.
- c. Establish a cooperation agreement with FORAGUA to strengthen the financial scheme by supporting the inclusion of new municipalities that contains critical areas within the CCSP and by providing technical assistant for the implementation of ACUs annual investment plans.
- d. Perform an assessment to identify complementary financial mechanisms to cover financial gaps related to **local conservation areas management in both corridors.**
- e. Develop the pre-feasibility study to access the compensation mechanism prioritized (i.e., PECC) to selected local protected areas.
- f. Support selected local conservation that met the criteria established in the pre-feasibility study, to successfully access the PECC compensation mechanism.
- g. In coordination with Component 2, strengthen technical capacities of selected private reserves and local governments to develop technical and legal documentation to access PECC according to the national carbon compensation projects regulation.

Output 1.1.2 Nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives strengthened to increase financial flows for PAs and local conservation areas' effective management.

Indicator: Number of local conservation areas with increased financial flows from NBT initiatives.

Target: Five local conservation areas with increased financial flows from NBT initiatives.

Since 2022, WWF has worked with 37 sustainable tourism businesses, including nature-based tourism operating in the CELS. Through this initiative the project has strengthened their operations via producing advertising material, business plan, market outreach events, the development of marketable tourism routes and circuits. Nevertheless, these reserves lack a robust tourism business model and proper infrastructure that guarantees a continuous cash flow to support their effective management. Seven of these businesses have a tourism model oriented to the CAVE segment (Scientific, Academic, Volunteering, and Education). The project will focus on strengthening five out of the seven CAVE initiatives (71%) to breach the financial gaps identified. Those prioritized (Río Zuñag, Candelaria, Río Anzu, Sumak Kawsay in situ, Finca palmonte) are related to private reserves that harbor forest patches that constitute core areas within the CELS, together protecting nearly 7,000 ha of montane forests. The project will capitalize on the experience generated by the WWF (Hempel Project) in the CELS that has supported these reserves in the last three years.

This output includes the following suggested activities:

- Development of a business model of each of selected tourism initiatives in five private reserves.
- Adoption of ecological and social standards to minimize negative impacts on the forests based on assessments such as carrying capacity assessments.
- Improve already existing infrastructure such as trails, viewing platforms, visitor centers, and accommodations using sustainable materials and design principles to minimize disruption to natural habitats.
- Establish agreements with academia and research centers to guarantee a continuous flow of visitors.
- In coordination with Component 2, strengthen administration and finance capacities of selected private reserves personnel. **Capacity building will ensure equitable participation of women and youth.**
- Equal opportunity for participation in decision-making regarding the management of local conservation areas (particularly in those owned by local families).**

Output 1.1.3. PNS and PNRNS adopt the SMART tool to address key management deficiencies related to monitoring & surveillance.

Indicator: Number of reports provided by the SMART platform for each national park that integrates the SMART mobile module related to surveillance & control and environmental crimes

Target: One complete annual report per national park.

The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) is a comprehensive monitoring system, designed for protected areas management (Cronin *et al.*, 2021). SMART plays an important role in protected areas management by enhancing conservation effectiveness through: (1) *Improved data collection*: managers can collect accurate, timely data on key conservation parameters. This facilitates evidence-based decision-making

and leads to more effective resource allocation and targeted conservation strategies; (2) *Enhanced enforcement*: By tracking surveillance efforts and detecting illegal activities, SMART helps strengthen law enforcement in protected areas, reducing threats such as poaching and illegal logging; (3) *Adaptive management*: The monitoring data generated by SMART allows managers to identify emerging threats and trends, enabling them to adapt management strategies in real time to address conservation challenges; (4) *Accountability and transparency*: SMART promotes transparency and accountability in protected areas management by providing a platform for documenting and reporting conservation activities and outcomes to stakeholders and the public. Lastly, SMART is the official tool of MAATE (Ministerial Agreement N.º MAAE-2020-09) to provide continuous and updated information for biodiversity management within the SNAP.

In close collaboration with MAATE, the project will guarantee the full implementation of the SMART tool in PNS and the adoption of the tool in PNRNS as described in the baseline (see above). Based on previous efforts of WWF, in collaboration with WCS and MAATE, in the PNS were initial training in the SMART tool and equipment of the lower section of the administrative unit of the PNS, the project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Assessment of SMART implementation in the PNS to identify limitations and actions from improvements.
- b. Train in the SMART tool, including system administration and analyses, in coordination with Component 2.
- c. Provide the required infrastructure and equipment to the PNRNS personnel to effectively adopt the SMART tool.
- d. Based on SMART findings support adaptative management strategies with parks' personnel and the National Direction of Protected Areas of MAATE.

Output 1.1.4. Key management deficiencies addressed in local conservation areas.

Indicator: *Number of management deficiencies identified and addressed.*

Target: *At least two management deficiencies addressed per selected protected area.*

In the project intervention area, there are many local conservation initiatives under different management schemes (e.g., private reserves, conservation and sustainable use areas – ACUS) with limited management capacities (METT Score) or lack management effectiveness assessments. These areas are critical for preserving the connectivity between the Andes-Amazon interface in the Eastern Ecuadorian ridge. In this context, the project will support overcoming critical management deficiencies identified by management effectiveness evaluations in selected local conservation areas. The specific conservation areas where the project will target its resources will be selected in coordination with key project partners (Ecominga and NCI) based on landscape ecological criteria (e.g., area size, distance to PAs). Specifically, the project will help address two management deficiencies in four prioritized local conservation areas inside and outside the SNAP, two per corridor, and will build upon WWF and NCI experiences in MEE evaluations and strengthening PAs management effectiveness. The specific management deficiencies that will be addressed will be defined in the project implementation phase together with local stakeholders and based on the updated GEF METT assessment that will be completed at the beginning of the implementation phase in Y1.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Strengthen local stakeholders' (i.e., landowners, park rangers, local governments, community members) capacities related to area-based conservation, management effectiveness criteria, and the use and interpretation of the METT tool.
- b. Perform management effectiveness evaluations to identify management deficiencies at the beginning and end of project, based on the METT tool.
- c. In close collaboration with local stakeholders, define priority actions based on pertinence, impact, and financial feasibility.
- d. Support local stakeholders to implement the prioritized management actions in four selected local conservation areas.
- e. Develop protocols for the prevention, care and response to gender based conflicts.

Component 2: Inclusive governance in two connectivity corridors

This component focuses on enhancing effective governance across the landscape by promoting dialogue among key stakeholders to integrate landscape management mechanisms within connectivity corridors. The primary aim is to strengthen landscape management mechanisms, fostering shared objectives in territorial development, considering land use change and deforestation scenarios. The specific outputs include the formation and implementation of annual work plans by local working groups with active participation from disadvantaged populations, such as women and youth; active participation of key stakeholders in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms established for each connectivity corridor; and the implementation of participatory management plans for both corridors that integrates land use change scenarios to increase adaptive capacity. This Component will engage the following key stakeholders: (1) Municipal governments of local conservation areas (ACUS); (2) Nature and Culture International (NCI); (3) Local working groups; (4) MATTE - Directorate of Protected Areas and Other Forms of Conservation (DAPOFC). Women and youth participation in decision making will be promoted in all governance structures promoted by the project. The formulation of both management plants will incorporate the specific needs and priorities of women, men and youth.

Outcome 2.1: Landscape management mechanisms strengthened, to foster shared objectives in territorial development

Indicator: Number of hectares managed through shared objectives and mechanisms that reduce threats to mountain forests and ecosystem services.

Target: 461.088 ha

Both connectivity corridors must achieve integrated landscape management to ensure conservation and sustainable practices. This vision involves developing a unified conservation agenda based on a shared understanding of challenges, priorities, and collaborative processes, engaging various stakeholders and rights holders (WWF, 2024). It includes co-designing strategies and approaches, setting clear goals, and enhancing long-term engagement and collaboration models rooted in mutual trust. These principles are fundamental for good governance, complemented by the need to harness collective experience and ensure equitable distribution of costs and benefits and transparency in decision-making processes (Amend *et al.*, 2021).

Both corridors have embarked on this journey through thematic working groups, which bring together stakeholders with common interests but are currently in early collaboration stages. This outcome aims to strengthen these groups in both corridors and establish two multi-actor, multi-level coordination platforms—one for each corridor—with inclusive participation and equitable stakeholder representation. Through these platforms, a management plan will be developed for each corridor, fostering joint technical, social, and political agreements to achieve socially relevant, economically productive, and environmentally sustainable outcomes, with measurable indicators to guide and assess implementation achievements and lasting impacts.

Capacity-building efforts will focus on enhancing the abilities of key stakeholders to implement the management plans and uphold effective and equitable governance mechanisms in both corridors.

Output 2.1.1.: Local working groups in both corridors, with annual work plans formulated and under implementation with the effective participation of disadvantaged population (i.e., women and youth).

Indicator: Number of workplans of local working groups, that are under implementation, and that incorporate tailored actions proposed by women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups.

Target: At least 10 annual workplans under implementation

Through this output, the project aims to enhance the effectiveness of local working groups to foster collaboration among stakeholders engaged in similar activities and interests. In the CELS corridor, two local working groups—the tourism and research groups—are currently in their early stages of development, while efforts are underway to establish a sustainable production association. In the CCSP corridor, six technical working groups are operational, focusing on biodiversity research and monitoring, territorial planning, and conservation area management. However, the working groups in both corridors currently have limited planning and coordination tools to address landscape-level management issues.

The project will ensure that at least ten local working groups across both corridors integrate key stakeholders and function to implement joint projects centered on priorities established in the corridor's management plan related to conservation and sustainable practices. To achieve this, the project will enhance coordination and planning capacities, facilitating the development of shared visions and collaborative projects, as well as their engagement in political advocacy efforts. The project will also deliver seed funding and support groups on leveraging additional funding for the implementation of workplans.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Support corridor management and establish new working groups around local stakeholders' common themes and interests.
- b. Promote the integration of key stakeholders in the working groups, ensuring the effective participation of women, youth and small landowners, by creating safe and accessible spaces for their involvement.
- c. Facilitate the establishment of management structures for the working groups (based on gender equity), including defining clear roles and responsibilities and coordination and communication procedures.

- d. In coordination with Output 2.4, provide group members, **including women and youth**, with relevant technical and governance skills training.
- e. Develop participatory annual work plans for each group, along with follow-up tools and mechanisms.
- f. Establish strategic partnerships for these groups with government entities, cooperation agencies, financial mechanisms, and the private sector to develop projects and initiatives in the corridors.
- g. In coordination with components 4 and 5, implement monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management mechanisms to measure, systematize, and communicate the results achieved by the working groups.
- h. Implement communication activities to disseminate the work of the groups in each connectivity corridor in coordination with Component 4, output 4.1.1.
- i. Participate in ASL regional activities engaging with the Integrated Program as needed.

Output 2.1.2: Key stakeholders actively participate in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms established for each connectivity corridor.

Indicator: Number of stakeholders participating in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms. Target: At least 100 stakeholders participating (30% of which are woman and youth).

This output aims to establish multi-stakeholder platforms for each corridor, fostering active and cohesive participation from diverse actors. Local governments, serving as the core promoting group for each corridor, will lead these efforts. These platforms are designed to assist local authorities and civil society in developing a management plan and creating governance and coordination spaces for its implementation across both corridors.

Building on the foundation laid by the local working groups (output 2.1.1) in each corridor, these local governance platforms will bring together diverse stakeholders with influence over corridor management. This development process, led by local stakeholders, will be tailored to the distinctive dynamics of each area. Consequently, the structure and operational mechanisms of the platforms will be defined by agreements reached among stakeholders during this process. To support the proper function of the platforms, awareness campaigns will ensure key issues are prioritized on stakeholders' agendas and highlight the importance of the corridors and the benefits of coordinated sustainability efforts.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Develop capacities and tools for local governments to facilitate and maintain the platform agreed operations. **The project will guarantee that women working for local governments have equal opportunities to participate.**
- b. Convene working groups and other actors to establish a permanent mechanism for coordination and exchange, to share progress, operational dynamics, and lessons learned.
- c. Facilitate meetings to reach agreements among stakeholders on the platform's structure, roles and operations.
- d. Promote dialogue on the implementation of approaches such as inclusive conservation, rights and gender equality.

- e. Develop capacities and tools for local governments to facilitate and maintain the platform agreed operations.
- f. Support local governments and stakeholders on the implementation of the platform.
- g. In coordination with Output 4.1.1, implement awareness and information activities targeting key stakeholders around the corridor attributes and challenges and the importance of joint management actions.

Output 2.1.3: Participatory management plans for the two corridors are under implementation.

Indicator: Number of participatory management plans under implementation.

Target: Two, one per connectivity corridor.

This output focuses on developing the management plans for each corridor. Local governments will lead the development of the planning instrument in coordination with other authorities and civil society. This will be achieved through the participation and coordination mechanism of the multi-stakeholder governance platform, ensuring alignment with other existing national and local official planning and management instruments, including deforestation and climate change scenarios. It is expected that workplans of working groups under output 2.1.1 are aligned with the corridors management plan.

The project will incorporate a participatory process for constructing the management plan within the multi-actor platform framework. This process will encompass the interests and opportunities of local stakeholders, facilitating consensus-building to promote conservation and sustainable management. The meaningful participation of local stakeholders in developing the corridor management plan ensures its legitimacy by incorporating diverse voices and visions from the territory. This participation fosters greater ownership and commitment among rights holders to uphold the agreements and implement the activities.

A crucial aspect of the project's approach to implementing the corridor management plans is ensuring alignment with local governments' annual investment plans. The project will work closely with local governments to ensure their annual plans channel available resources toward the defined priorities.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. With local governments and other key stakeholders, analyze MAATE guidelines for developing management plans, including the incorporation of land use and climate change scenarios, and identify opportunities and challenges for applying them in each corridor.
- b. Systematize and analyze the progress and opportunities in each corridor around conservation and sustainable land management, especially those linked to development and land use plans and other management instruments and policies.
- c. Design a methodology for the participatory development of management plans in each corridor led by the multistakeholder platform, considering inclusive approaches that incorporate specific needs and priorities of women and youth.
- d. Facilitate the implementation of the designed methodology to develop each corridor's management plan.
- e. Develop a communication strategy to disseminate the management plan, highlighting the participatory process.

- f. Develop tools and materials for working groups and other stakeholders to internalize and operationalize the management plan.
- g. Assist local governments in adequately including activities in their annual investment plans that contribute to achieving the outcomes established in the management plans.

Output 2.1.4.: Local promoters, key local government personnel and other relevant local stakeholders trained to implement management plan actions (improved governance, conservation areas management and SLM practices).

Indicator: *Number of people trained.*

Target: At least 250 (30% are women and youth).

Successfully implementing corridor management plans relies on stakeholders acquiring knowledge and technical skills to apply best practices for conservation and sustainable land management. Equally important are planning, leadership, communication, and fostering participation skills to ensure effective governance.

The project aims to enhance the technical capacities of local producers, private reserve owners, park rangers, key government personnel (at both local and national levels), and other relevant stakeholders in the project intervention area through formal and informal educational programs. **The project will guarantee the participation of women and youth.**

In alignment with WWF-Ecuador's education strategy and andragogical principles, the project will develop a program in collaboration with a higher education institution to establish a continuous **inclusive** educational offering. This initiative will enable stakeholders in the connectivity corridor to continually train and update their knowledge even after the project's conclusion.

The objective is to train at least 250 stakeholders (30% women and youth) through a university-sponsored continued education program focused on acquiring knowledge and tools for implementing conservation and SLM practices, as well as other specific technical skills according to the project's components. Specific topics will be defined during the development of the training modules. This training will incorporate both theoretical learning and practical field methods.

The project will provide training modules to develop skills in good governance, conducted in collaboration with local working groups and the multi-stakeholder platform, addressing topics such as inclusive conservation, human rights, and gender. Each trained individual is expected to catalyze change within their communities, creating a multiplier effect.

Through this, the output will focus on transforming community participation from a passive to an active and collective engagement in problem-solving—an essential aspect for advocating common interests and advancing sustainable development. The project seeks to strengthen community involvement, **emphasizing the effective participation of women and youth**, in public decision-making by recognizing

the importance of collective capacities, encompassing legal knowledge and social, educational, and political strategies. This approach aims to achieve greater community autonomy and, thereby, enhance the social influence of governance platforms implemented in the management of the hydroelectric and mining sectors (see below), with special attention to improving their social and environmental responsibility plans.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Establish a partnership agreement with a relevant university to develop a continuing education program.
- b. Develop an education curriculum on conservation and SLM practices, integrating theoretical learning with practical field training.
- c. Create supplementary modules aimed at fostering skills in good governance among participants, addressing topics such as inclusive conservation, human rights, and gender.
- d. Design inclusive strategies to actively engage small-scale farmers, women and youth in training activities and working groups, ensuring the creation of safe and supportive environments.
- e. Develop comprehensive content and educational materials required for the program.
- f. Execute the education program with the active participation of key stakeholders involved in the project.
- g. Provide personalized mentoring and support to stakeholders through counseling sessions and follow-ups, fostering the effective application of acquired knowledge within their communities.
- h. In coordination with Component 5, conduct regular evaluations to assess participants' progress and gather feedback on the effectiveness of activities, enabling necessary adjustments and improvements.

Component 3: Incentives for SLM practices in two connectivity corridors

SLM practices, such as agroforestry, silvopastoral systems, and land restoration, enhance landscape permeability by reducing habitat fragmentation and fostering a diverse land-use mosaic. These systems allow species to move between patches of natural habitat, which maintains ecological connectivity and improves ecosystem functionality in agricultural landscapes. For example, agroforestry systems combine crops with native tree species, creating microhabitats that support biodiversity while providing economic benefits to local farmers (Nair, 2014; Perfecto et al., 2009). Silvopastoral systems, which integrate trees with livestock grazing, have also been shown to improve soil health and carbon sequestration, further enhancing landscape connectivity (Murgueitio et al., 2011).

SLM practices have been successfully implemented to restore degraded lands and increase landscape permeability. For instance, agroforestry projects in the Brazilian and Peruvian Amazon have helped rehabilitate degraded areas, improve biodiversity, and support local livelihoods by producing high-value crops such as cacao and coffee under shade trees (van Noordwijk et al., 2015; De Sousa et al., 2016). Similarly, land restoration programs in the Ecuadorian Amazon, focusing on native species reforestation and sustainable livestock management, have improved ecological connectivity while reducing pressure on mature forests (Wunder et al., 2014). These practices not only enhance the ecological connectivity of fragmented landscapes

but also provide critical ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water regulation, and soil conservation. In doing so, they contribute to both environmental resilience and rural livelihoods, creating a sustainable framework for long-term conservation in critical areas of the Neotropics (Chazdon et al., 2020).

This component will engage the following key stakeholders: (1) Local producers; (2) Local producer associations; (3) Municipal governments of local conservation areas (ACUS); (4) FORAGUA; (5) Pastaza provincial government; (6) Ministry of Agriculture (MAG); (7) National financial mechanism, (8) Fair Trade Organizations. A gender analysis will be conducted to assess how current productive systems involve women and youth differently, allowing the project to adapt SLM and restoration practices to ensure equitable benefits while minimizing potential risks. Likewise, land use change scenarios for 2030 will be incorporated to ensure target areas are those that will help reduce the expected deforestation rates in both corridors.

This component aims to promote SLM practices to enhance landscape permeability to maintain connectivity. The outcomes include increasing connectivity through climate smart SLM practices by adopting agroforestry and silvopastoral systems and land restoration related practices at the farm-scale while encouraging actors in selected value chains to adopt SLM frameworks for better ecosystem services and socioeconomic benefits. Expected results include financial mechanisms supporting SLM; conservation agreements to promote SLM at the household scale; improved market access for sustainably produced products; and enhanced access to financial services for small rural producers to support SLM practices and commercialization of sustainable products.

Outcome 3.1 Key areas that promote connectivity under sustainable land management (SLM) practices and ecological restoration.

Indicator: Number of ha under SLM practices (e.g. agroforestry, silvopasture and restoration)

Target: 600 ha under SLM practices and 400 ha of degraded lands and secondary forests under restoration.

In the project intervention area, 65,704 hectares of native forest have been converted into pastures and agricultural lands in the last 22 years, resulting in an annual forest loss of 3,129 hectares. This has decreased structural connectivity between the Andes and the Amazon biomes. Sixty percent (i.e., 39,422 ha) of the lost forests were distributed between 500 and 1,500 m asl. Moreover, nearly 40,000 ha more are expected to be lost by 2030 (See Annex E). Reverting this trend requires the promotion of SLM practices at the household scale. The concept of SLM is a unifying theme for global efforts on combating biodiversity loss, desertification, drought, and land degradation (Thomas et al., 2018). SLM combines technologies, policies, and activities aimed at integrating socioeconomic principles with environmental concerns to maintain or enhance production, increase the resilience of ecosystem services, and be economically viable and socially acceptable (Gabathuler et al., 2009).

This outcome aims to reduce pasture expansion and increase yield by targeting priority areas expected to be deforested by 2030. Through the adoption of SLM practices, the project expects to deliver economic and environmental benefits derived from optimized rangeland production, restore unproductive degraded areas, and conserve small forest fragments within farms. Maintaining ecosystem function to secure service provision is a prerequisite for SLM (Gabathuler et al., 2009).

The outcome aims to implement SLM interventions that promote the conservation of critical areas that increase landscape connectivity within both connectivity corridors **and reduce expected deforestation trends**. To increase investments in SLM practices at the intervention site, the project will target and match the funding currently provided by FORAGUA, local government initiatives and national economic incentives (i.e., REM up to U\$ 1000/ha for forest restoration). Likewise, the project will prioritize secure land tenure regimes and overcome land tenure barriers to participation in incentive programs. The outcome will foster robust and equitable associations among local producers to create a competitive environment conducive to adopting better practices and accessing value-added markets. Lastly, the outcome seeks to facilitate local producers' access to financial services (e.g., rural informal savings) to support the adoption of SLM practices.

Output 3.1.1 Local and national financial mechanisms channeling resources for SLM practices in priority areas that enhance connectivity.

Indicator: Amount of in-cash contributions derived from financial mechanisms leveraged by the Project for SLM practices.

Target: At least U\$ 1.000.000 mobilized

Complementing Output 1.1.1, the project will strengthen the existing financial mechanism FORAGUA in the CCSP to direct resources towards adoption of SLM practices. As part of the grant agreement with FORAGUA explained in Output 1.1.1, the project will channel additional GEF resources and provide technical assistance (through the Sustainable production specialist in charge of implementing Component 3) to increase financial and technical capacities of the fund to implement conservation agreements with local landowners. Besides the deficiencies described in Output 1.1.1, FORAGUA encounters challenges in mitigating environmental externalities arising from unsustainable agricultural practices. Currently, FORAGUA's sustainable production efforts primarily focus on certifying deforestation-free practices, while traditional methods such as monocultures and pesticide usage persist. Consequently, through this output the project will assist FORAGUA in integrating environmental best practices and safeguards into conservation agreements, thereby promoting more holistic environmental stewardship.

As mentioned before, GEF resources will be managed by FORAGUA through a separate account, to ensure it is not capitalized as part of the Trust Fund and is spent during the project lifetime for the purposes stated in this document. Complementary, WWF will cover the time of NCI to provide additional technical support to guarantee a successful implementation of the conservation agreements.

In the CELS, there is currently a notable absence of a financial mechanism that effectively connects local governments with sustainable production, conservation, and restoration efforts. To address this gap, WWF, in collaboration with CESA, has organized initiatives to promote SLM practices. One of the initiatives involves establishing bio-factories that harness resources from 34 hectares of local producers. These practices have yielded promising results, including a 30% reduction in monthly expenditure on external consumables like synthetic fertilizers and related supplies. Building on this pilot's successful experience, WWF aims to scale up these practices to the broader landscape of the CELS corridor. This expansion will be facilitated through

cooperative agreements with local governments, leveraging the lessons learned and experiences gained from the initial implementation of SLM practices. In the same line, the project will seek to mobilize funds for scaling up SLM practices in the CELS through the presentation of a project proposal in coordination with local governments for REM competitive funds administered by the Sustainable Environmental Investment Fund (FIAS).

Aligning with recommendations from the ASL IP, this output will also promote mechanisms for responsible and inclusive conservation, safeguarding the rights of local land users and communities. Upon agreement with landowners, the project could support property regularization efforts in selected cases where the project can easily expedite land access procedures, such as updating property records in municipal cadastres, prioritizing women tenure, when feasible. It is important to clarify that land conflicts will not be addressed by the project; rather, tenure will be regularized only in cases with no disputes and if needed depending on the assessment of the project team. Additionally, information collected during the design of conservation agreements (Output 3.1.2) can be used as input for local government-led land tenure regularization programs that will be executed by the government. Furthermore, in alignment with Component 2, the project will develop training programs to enhance producers' understanding of property rights and land tenure. It will also work with local governments to disseminate information about property regularization procedures, focusing on promoting women's and other marginalized groups' participation.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. In coordination with Component 1, establish a cooperation agreement with FORAGUA to strengthen its financial scheme by including new municipalities that contain critical areas within the CCSP and by assisting the implementation of conservation agreements.
- b. Provide technical and financial support to FORAGUA to promote sustainable land management practices in pastures/rangelands, SAFs and agricultural production, in the CCSP: Specifically, the project will foster practices that optimize water, nutrient/carbon, and biomass to secure ecosystem services, including food security and water provision.
- c. Support the analysis, identification and implementation of measures to address land tenure problems within selected locations that promote landscape connectivity, have a higher risk of deforestation, and where SLM practices will be implemented (Output 3.1.2)
- d. When feasible, assist landowners and provide them with legal and administrative support for land tenure regularization, including obtaining and organizing the necessary documentation to formalize their land tenure rights, including land titles, deeds, and other legal documents. This may involve conducting surveys, property mapping, and georeferencing to accurately demarcate land boundaries.
- e. In partnership with selected GADs, scale up SLM practices promoted by CESA and WWF in the CELS through the development of a model of SLM for cattle grazing production, SAFs and restoration at the farm scale.

Output 3.1.2 Conservation agreements with individual or with second-degree associations to promote sustainable land management (SLM).

Indicator: Number of local producers and/or households involved in conservation agreements. Target: At least 100 local producers (20% women) are involved in conservation agreements.

The output will promote conservation agreements as means to address forest conservation and secure ecosystem services provision considering expected extreme climate events, particularly draughts. Conservation practices will focus on forest remnants to maintain ecosystem functionality, including establishing water source conservation areas through preservation of riparian forests that secure water supply, particularly during draught conditions, and enhance connectivity. Nested within the conservation agreement, the project will implement integrated farm management plans to incorporate the SLM framework and practices into the farm productive system. SLM practices encompass agricultural production, forest and non-forest ecosystem restoration, and conservation, scalable from the farm to landscape levels.

Integrated farm management plans facilitate stabilizing natural forest areas with sustainable tree cover, promoting diverse agroforestry systems that align with household and farm priorities while supporting landscape objectives (Buck *et al.*, 2020). Through the integrated farm management plans, appropriate SLM practices will be identified and adapted to the specific biophysical and socio-economic conditions of selected land. The practices include the hierarchical approach of preventing, reducing, and reversing the impacts of land degradation. Among them are those geared to diversification, integrated pest management, soil conservation, water management and harvesting systems. Restoration-oriented practices in agricultural systems are primarily based on agroforestry and similar techniques, while natural ecosystems' restoration processes include natural regeneration and assisted or active restoration.

Special attention will be given to gender criteria to ensure sustained participation and benefits access from women and youth as well as climate change consideration in the SLM practices design and implementation. The project team will integrate tools from the gender strategy, including labor-saving technologies to reduce women's workload. Gender considerations will also be incorporated into farm plan designs, acknowledging women's active role in rural economies.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Assess how current productive systems involve women and youth differently.
- b. Systematization of successful SLM practices.
- c. Selection of intervention farms based on a prioritization exercise that includes land tenure, spatial connectivity, forest remnants, gender, among other criteria.
- d. Engage landowners/users where the project will implement farm management plans, linked to output 3.1.1.
- e. Development of a farm-landscape level spatial planning tool to generate integrated farm management plans that include natural forest, riparian protection, and productive tree cover, considering climate change scenarios.
- f. In coordination with component 4, design of a training program of SLM practices in close collaboration with FORAGUA and local governments in both corridors.
- g. Establish conservation agreements with producers who have participated in the training program.
- h. Provide technical assistance for the implementation of SLM practices.

- i. Establishment of a monitoring program to assess impacts of SLM on ecosystem services provision.

Outcome 3.2: Actors in selected value chains adopt SLM framework to enhance ecosystem services provision and deliver socioeconomic benefits.

Indicator: Number of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex) have access to incentives and mechanisms that strengthen SLM in value chains.

Target: 250 beneficiaries.

Small rural producers with family farming economies are characterized by low collateral, low profitability of their lands, and high vulnerability to market shocks (Anderson, 2003). These conditions limit their access to financial services and risk management tools like insurance. Further, access to differentiated markets and improved livelihoods are critical to encourage long-term adoption of SLM practices (Hellin *et al.*, 2009).

Access to credit lines is a critical barrier, along with labor limitations and land tenure insecurity, for adopting good practices for SLM by small producers (Thomas *et al.*, 2018). Despite a growing interest among financial institutions in including sustainability criteria in their operations, formal financial services have a limited geographical reach in rural areas and their products are primarily based on conventional approaches.

This outcome targets sustainable value chains by strengthening farmer associations to have better conditions for accessing inputs such as credit and supplies (e.g., seed and fertilizers), fostering collaborative work along the value chain, and strengthening business management skills. Likewise, this outcome will facilitate access to financial services, enabling the adoption of SLM practices and supporting the commercialization of agricultural products to small rural producers. It seeks to bridge the gap between available credit lines for SLM practices and access to financial capital for small rural producers, including women and youth.

Building on the achievements of the BIOFIN initiative in Ecuador, this outcome will strengthen financial mechanisms and value chain development to support small rural producers in both connectivity corridors. BIOFIN's focus on identifying biodiversity finance gaps and developing economic incentive mechanisms provides a strong foundation for improving access to credit lines and financial services that are tailored to support SLM adoption. By increasing market access for value-added products and strengthening local producer associations, the initiative will help rural small holders and their families access incentives to adopt SLM practices. Lastly, this outcome aims to support existing sustainable value chains in both connectivity corridors, allowing smallholders to add more product value and establish long-term business relations with local and national markets. Mechanism for equitable benefits distribution derived from strengthened value chains will be implemented.

In sum, this outcome seeks to bridge the gap between available credit lines for SLM practices and the financial needs of small rural producers. Through increased access to financial capital, improved business management, and market opportunities, rural producers will be empowered to adopt sustainable practices that enhance ecosystem services while ensuring socioeconomic benefits.

Output 3.2.1. Access to markets that favor added-value sustainable produced products, enhanced.

Indicator: Number of products that are commercialized with an added value.

Target: At least 4.

The opportunity for smallholders to raise their incomes increasingly and adopt SLM practices depends on their ability to compete in the market (Markelova & Mwangi, 2010). Despite growing market opportunities, lack of information on prices and technologies, lack of connections to established market actors, distortions or absence of input and output markets, and credit constraints often make it difficult for small farmers to take advantage of market opportunities (Markelova *et al.*, 2009). To increase market access with added value products, the project prioritized two intervention strategies: (1) strengthen local producer associations to enable local smallholders to access incentives (e.g., tax exceptions, land tenure regularization, technical assistantship) to adopt SLM practices, and (2) strengthening existing sustainable value chains in both connectivity corridors, so that smallholders may add more value to their products and establish long-term business relations with local and national markets. Local capacities for value chain management will be strengthened, mainstreaming gender, market, and fair-trade approaches.

During the implementation phase, the project will identify value chains directly linked to land use and management decisions at the intervention sites. For each value chain, a prioritization exercise will determine those with the greatest potential to promote SLM and alleviate pressure on forest remnants in the project intervention areas. The criteria for prioritization include: (1) link to products and SLM practices promoted in outcome 3.1, output 3.1.3, (2) the number of potential beneficiaries, (3) women's participation, (4) opportunities to incorporate SLM practices, (5) relevance to the local economy, (6) potential for value addition, (7) opportunities for co-financing, and (8) market potential.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. During project implementation phase, assess existing value chains based on the SLM framework, and identify deficiencies and opportunities to enhance their performance. Likewise, this activity will identify gender specific barriers in access to markets that will be further addressed through project activities.
- b. Establish dialogue, coordination, and collaboration spaces among all stakeholders along the prioritized value chains, including farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, consumers, and policymakers, to create synergies and foster partnerships.
- c. Support productive organizations with **inclusive and** sustainable production guidelines to minimize environmental **and social** impacts along the chain, such as efficient energy and water consumption, waste reduction, minimal use of packaging or use of sustainable packaging, **women participation, fair and equitable labor payment**, transport optimization, among others.
- d. Establish **gender-sensitive** community business centers as an associative business model that facilitates producers' access to capacity building, knowledge exchange, access to inputs and resources, market linkages, financial services, technology transfer and community engagement.
- e. Linked to Component 2, increase local capacities, **including women and youth**, to enhance product quality, and strengthen business management skills among value chain actors.

- f. Establish alliances to improve market access such as fair-trade organizations and anchor companies (e.g., FEPP Camari, Fundación Maquita).
- g. Implement mechanism for equitable benefits distribution derived from strengthened value chains.

Output 3.2.2 Small rural producers' access to financial services enhanced to support SLM practices and/or commercialization of sustainable products.

Indicator: Number of local producers (disaggregated by gender) with access to rural informal savings mechanisms or credits.

Target: At least 100 local producers (30% women).

Improved farmers access to support services, especially micro-credits, trigger collaborative efforts in land management (e.g., farmer-to-farmer training) and promote investments in the rural area to create an enabling environment for SLM (Nyanga et al., 2016). Rural financial services can effectively support the adoption and scaling up of SLM practices.

To support the implementation of this type of incentive the project will generate guidelines, tools and other inputs that promote linkages between the proposed incentives and implemented SLM practices (Output 3.1.3). For example, clear criteria will be established for the characterization of farms and guidelines for their comprehensive management, some of which can become the impact indicators used for the credit granting process. Regarding incentives such as tax benefits for SLM or support for land tenure regularization, the conservation agreements (Output 3.1.3) can be the local instruments that enable their implementation. The GEF/FAO project "Climate-smart Livestock Management Integrating Reversion of Land Degradation and Reduction of Desertification Risks in Vulnerable Provinces" implemented by MAATE and MAG has developed experiences in capacity strengthening and access to credit that will serve as a basis for this output.

The need to establish or strengthen community savings banks will be assessed to promote investments in SLM that require smaller amounts. Alternatively, public, and private banking institutions and from the popular and solidarity financial sector have made incursions into sustainable financing. For example, BanEcuador designed a sustainable product with FAO. Banco Pichincha, with its product Biocredito Productivo (Productive Biocredit), is another alternative to be assessed. During the project inception phase a screening of these services will be conducted to select and develop financial products that can be oriented towards SLM practices mainstreaming a gender approach. Cooperation agreements will be sought with the institutions selected. In all cases, once the project has started, it will be necessary to assess the partner given the existing macro-economic conditions, and the mechanism or product can best meet the needs and characteristics of the producers in the intervention sites. Whatever option is adopted, it will ensure that the products designed remain available after the project lifetime.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Screening of public and private institutions to select and develop financial gender-sensitive products that can be oriented towards SLM practices, including an assessment to understand

the financial needs and constraints of the communities, considering gender-based differences, in the project intervention areas. This includes analyzing current financial services available, identifying gaps, and assessing the demand for banking services tailored to SLM.

- b. Ensuring compliance with banking regulations and requirements specific to SLM-related financial services. This includes obtaining necessary licenses and approvals from regulatory authorities to establish a community savings bank.
- c. Development of a governance framework for the savings bank, including establishing a board of directors guaranteeing active women leadership and management team responsible for overseeing SLM-related financial activities. This also entails defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.
- d. Development of a business plan and financial model, outlining capital requirements, revenue streams, operating expenses, and identifying funding sources and investment opportunities to support SLM initiatives.
- e. Product Development: Designing financial products and services tailored to support inclusive SLM practices, such as loans for sustainable agriculture, and insurance products for risk mitigation. Ensuring accessibility, affordability, and suitability for community members with gender perspective.
- f. Through Component 2, provide training and capacity-building support to bank staff and community members on SLM-related financial services. This includes financial literacy training, technical assistance, and outreach programs to promote understanding and adoption of SLM practices.
- g. Perform ongoing support, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the bank's operations in supporting SLM practices.

Component 4: Communication and Knowledge Management

This component aims to enhance collaboration at local, national, and regional levels through the dissemination of information, tools, and lessons learned on conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity. It focuses on promoting awareness, facilitating information exchange, and implementing feedback mechanisms related to corridor management. To achieve these objectives, the project will focus on three main outputs: Strategic Communication for Conservation and Sustainable Land Management, Strengthening of the Connectivity Corridors National Knowledge Platform and Knowledge Contributions to ASL IP and other regional initiatives

This Component will engage the following key stakeholders: (1) ASL Regional Program; (2) MATTE - Directorate of Protected Areas and Other Forms of Conservation (DAPOFC); (3) National working Group for Connectivity Corridors; and (4) Academia. All knowledge management and communication derived from this component, will integrate lessons learned from mainstreaming an inclusive approach throughout the project, emphasizing on women and youth participation.

Outcome 4.1.: Information, tools and lessons learned on conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity, disseminated.

Indicator: Number of stakeholders that have been provided with information, tools and lessons learned on

conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity.
Target: At least 15,000 local, national and regional stakeholders (at least 30% women).

The project aims to enhance collaboration at local, national, and regional levels, including with the ASL IP, through awareness campaigns, ongoing information exchange, and feedback mechanisms related to corridor management. It will also involve the publication and dissemination of communication materials to share project achievements and lessons learned.

To achieve these objectives, the project will focus on three main outputs: strategic communication, knowledge exchange initiatives, and scaling up lessons learned to the ASL IP program. Additionally, it will support national and regional initiatives to integrate lessons learned and scientific findings into conservation practices, fostering innovation and maximizing impact.

Output 4.1.1 Strategic Communication for Conservation and Sustainable Land Management.

Indicator: Number of local stakeholders reached by strategic communication activities.

Target: 10,000 people (50% women).

The strategic communication plan, tailored to cultural and gender nuances, plays a pivotal role in advancing conservation and sustainable land management objectives. Effective and assertive communication serves as a cornerstone for achieving project outcomes by catalyzing stakeholder engagement and knowledge dissemination in different outcomes and conservation objectives. To foster conservation and sustainable management across both corridors and facilitate the replication of successful approaches nationwide and regionally, it is imperative to elevate public awareness and understanding of the significance of biodiversity, ecological connectivity, and ecosystem services provision. This is essential for garnering the interest, commitment, and support of key stakeholders towards project objectives.

This project will address 4 critical aspects through strategic communication:

- a. Increase recognition and understanding of connectivity corridors: Enhance awareness of the ecological value, threats, and opportunities associated with both connectivity corridors within key stakeholders through events and communication toolkits.
- b. Enhance local stakeholder engagement: Foster greater involvement and commitment from local stakeholders towards project initiatives.
- c. Increase communication capacities: Strengthen communication and marketing capacities within local stakeholders such as NBTs entrepreneurs and small farmers for them to reach new markets and sustainable funding.
- d. Advocate for scale-up: Coordinate communication materials and collaborative spaces to share and promote the adoption and replication of the project's outcomes and tools at a national and regional level.

By targeting influencers such as the media and opinion leaders, we aim to catalyze desired actions among change agents, including government institutions and civil society. Our communication methodologies will be culturally relevant and gender-sensitive, ensuring accessibility and resonance across diverse audiences. Crucially, our communication strategy draws from the insights and contributions of local stakeholders, promoting knowledge internalization, process ownership, and empowerment among community actors. This approach leverages the diverse activities undertaken within the project.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Develop a Project Communication and Branding Plan. This plan will outline key messages, brand guidelines and materials, integrating participatory education and inclusive conservation methodologies. It will be shared with project partners and consultants.
- b. Identify and empower local promoters. We will identify individuals, **men and women**, from both corridors with a keen interest on enhancing their communication and marketing capacities.
- c. Documenting local perspectives. Collaborating with local stakeholders, the project will capture information, experiences, and lessons learned to develop communication products, **including lessons learned from mainstreaming an inclusive approach**.
- d. Supporting project activities. We will integrate communication and marketing strategies to support different project initiatives.
- e. Designing and sharing milestones to key stakeholders. Throughout the project we will create and disseminate communication materials, including infographics, photographs, videos, and social media posts, to showcase project milestones among key stakeholders.

Output 4.1.2 National knowledge platform strengthened to promote connectivity corridors as a key tool to landscape management.

Indicator: Number of digital knowledge platforms implemented and disseminated among key stakeholders.

Target: One

This output aims to develop a comprehensive digital management platform designed to enhance informed decision-making by providing indicators related to the status and effectiveness of connectivity corridors. This innovative tool serves as a centralized hub that integrates and synthesizes data derived from various sources, including management effectiveness assessments conducted within the protected areas (APs), monitoring and surveillance tools (SMART), and analyses of land use dynamics such as deforestation trends. This activity will be designed from the National Working Group for Connectivity Corridors, aimed at foster dialogue, reflection, and collaborative management concerning the ecological connectivity strategies of both government entities and GADs aimed at biodiversity conservation. Emphasis is placed on connectivity corridors, aligning with prevailing environmental regulations to meet international targets, notably those pertaining to 30x30 initiatives and climate change mitigation. This tool will help centralize and make key information available for the existing and potential corridors in the country.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Establishing a comprehensive geodatabase of existing and planned corridors and their ecological significance.

- b. Design of the technological infrastructure required for the knowledge platform to become a resource-based hub.
- c. Establish links with InaBio and Academia digital platforms that can enrich contents and foster collaboration.
- d. Strengthening the National working Group for Connectivity Corridors, by facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration among members, **guaranteeing gender equity**, through workshops, seminars, and training.
- e. Implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of corridor conservation efforts.
- f. Promoting public awareness and engagement through educational campaigns and outreach programs.

Output 4.1.3 Knowledge contributions to ASL IP and other regional and national initiatives, to scale up and replicate actions that enhance Andes Amazon connectivity.

Indicator: Number of knowledge contribution products delivered through the ASL IP and other regional and national initiatives aimed at scaling up or promoting replication.

Target: At least one for each component.

During the project's inception phase, a knowledge management plan will be developed to identify, capture and document key learning and experiences focused on effective management of Protected Areas (PAs), inclusive governance, SLM in the Andes-Amazon region. This plan includes dissemination of materials such as audiovisual content, printed materials, and a dedicated website. Special attention will be given to knowledge and communication products that underscore the significance of connectivity between the Andes-Amazon region. These communication materials will be shared inside the implementing and executing agencies, outside with key partners and stakeholders involved in project execution and with the ASL IP regional coordination.

The gender approach will be a pivotal component of the knowledge outputs produced by the project. This will encompass a diverse range of topics, including experiences in gender mainstreaming across various project activities. Moreover, the knowledge outputs will highlight successful cases of women actively engaged in implementing gender-sensitive SLM practices. Additionally, the project will showcase instances where women have directly benefited from incentives, such as land tenure regularization, and women-led organizations with access to market. Furthermore, the project will document and disseminate tools utilized for gender mainstreaming throughout the project cycle, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of gender considerations in all project interventions. As the project progresses, additional insights and strategies for gender inclusion will be identified and incorporated into the knowledge outputs.

The ASL IP fosters knowledge management and learning exchanges among the participant country projects. In collaboration with the regional coordination of the ASL Program, the project will seek to up-scale key findings and learning experiences. Additionally, given that the IP program facilitates, with a practical and demand driven approach, the transfer of experience and best practices, contributing to capacity building,

dissemination of innovation, the project will promote the development of specific webinars related to the Andes-Amazon connectivity in close collaboration with participant country projects.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Develop a knowledge management plan for the project in close collaboration with MAATE and the ASL IP. This includes elaborating a communication strategy, considering the problems, public, products and plan based on the 4P methodology. This includes the use of logos and other relevant topics for effective communication.
- b. Articulate knowledge management with ASL IP through webinars and other training platforms
- c. Establish a repository for the developed products, including databases and codes that allow replication and verification.
- d. Develop products identified in the knowledge management plan that systematize information, allow the dissemination of achievements and lessons learned, relevant project knowledge products that contribute to scale-up at the regional level project findings, tools and methodologies.
- e. Participate in ASL annual conferences and other related IP meetings either in-person or virtual.

Component 5: Monitoring and evaluation.

This component aims to develop and utilize a gender-responsive and inclusive project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to support decision-making and adaptive project management. By collecting accurate evidence through monitoring, the project can perform results-based evaluations to assess project performance and inform decision-making.

Outcome 5.1.: A gender-responsive and inclusive project monitoring and evaluation framework is developed and utilized to inform decision-making and adaptive project management.

Indicator: *Number of M&E plans developed and implemented.*

Target: *One M&E plan.*

Monitoring and evaluation play crucial roles in supporting collaboration and learning, fundamental to adaptive management. Accurate evidence collected through monitoring informs decision-making, underscoring the importance of results-based monitoring and evaluation. In adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation encompass diverse implementation activities. These include stakeholder engagement, situation analysis, theory of change development, and reporting, facilitating project adjustments.

WWF has embraced the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation since 2012, structuring program cycles from inception to evaluation (Conservation Measures Partnership, 2020). These standards promote adaptive management, refining strategies for improved outcomes.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning are integral to WWF's project implementation, with an internal system tracking progress at various levels. Indicators, beneficiary feedback, and contextual analysis inform evaluations and learning sessions, guiding strategy adjustments, and shaping future projects.

Output 5.1.1 Periodic M&E reports to CI-GEF Agency, the project Steering Committee and GEF, to inform the project's adaptive management.

Indicator: Number of progress reports submitted.

Target: at least 4 annual progress reports

For this project, monitoring, evaluation, and learning will be based on four key pillars:

- **Workplan and Budget Tracking:** A rapid assessment of progress against the annual workplan and budget will be conducted with project staff. This assessment will help to determine if the project is on track and, if needed, guide adjustments to project operations.
- **Indicator's assessment:** Information on project indicators will be collected and analyzed periodically by the Project Management Unit (PMU), allowing for early warnings and the opportunity to review or redirect project activities as needed.
- **Participants Feedback:** As part of the stakeholder engagement strategy, feedback from project participants will be collected to understand their perspectives and experiences with the project.
- **Risk and Context Assessment:** Periodic assessments will be conducted to identify risks and contextual factors that might hinder project objectives.

Based on these inputs, the project will hold annual pause-and-reflection sessions to review the theory of change, assess progress, identify risks and opportunities, and gather lessons learned. Any necessary adjustments will be proposed for approval by relevant project partners and implementing agencies.

The Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer will oversee these processes throughout all project phases in coordination with the Project Manager and technical staff. The M&E Officer will train the project team and partners on performance indicators, information collection methods, learning and adaptation activities, and documentation requirements. WWF will ensure data collection and storage are consistent and secure, with folder access restricted to authorized users based on their roles. The monitoring strategies will follow Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPPs), protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Develop annual work plans with measurable targets for each project year.
- b. Collect data and record progress against project workplans, budgets, and results framework indicators.
- c. Collect project participant feedback through qualitative and quantitative methodologies tailored to each group.
- d. Gather and analyze data on context indicators and project-related risks.
- e. Submit timely quarterly project progress technical and financial reports, annual PIR, basic management indicators, and co-financing data.

- f. Implement internal pause-and-reflection sessions.
- g. Incorporate recommendations from pause-and-reflection sessions into project plans and budgets.

Output 5.1.2 Project external evaluations conducted to assess the achievements and challenges of the project in accordance to GEF and CI-GEF Evaluation Policy.

Indicator: # of Midterm and terminal evaluation reports submitted.

Target: Two evaluation reports (one midterm and one terminal).

As part of M&E, the GEF tracking sheet on GEF Core Indicators will be updated at mid-term and at the end of the project and will be made available to the GEF Secretariat along with the project PIR report; the Midterm Review (MTR) and Terminal Evaluation (TE) will verify the information in these tracking tools. Per GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy the project will be subject to a MTR to be commissioned and launched by the Project Manager before the project reaches its mid-point, and a TE. The MTR and TE will include all parameters recommended by the GEF Evaluation Office and will verify information gathered through the GEF tracking tools, as relevant. Both will be carried out using a participatory approach including consultations with parties that may benefit or be affected by the project, identified in the stakeholder analysis. The Technical Committee will participate in the MTR and oversee a management response to the evaluation recommendations along with an implementation plan. The TE will provide an independent assessment of project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of impact and sustainability. Project performance will be assessed against standard evaluation criteria using a six-point rating scheme. It will have two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing. The draft TE report will be sent to project stakeholders for comment. The final TE report will be publicly disclosed.

The project will implement the following suggested activities:

- a. Review key project information derived from the monitoring and knowledge management system.
- b. Facilitate the independent evaluations process as needed.
- c. Coordinate and facilitate an internal workshop and interviews with team members to analyze project progress and achievements.
- d. Present and validate evaluation results with the project team, its partners and local stakeholders.

13.1. The project will contribute to enhancing the Andean-Amazon ecosystem connectivity of the globally significant forest of the Eastern Ecuadorian Andean ridge. The management of the landscape with a connectivity approach will protect and restore key forest fragments and promote the adoption of SLM practices. The accomplishment of this objective will be assessed based on the following impact indicators:

Core Indicator 1. Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (hectare). Sub indicator 1.2 Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness. A total of 577,289 ha of protected areas (PAs) that contain globally important montane forests are under improved management effectiveness. The project expects to channel resources to overcome key management deficiencies, incrementing the conservation effectiveness of eight PAs within the intervention landscape (Table 5).

Table 5. Protected areas (PAs) where the project is planning to focus activities to overcome management deficiencies.

Category	Name	Area (ha)
National Park	Río Negro-Sopladora	33,742
National Park	Sangay	486,613
Community Protected Area	Tambillo	1,955
Community Protected Area	Marco Pérez de Castilla	8,605
Decentralized Autonomous Protected Area	Yacuambi	26,904
Decentralized Autonomous Protected Area	Siete Iglesias	16,014
Private Protected Area	Candelaria	2,699
Private Protected Area	Zuñag	758
Total		577,289

Core Indicator 4. Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectare): 461088 ha of landscapes are under improved management to benefit biodiversity.

Sub indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity: this estimate contains the area of both connectivity corridors, excluding PAs embedded within the CELS and the CCPS. To reach this target, the incremental reasoning of the project is that by strengthening the effective governance of both corridors together with fostering dialogue among key stakeholders to integrate landscape management practices in land use planning, both corridors will reach sustainable landscape management that maintains the Andes-Amazon connectivity in line with Sub indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems. Likewise, the project will work on strengthening local capacities to enable an effective participation in multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms while promoting SLM practices in key areas that increase landscape connectivity.

Core Indicator 6. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO₂e). Sub-indicator 6.1_Direct (-483,746 t CO₂e) and 6.2_Indirect (-4,584,544 t CO₂e): Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector. Total: -5,068,290 t CO₂e. The direct carbon sequestered is related to 600 ha of SLM

practices oriented to transform C-source degraded lands and grazing areas to C-sink improved managed areas (e.g., transformation of pastures to silvo-pastures with improved grazing practices). The indirect GHG emissions mitigated are related to an expected one third reduction in the projected deforestation for the period 2024-2028 (see section A).

Core Indicator 11. People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (count): 56,177 (27,154 men and 29,023 women).

14. In addition to the GEF core indicators, this project is expected to deliver significant global environmental benefits (GEB), particularly by promoting connectivity between key protected areas across the Eastern Andean ridge, which contains critical habitats for keystone endangered species such as the Andean tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*; EN A2cd+3cd; C1) and the Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*; VU A3c+4c). The Llanganates-Sangay Ecological Corridor (CELS), in particular, harbors important forest fragments within human-dominated landscapes that serve as stepping stones for species like the mountain tapir, facilitating connectivity between Sangay and Llanganates National Parks (Ríos-Alvear et al., 2024). Many of these crucial stepping stones are located on private reserves or farms, where the project aims to intervene through its components 1 and 3, working directly in overcoming key management deficiencies of PAs and local conservation areas as well as with landowners to implement conservation agreements coupled with SLM practices, thereby strengthening habitat connectivity.

15. Both connectivity corridors are located within key biodiversity areas (KBAs) that host numerous narrow-range (endemic) amphibian species, many of which are highly threatened, such as *Atelopus palmatus* (CR A2ac), *Atelopus podocarpus* (CR D), and *Pristimantis atratus* (VU B1ab(iii)). EcoMinga and the Universidad Técnica de Loja (UTPL) have an ongoing monitoring program for these species within their private reserves (EcoMinga) and neighboring forest patches in local conservation areas of the CCPS. Similar to the mountain tapir, the project will strengthen local conservation efforts by addressing management deficiencies (Component 1) and mitigating direct threats through the adoption of SLM and restoration practices (Component 3), ensuring the long-term conservation of these critical forest habitats.

16. The project embodies the principles of the KMGBF by integrating biodiversity conservation with sustainable land management, enhancing connectivity, engaging local communities, and addressing climate change—all critical for achieving the global biodiversity targets set forth in the framework:

- a. The project focuses on protecting and restoring key forest fragments within the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes, directly supporting the KMGBF's objectives to halt biodiversity loss;
- b. By promoting connectivity between critical habitats, the project supports the KMGBF's emphasis on maintaining ecological networks and corridors to facilitate species migration and adaptation to changing environmental conditions;

- c. The project's focus on promoting SLM practices, including transforming degraded lands into carbon sinks, aligns with the KMGBF's goals of integrating biodiversity considerations into land-use planning and sustainable practices;
- d. By targeting a reduction of over 5 million tons of CO2 emissions through improved land management, the project addresses the dual goals of climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation, reinforcing the KMGBF's integrated approach to environmental challenges.
- e. Strengthening local capacities and fostering dialogue among stakeholders aligns with the KMGBF's call for collaborative governance and the involvement of local communities in biodiversity conservation strategies.

Stakeholders

17. During the project design phase, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to identify: 1) Institutional stakeholders in Ecuador with relevant competencies and responsibilities concerning connectivity corridors and the SLM approach. This encompassed central government institutions as well as sub-national entities at the provincial level; 2) Social groups and individuals situated in the program's priority areas, engaged in coordination platforms to develop strategies for managing connectivity corridors and enhancing ecosystem services, notably water management and forest conservation; 3) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with past or ongoing involvement in conservation, including connectivity corridors, SLM, and protected areas; and 4) private sector, including financial institutions related to protected areas management, and SLM practices.
18. The strategy for stakeholder engagement during project implementation is detailed in the project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Section D – stakeholder engagement plan). The plan may be updated at the start of project implementation, based on the results of the ESMF. The plan will be implemented in an adaptive manner, in accordance with official guidance regarding social distancing.
19. The table below summarizes the engagement approach for the main groups of stakeholders who will play a key role in project implementation.

Stakeholder	Role during project implementation	Related Project Outcome and associated Global Environmental Benefits
Ministry of Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition (MAATE)	Project Partner. Co-financier. Member of the Project Steering Committee. The project will be articulated through the Protected Areas and Other Conservation Forms Directorate, which together with the Provincial Directorates will support the implementation of the project. As the national Authority in protected areas, oversees the	Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 4.1 Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 6.

	administration of the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) and it oversees the development and validation of public policy instruments that implement the connectivity corridors. MAATE will also articulate the capacity building activities of the project. Lastly, the administrations of Sangay and Río Negro-Sopladora National Parks will be directly involved in the implementation of Component 1 by implementing the SMART monitoring system in the administrations together with tailor-made training for the adoption and effective use of the SMART platform. The PMU will articulate the implementation of activities related to increase management efficiency of both Parks together with the inception and implementation of the SMART tool.	
Ministry of Agriculture (MAG)	Project Partner. The Ministry will support the development of Component 3, particularly the project's field extension and technical assistance activities. MAG will provide guidance and assistance with the promotion of SLM practices, access to financial and non-financial incentives and markets. It will be particularly important to work in coordination with the Directorate of Peasant Family Production, which has promoted good agricultural practices throughout the country and has developed training modules to develop model farms to implement these practices. In addition, MAG will provide technical and political support to integrate the SLM approach into national policies and planning processes. Representatives of MAG will also participate in the governance platforms to be created for the CELS and CCSP. At all levels MAG will be a key target of project communications and KM products to promote replication and scaling up of lessons learned.	Outcome 3.1 Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
Nature and Culture International (NCI)	Project partner. Co-financier. Member of the Project Steering Committee. It will provide its technical expertise to consolidate the connectivity corridor Sangay-Podocarpus. It will provide technical assistant to directly implement components 1, 2 and 3 with partnerships with various local institutions who have experience and presence within the CCSP.	Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 4.1 Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 3. Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs): 6	Project partners at territorial level. Co-financiers. Representatives of the Provincial and Municipal	Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 3.1

provincial and 23 municipal governments.	governments will participate in the project landscape advisory groups, with a technical advisory role to provide guidance for the effective implementation of the project. They will participate directly in the project implementation and will be beneficiaries of project actions, especially under components 2 and 3. Under Component 2, the project will work directly with representatives of the GADs in the conformation of the governance platforms to be created for each of the connectivity corridors, including the formulation and implementations of the corridors' management plans and the incorporation of these instruments within the PDOTs and other pertinent instruments. Under Component 3, GADs will play a critical role through the elaboration of participatory integrated farm plans for the implementation of SLM practices, interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination and articulation in the territory, the development of incentives, the promotion of value chains and market access mechanisms. At all levels they will be key targets of project communications and KM products to promote replication and scaling up of lessons learned.	Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 3 Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
EcoMinga	Project partner. Co-financier and landowner. EcoMinga is an Ecuadorian NGO dedicated to the conservation of Andean ecosystems. EcoMinga established a network of ten private reserves covering 5000 ha across the CELS. This NGO has collaborated with WWF since 2020, implementing activities to increase the reserve management effectiveness. EcoMinga reserves constitute core conservation areas to maintain the connectivity within CELS. Their expertise will contribute to support the implementation of Component 1 by the effective implementation of management actions to overcome key deficiencies identified in the METT tool. In the context of Component 2, EcoMinga plays a critical role in supporting the project actions to foster an effective governance that enables biodiversity conservation and sustainable use within the CELS.	Outcomes 1.1 and 2.1 Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 6.
CESA	Project partner. Co-financier. CESA has long-term experience in promoting SLM practices in the Andes. Since 1969 CESA has worked in conservation and management of water resources, soil restoration, and the adoption of agroecology throughout the Andean region. CESA has worked in household production and commercialization systems, food sovereignty and	Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.

	security, peasant economies and trade. Lastly, CESA has been a partner of WWF in the CELS since 2021, implementing pilot SLM practices at the farm scale and promotion of agrobusiness. Their knowledge and experience will contribute to strengthening the implementation of Component 3 within the CELS and in disseminating sustainable land management practices. Additionally, CESA could play an important role in training and capacity building (Output 2.2.3).	
Local producers	Local producers, including women and youth, play a critical role during the project implementation. They will be the primary beneficiaries of the project's efforts to improve livelihoods, contribute to environmental conservation, and participate in empowerment and community development processes. By adopting SLM practices, local producers will enhance their agricultural productivity and resilience, while also contributing to the overall objectives of landscape connectivity and biodiversity conservation within the project areas. The project will provide training, technical assistance, and access to financial and non-financial incentives to support these efforts. Additionally, local producers will be involved in participatory integrated farm planning, which will help them develop and implement effective SLM practices plans. Their active participation and empowerment are essential for the success and sustainability of the project's outcomes.	Outcomes 2.1, 3.1 and 3.2 Core Indicator 3. Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
Regional Water Fund (FORAGUA)	Project partner. Co-financier. FORAGUA is a key public-private partner to implement Component 3 in the CCSP through its Technical Secretariat (see outcome 3.1). In close collaboration with FORAGUA the project will inject resources to strengthen selected Municipal Gad's investment plans to implement SLM practices in local conservation areas. Likewise, a partnership with FORAGUA will help train technicians from GADs, local producers and strengthen selected value chains.	Outcomes 1.1, 3.1 and 3.2 Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
Fair Trade Organizations - FEPP - Camari - COPADE	They are key as business links to enable smallholders' access to differentiated national and international markets. The project will seek to develop cooperation agreements. FEPP Camari is a potential business link for food and handicraft initiatives for domestic markets and exports. In addition, its specialized shops are an attractive	Outcome 3.2 Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 11.

	point of sale for the promotion of SLM approach with the consumer. COPADE promotes fair trade between Ecuador and Spain (e.g., healthy processed products, organic dry grains and utilitarian items).	
Financial Institutions - BanEcuador - Banco Pichincha - Banco Codesarrollo	They have green financial products and/or are open to developing new green financial products for the project's target population.	Outcome 3.2 Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 11.
Academia	Different universities and researchers participate in research networks, created in the context of both corridors. These groups played a crucial role in advancing ecological research and developing methodologies for species monitoring. For instance, at CELS, numerous collaborative initiatives emerged among several research institutions, including Ikiam, the Universidade do Porto, INABIO, Universidad de La Laguna, and Waska Amazonía, focusing on landscape connectivity. These collaborations allow for progress in understanding how different natural areas interconnect and how this influences biodiversity conservation. Concurrently, at CCSP, the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, working in conjunction with local GADs and NCI, leads an interinstitutional initiative dedicated to biodiversity monitoring, and development of conservation indicators. Likewise, this initiative aims to support local capacities in the surveillance and preservation of biodiversity across the CCSP. These institutions could play a role in supporting implementation of Project baselines, informing the Project M&E and measuring impact indicators.	Outcomes 2.1, 4.1 Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 3. Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
WWF – Ecuador	In Ecuador, WWF has been present since 1962, initially focusing on the Galápagos Islands and gradually expanding onto the mainland. The Ecuador Program was established in July 2014, fostering collaboration with a wide range of key allies committed to conserving and sustainably using biodiversity in priority areas identified for their natural and cultural values, and their capacity to provide essential environmental services crucial for Ecuador's sustainable development. Since 2010, WWF- Ecuador has been promoting connectivity in close collaboration with local governments and the Ministry of Environment. Through the 'Connecting People and Connecting	All outcomes Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 3. Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.

	Parks in the Llanganates Sangay Ecological Corridor' project, WWF aims to consolidate a sustainable landscape ensuring the preservation of key ecosystem services and connectivity between Sangay and Llanganates National Parks, simultaneously enhancing the livelihoods of local communities. Moreover, since 2023, WWF has been implementing the 'Connectivity Corridors in Two Priority Landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon Region' project under the ASL IP framework, aiming to establish the country's first two amazonian corridors.	
Conservation International Ecuador	With more than 20 years of experience, CI Ecuador has focused on natural ecosystem and services conservation to preserve human well-being. More importantly for this project, CI Ecuador has been acting as the executing agency for the "Connectivity corridors in two priority landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon Region" project which is part of the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes program phase II.	Outcomes 3.1, 4.1 Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 3. Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.
Conservation International – GEF Implementing Agency (CIGEF)	As an Implementing Agency for GEF since 2013, CIGEF has a portfolio of more than 300 million USD mobilized across GEF focal areas and regions. In Ecuador, CIGEF has been working in GEF funded projects since 2014 through the project "Implementation of the strategic plan of Ecuador Mainland Marine and Coastal protected Areas Network" (GEF 6 project).	All outcomes Core Indicator 1. Core Indicator 3. Core Indicator 4. Core Indicator 6. Core Indicator 11.

Policy Coherence

1. The project directly contributes to objectives stated in several Multilateral Environmental Agreements endorsed by Ecuador:

By focusing on tropical montane forest landscapes, this project directly supports the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Protecting these ecosystems of high ecological integrity helps preserve endemic species and maintain ecological balance. Specifically, the project contributes to Target 1 of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by improving participatory territorial management of two connectivity corridors and several local conservation areas. Also, it contributes to Target 2 with 400 hectares of areas under restoration inside the connectivity corridors. Contribution to Target 10 is through productive areas under SLM practices. Through the working groups and the multistakeholder platform proposed in Component 2, the project also contributes to

Target 14 of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Target 18 and 19 of the protocol are addressed by the project through strengthening financial mechanisms in both corridors as proposed in Components 1 and 3.

The initiative aligns with the Paris Agreement by enhancing carbon sequestration through forest conservation and restoration. Sustainable land management practices reduce emissions and promote resilience to climate impacts. Specifically, the project contributes to Article 5 related to sinks and reservoirs, through the conservation of montane forest landscapes. It also indirectly contributes to Article 4 related to Mitigation, mainly by addressing some barriers to halt deforestation. Through this, the project also contributes to the national NDC In its adaptation component through maintaining connectivity and implementation of sustainable land management practices and its Mitigation targets at the LULUCF component.

The project addresses several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 15 (Life on Land) and Goal 13 (Climate Action). By promoting sustainable land use, it helps balance economic development with environmental conservation.

The project supports the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) by restoring degraded lands and preventing further degradation, thereby improving land productivity and ecosystem services. Specifically, the project contributes to Strategic Objective 1 related to land degradation neutrality through sustainable land management proposed in Component 3. It also contributes to Strategic Objective 4 through management effectiveness of terrestrial protected areas.

Enhancing habitat connectivity is crucial for wildlife migration and ecosystem resilience. This aligns with agreements that emphasize cross-border conservation efforts and collaborative management of shared natural resources.

Moreover, the project is aligned and directly contributes to national sectoral policy, programs, and institutional frameworks aligned with the mentioned MEAs, as detailed below:

- a. The National Biodiversity Strategy 2015-2030 has results and goals that demonstrate the cross-sectoral approach proposed by the country to manage its natural heritage sustainably. Specifically related to the project are Result 3, which underpins incentives for the protection, sustainable use, and restoration of biodiversity (Components 1 and 3); Result 7, which establishes a 15% reduction in the terrestrial ecosystems loss (Components 1 and 3) and Result 13 which refers to an integrated and participatory management of the National Protected Areas System and other conservation mechanisms (Component 1 and 2).
- b. Through Ministerial Agreement No. MAAE-2020-019, the country has officially recognized connectivity corridors and set a technical standard for their design, establishment, and management in Ecuador. The project is working through all its components to strengthen the first two corridors officially recognized in the country: CELS and CESP. Both corridors are part of the eleven areas prioritized by MAATE in the country for establishing connectivity corridors. The Ministerial Agreement states that areas recognized under this figure must maintain a sustainable landscape management approach that encourages the provision of environmental services. Moreover, they must contribute to strengthening prioritized conservation objectives, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, encourage the participation of GADs, private owners, and

indigenous and local communities, and articulate environmental policy within territorial planning tools. All these aspects have been explicitly included in the project.

- c. Through Ministerial Agreement No. MAAE-2020-09, the adoption of the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) in the protected areas of the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) of Ecuador is officially recognized. This tool, fundamental for the effective management of protected areas, has been designed to address the multiple threats affecting these zones, promoting continuous, coordinated, and effective monitoring of control and surveillance activities. SMART is an open-source and adaptable tool that allows protected area managers to record, analyze, and use spatial data to improve conservation strategies and on-the-ground surveillance actions. SMART's primary objective is to strengthen the capacity of environmental authorities and improve the effectiveness of the SNAP in controlling the threats affecting protected areas. The tool allows for adaptive management, where information collected in the field can be used to dynamically adjust patrolling strategies and responses to threats. Additionally, SMART facilitates the creation of reports and maps that are essential for informed decision-making and long-term planning. The implementation of SMART began in Yasuní National Park in 2015, a key area due to its high biodiversity and the challenges it faces from human pressure and resource exploitation. The implementation and expansion of the SMART tool in the SNAP represents a significant opportunity to improve the management of the country's biodiversity. The project will support the adoption of the SMART tool in the PNRNS and the improvement of the existing SMART system in the PNS. The funding will enable MAATE personnel training, technology acquisition, and strengthening the SNAP monitoring network that integrates all protected areas that currently uses SMART.
- d. In compliance with Art. 132 of the Organic Code of the Environment which indicates that the National Environmental Authority shall prepare, update, and formalize the Strategic Plan of the National System of Protected Areas, MAATE developed and officialized this plan through Ministerial Agreement Nro. MAATE-2022-152. The plan establishes the strategic actions for the creation and management of protected areas as stated in the Environmental Organic Code. The project directly contributes through all its components to Strategy 1. Conservation and Integrated Connectivity of the Plan which focuses on fostering sustainable landscapes with effective links to other conservation areas and with actions that harmonize conservation with the productive activities carried out by the population. Also, the project will contribute to Strategy 3. Participatory Management by establishing mechanisms and guidelines for coordination, articulation, and decision-making among stakeholders for the management of PAs inside both connectivity corridors. Finally, the project aligns to Strategy 5. Financial Sustainability since it will establish or strengthen financial mechanisms for PAs inside both corridors.
- e. Ecuador recognizes various mechanisms and tools for conservation, all of which are supported by a legal framework that includes the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, the Forestry and Natural Areas and Wildlife Conservation Law, the Environmental Management Law, and the Ecuadorian Environmental Organic Code (COA). The National System of Protected Areas (SNAP for its Spanish acronym) is Ecuador's primary strategy for biodiversity conservation. It consists of four subsystems: i. State; ii. Decentralized Autonomous; iii. Community; and iv. Private. The project will work in areas currently under three of the four subsystems. With the state subsystem, the project will strengthen two PAs through Component 1: Sangay and Río Negro-Sopladora National Parks. This project will also target areas that are part of the Decentralized Autonomous subsystem through Components 1, 2 and 3. Finally, the management of private PAs in the CELS will be addressed in Component 1.
- f. In addition, starting in 2023, Ecuador has an enabling legal framework for recognizing, registering, and reporting Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) – Ministerial Agreement No. MAATE-2023-130. These areas contribute to *in situ* conservation and are under governance and management mechanisms other than SNAP. This is an important policy tool for the project. It allows several local

conservation areas strengthened through components 1, 2, and 3 to be recognized in national accounting and eventually access national and international incentives.

- g. To tackle the causes of deforestation and forest degradation in Ecuador and to reduce associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Ecuador's REDD+ Action Plan: Forests for Good Living 2016-2025 (PA REDD+) was developed and formalized through Ministerial Agreement No. 116 in November 2016. The PA REDD+ is part of the National Climate Change Strategy (ENCC). It includes measures for conservation, sustainable forest management, and optimizing other land uses to reduce pressure on forests, all of which are addressed directly by the project. It outlines actions to mitigate climate change and aims to align the country's environmental and development agendas with a territorial approach. The REM-Ecuador Program is a results-based payment program for REDD, funded by German and Norwegian cooperation. As explained in previous sections, the project will leverage REM to mobilize funding for its targeted intervention areas and activities.
- h. The Organic Code of Territorial Organization - COOTAD (19/10/2010, modified on 16/01/2015) regulates the organization of the territory and integrates the decentralized autonomous government regulations to guarantee their political, administrative, and financial autonomy. For this purpose, it breaks down the functions of the decentralized autonomous governments and regulates the treatment of community lands and territories. It defines land management and emphasizes that it must be based on the principles of land's social and environmental roles, the prevalence of the general interest over the individual interest, and the equitable distribution of burdens and benefits. It also establishes rural property tax exemption for community lands of indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian communes, communities, peoples and nationalities and lands of their ownership where they maintain primary forests or reforest with native plants. COOTAD also specifies that investments in works aimed at preserving or increasing the productivity of the land, protecting it from erosion or other adverse factors, shall be excluded from the property's value. The project, through its components 1, 2 and 3, strengthens the capacities and mechanisms of the DAG, so that they can fulfill the role granted in the COOTAD for conservation.
- i. Ecuador's agricultural policy towards sustainable rural land development: 2015-2025 seeks to reverse the structural trends of the former agricultural model, which has eroded the natural resource base, to replace it with a new scheme focused on four strategic objectives: a) to contribute to reducing poverty and socio-economic inequality of rural inhabitants, in particular, to improve the social inclusion of small and medium-sized farmers living in the countryside; b) to improve the contribution of agriculture to guarantee food security and sovereignty for the Ecuadorian population; (c) to enhance the contribution of agriculture to rural territorial development and national economic growth with social inclusion and sustainable agricultural systems; (d) to support change in the national production matrix, in terms of replacing primary and agro-industry imports, diversification of export supply, and generation of the agro-industrial development primary base. It specializes in small agricultural units, family farming, and community partnership and work. It favors the SLM framework as it proposes a change in the agricultural model focused on the sustainable use of land, water, genetic resources, and other natural resources used for food and agricultural production. Through the implementation of SLM practices at the farm scale, the project will contribute to the implementation of this policy through agricultural productivity, improved food security, and strengthen local economies by promoting the trade of sustainable products, regularizing land tenure, and increasing access to rural financial services.
- j. Ecuador's Commitment to Gender Equality: Ecuador has established a robust legal and policy framework to promote gender equality, which includes the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, the Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women, and the Violet Economy Law. The National Biodiversity Strategy 2015-2030 incorporates gender and intercultural approaches, ensuring that biodiversity conservation policies are inclusive and equitable. The National Gender Equality Agenda 2021-2025 and the Gender and Climate Change

Action Plan (2023) integrate gender perspectives into economic, employment, environmental, and climate change policies. Despite these advancements, gender inequalities persist in access to natural resources, income opportunities, and participation in decision-making. The project will support these efforts by implementing gender-responsive actions and strengthening the institutional framework to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups.

Innovation

27. This project has been designed to constitute the first one that links the Andes with the Amazon biomes within the ASL impact program and, by doing so, offers an innovative approach that can relate to the regional impact program to enrich the ASL program vision and fostering replication and scaling-up project key findings, beyond the Amazon biome. The project intervention area explicitly links the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes with the Amazon plains, known as the **Andes Amazon Transition Belt (AATB)**, which is crucial for sustaining ecological processes in the Amazon, such as river discharge and nutrient deposition, fundamental to human systems (Laraque et al., 2009; Lujan et al., 2013). Specifically, the project catalyzes innovation towards maintaining the Andes-Amazon connectivity through (1) The consolidation of an inclusive governance model for connectivity corridors on a multi-actor and multi-sector platform that integrates territorial visions from the Andean context with the Amazon ones, (2) The adoption of a SLM approach in the design and implementation of integral farm management plans that remove the barriers rooted in the Andean-Amazon interface. The proposed SLM approach provides an enabling environment that simultaneously conserves natural resources and increases yields to local producers.
28. Additionally, the project innovation supports decentralized protected area management that gives local governments and private landholders a leading role in creating and administrating conservation and sustainable use areas. The goal is to secure vital ecosystem provision services, foster SLM practices, and ensure inclusive governance of the PAs. Lastly, the development of a national knowledge hub that integrates and provides relevant and on-time information for the national connectivity corridor network. For the first time in Ecuador, the network will administrate the knowledge hub, which promotes an inclusive conservation vision that decentralizes the role of MAATE in managing protected areas. This network will adopt this hub, ensuring sustainability beyond the project's lifetime.

Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Please describe the Institutional Arrangements for the execution of this child project, including framework and mechanisms for coordination, governance, financial management and procurement. This should include consideration for linking with other relevant initiatives at country-level (if a country child project) or regional/global level (for coordination platform child project). If possible, please summarize the flow of funds (diagram), accountabilities for project management and financial reporting (organogram), including audit, and staffing plans. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project

1. The project institutional arrangements are presented below, including participation, roles and responsibilities of each body.

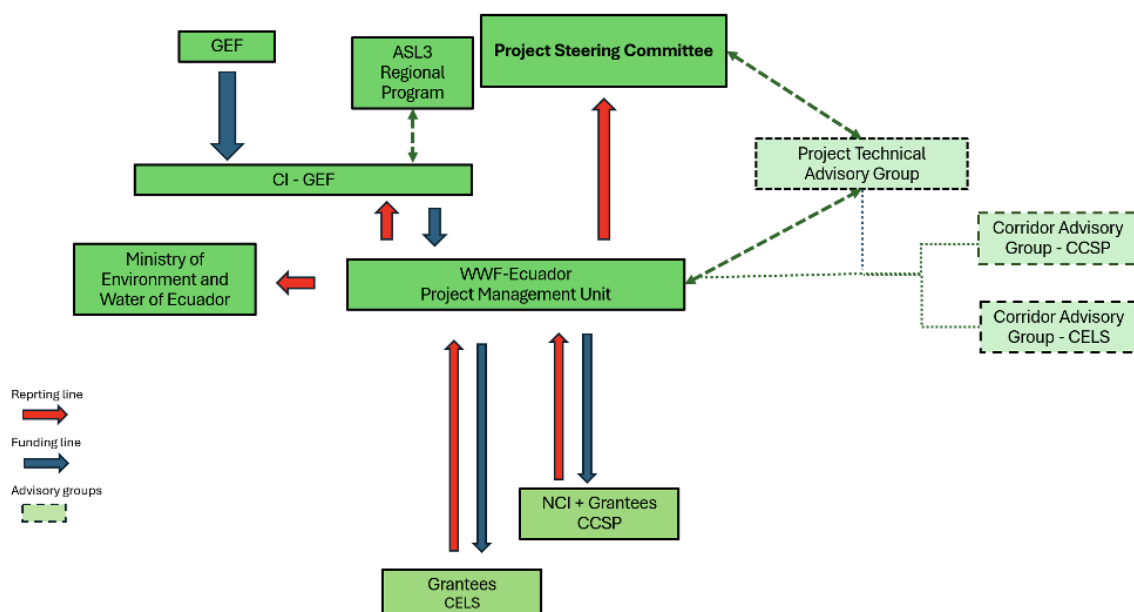


Figure 7. Project institutional arrangements diagram

Implementing Agency

1. Conservation International as the GEF Implementing Agency (CI-GEF) will: (i) provide technical and financial oversight to ensure the achievement of project objectives; (ii) liaise with the ASL IP and the GEF Secretariat; (iii) ensure that both GEF and CI policy requirements and standards are applied and met; (iv) participate in the Project Steering Committee as observer; (v) provide technical, strategic and financial support to the Project Management Unit (PMU) to ensure country ownership of the project; (vi) procure the mid-term and final evaluations and review project audits; and (vii) arbitrate and ensure resolution of any conflict during implementation that cannot be resolved in first instance by the Executing Agency. CI-GEF will work with the EA to ensure that at the end of the project, unused funds, interest, and any funds not used for project purposes will be returned to the GEF in accordance with fiduciary standards.

Government Counterpart

2. The MAATE will be responsible for the strategic guidance, overall project supervision, and alignment with national policies, priorities, and regulations. Through the Direction of Protected Areas and Other Conservation Efforts, the Undersecretary of Natural Heritage will provide technical assistance and guidance on management of Protected Areas, biodiversity monitoring, and environmental legislation. The MAATE will be part of all project's decision-making platforms detailed below.

3. MAATE will assign a National Project Director (NPD) who will ensure the alignment of project activities with government policies and priorities. This position is also responsible for coordinating between MAATE's areas and with other governmental entities.

Executing Agency

4. WWF-Ecuador is the executing agency and will host the Project Management Unit (PMU) team. In the EA role WWF-Ecuador is responsible of the day-to-day management of the project, including the GEF funds management and technical interventions to achieve the project targets. WWF-Ecuador will be part of the Project Steering Committee, and the Technical Advisory Group, the PMU lead act as the Secretariat for the project governance. WWF Ecuador is responsible of the close coordination with the government counterpart, MAATE and the National Project Director assigned by the institution.
5. Following CIGEF policies and guidance, WWF-Ecuador will prepare technical and financial reports, provide relevant information for external audits, and present reports to CIGEF and MAATE in line with the Agency policy.

Decision-making platforms and advisory groups

Project Steering Committee

6. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be the highest decision-making platform for supervising and monitoring the project's technical and financial execution. Specific responsibilities of the PSC include: (1) providing overall strategic guidance and ensure alignment with national priorities and policies; (2) approve any major changes needed in project planning or execution in line with adaptable management of project implementation and CIGEF requirements; (3) make critical decisions regarding project scope, budget, and timelines, resolve high-level issues and conflicts the project manager or executing agency team cannot handle; and (4) oversight of project progress and performance, ensuring that the project meets quality standards and delivers value to the organization.
7. The PSC will be chaired by the Minister of MAATE or his/her delegate. The Committee will have the participation of the Project Manager, as secretary without vote, a CI-GEF authority as observer, a WWF-Ecuador authority, and a Nature and Culture International (NCI) authority. The PSC will meet every six months, ordinarily and extraordinarily, to address urgent or specific issues upon request of the Project Manager.

Project Technical Advisory Group

8. The Project Technical Advisor Group (PTAG) will provide expertise and advice on biodiversity conservation and monitoring, ecological and functional connectivity, sustainable land management practices, political advocacy, effective stakeholder engagement and capacity building, human rights and gender equality approach, communication strategies, and evaluation and monitoring of project progress and performance. It will meet with the Project Manager quarterly to check the project's alignment with PRODOC and the effective and efficient use of the financial resources according to the approved Annual Budget and Annual Operating Plan. It will technically support the achievement of all project targets, outputs, and outcomes and suggest adaptive measures for the project to be considered for the Steering Committee.

The Technical Advisory Group will include WWF-Ecuador, NCI and MAATE Specialists:

Landscape Advisory Groups

9. Each corridor will have a Landscape Advisory Group to guide the effective implementation of the project on the ground. Each group will be led by the Project Manager and will include the Provincial Directors of the MAATE of the project area, representatives from key executing partners (mainly local partners responsible for implementing activities), and representatives of GADs chosen among those directly involved in project implementation. According to project field planning, they will meet at least twice a year. Roles and responsibilities of these groups include: a) provide feedback on the annual work plan and activities implemented in each landscape, b) provide technical guidance on project implementation in each landscape, c) participate in project review meetings every three or four months, d) identifies opportunities for collaboration with other projects and initiatives on the ground, e) prepare recommendations for the PSC and PTAG to improve project performance on the ground, and f) invite specialists as needed to the discussion (academia, research centers, ASL IP)

Project Management Unit

10. The PMU will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project and execution based on the annual workplan and budget approved by the Steering Committee and CIGEF. This includes operational planning, executing, and monitoring day-to-day project activities, following up on consultants' activities and products, and overseeing grant management. The unit will also prepare technical and financial reports, perform quality and compliance management, and perform M&E and reporting. Finally, it will be responsible for the strategic oversight of the project.

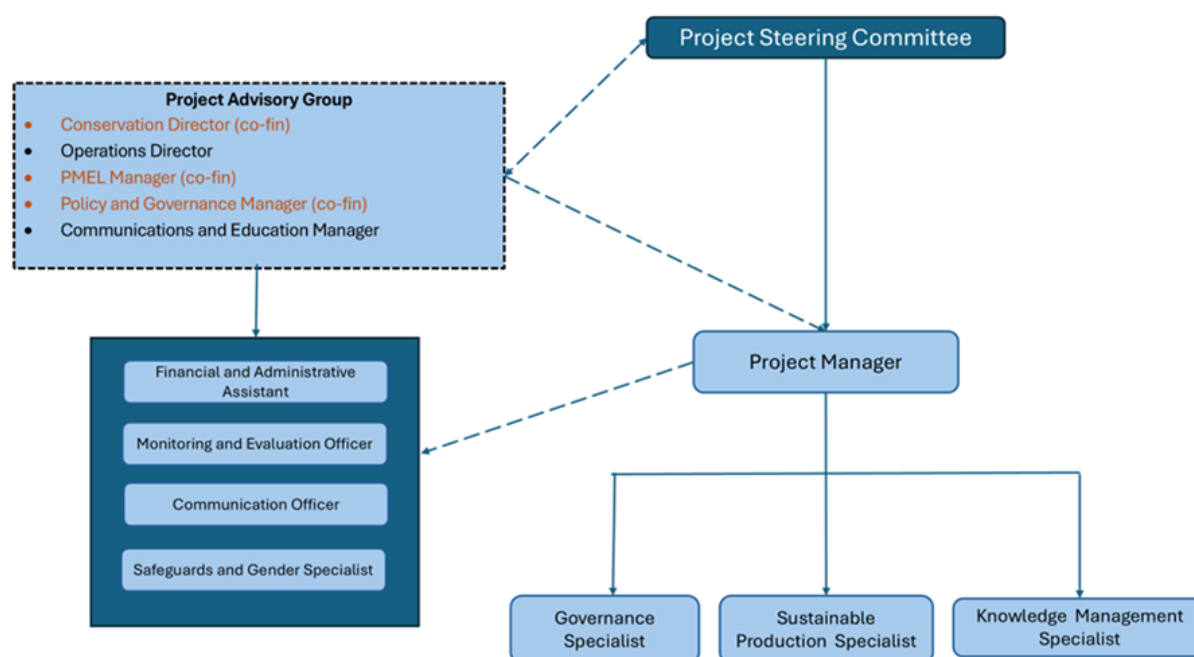


Figure 9. Project Execution Organizational Chart

1. The table below summarizes the grantees identified and with which the project will establish a partnership for implementation via sub-grants from WWF-Ecuador with all the required flow-downs from the CI-GEF Agency following the GEF Fiduciary Standards.

Grantee/ Subgrantee/Partner	Specific Role	Rationale
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Nature and Culture International (NCI)	Partner and Subgrantee	NCI will be our leading local partner at the CCSP. They will provide technical assistance and be the institutional liaison with local stakeholders in the CCSP, ensuring the successful achievement of project objectives across all components.
ECOMINGA	Subgrantee	EcoMinga has been a long-term partner of WWF in the CELS. This NGO owns seven of the fifteen core private reserves, which are vital for maintaining the connectivity corridor. EcoMinga's technicians possess strong capabilities that add significant value in achieving the expected outcomes of Components 1 and 4 within the CELS.
FORAGUA	Subgrantee	FORAGUA will be our key partner in implementing and ensuring the long-term success of Components 1 and 3. The GEF investment will complement and enhance ongoing efforts in local conservation, APs management, and sustainable land management (SLM) practices. GEF funds will not be capitalized in the Trust Fund, but will be managed in a separate account to ensure they are spent during the lifetime of the project and as compromised in the PRODOC.
Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL)	Subgrantee	UTPL is the private university in Ecuador with the largest continuing education program offered online. Its experience and educational infrastructure, in collaboration with NCI, have enabled the design of several continuing education programs focused on adults for natural resource management (including the water school). Partnering with UTPL will allow the project to maximize the reach and sustainability of its continuing education programs across its four thematic areas. Additionally, this partnership will strengthen the Project's collaboration with academia.

Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this child project?

If so, please describe that role here and the justification.

N/A

Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

Table On Core Indicators

Core Indicators

Indicate expected results in each relevant indicator using methodologies indicated in the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework Guidelines. There is no need to complete this table for climate adaptation projects financed solely through LDCF and SCCF.

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
574666.06	577289	0	0

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
0	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
574666.06	577289	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Área Ecológica de Conservación Municipal Siete Iglesias	555592963	Habitat/Species Management Area	16,013.60	16,014.00					
Área Protegida Autónoma Descentralizada Yacuambi	555745144	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	26,903.96	26,904.00					
Área Protegida Comunitaria Marcos	555681820	Protected area with sustainable use of	8,602.07	8,604.00					

Pérez de Castilla		natural resources							
Área Protegida Comunitaria Tambillo	555637320	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources		1,955.00					
Área Protegida Privada Candelaria	555759521	Habitat/Species Management Area	2,695.00	2,699.00					
Área Protegida Privada Zuñag	555759524	Habitat/Species Management Area	756.45	758.00					
Parque Nacional Río Negro Sopladora	555636660	National Park	33,705.66	33,742.00					
Parque Nacional Sangay	188	National Park	485,989.32	486,613.00					

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
0	400	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	400.00		

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
300000	461088	0	0

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
300,000.00	461,088.00		

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO ₂ e (direct)	15787907	5068290	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO ₂ e (indirect)	0	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO ₂ e (direct)	15,787,907	5,068,290		
Expected metric tons of CO ₂ e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting	2023	2025		

Duration of accounting	20	20		
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Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO ₂ e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO ₂ e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	105,434	29,023		
Male	99,197	27,154		
Total	204,631	56,177	0	0

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Indicator 1. Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management: Sub indicator 1.2 Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness. A total of 577,289 ha of PAs that contain globally important montane forests are under improved management effectiveness. The number of hectares estimated for indicator 1 was calculated using the latest official map of protected areas and the Land Use/Land Cover (LULC) map from MAATE (updated - November 2023). A GIS-based analysis was performed to estimate the area (in hectares) contained inside the PAs within the project intervention area. The project expects to channel resources to overcome key management deficiencies, incrementing the conservation effectiveness of eight PAs within the intervention landscape (see Table 5, Section B).

Core indicator 3. Area of land and ecosystems under restoration (hectare). Sub indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration. A total of 400 ha of degraded forest land are under restoration schemes. The target areas for the restoration schemes will be implemented through Component 3 via the conservation agreements with local producers (Outcome 3.1 – Output 3.1.2). The project expects to assess the effectiveness of the restoration schemes by estimating the annual survival and mortality rates of the planted trees (using native species), the species diversity contained in each locality and the total carbon sequestered in the 400 ha. These indicators will be assessed annually after the second year of the project.

Core Indicator 4. Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectare): 461,088 ha of landscapes are under improved management to benefit biodiversity.

Sub indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity: this estimate contains the area of both connectivity corridors, excluding PAs embedded within the CELS and the CCPS. The area estimate is based on a 2023 GIS analysis of connectivity corridors and Land Use/Land Cover maps from MAATE. Sub indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems: the project targets sustainable landscape management through the development and implementation of landscape level planning instruments and governance mechanisms. Additionally, it aims to strengthen local capacities and financial mechanisms for SLM practices.

Core Indicator 6. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO₂e). Sub-indicator 6.1: Total: -5,068,290 t CO₂e. Of this total, -367,775 t CO₂e carbon sequestered is related to 600 ha of SLM practices oriented to transform C-source degraded lands to C-sink improved managed areas (e.g., transformation of degraded pastures to silvo-pastures with improved grazing practices) and – 115,971 t CO₂e carbon sequestered comes from 400 ha of improved forest management via restoration. The remaining 4,584,544 t CO₂e are GHG emissions mitigated are related to an expected one third reduction in the projected deforestation for the period 2024-2028 (see section A).

Indicator 11. People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (count): 56,177 (27,154 men and 29,023 women). To estimate the number of beneficiaries, we used parish-level population data from the latest census (INEC, 2023), parish settlements at a scale of 1:50,000, and the delineation of the study area. From this information, we conducted a spatial analysis to identify and select the settlements of each parish located inside and outside the study area. This allowed us to estimate the proportion of settlements within the study area, including the parish head, and relate them to the total census population in each parish. From this value, we multiplied the proportion of settlements within the study area by the total population of the parishes to obtain the total number of project beneficiaries. The same procedure was used to estimate the total number of women and men and the total population living in poverty.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	Extreme weather conditions adversely affect SLM practices: The project will use information available on extreme weather and climate variations such as ENSO to analyze scenarios and develop substitutive measures. The mitigation responses will be designed following the Guide “Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment Framework (RAPTA)”. Accelerated land degradation and biodiversity loss due to severe climate change. SLM practices promoted by the project will be designed taking into consideration climate trends and extreme weather events to mitigate potential negative

		effects on interventions. The project will raise awareness and increase the knowledge of key stakeholders and other groups about the importance of adopting SLM practices to prevent, reduce and reverse climate driven impacts that leads to land degradation, including synergies between biodiversity, carbon, water, and impacts on local livelihoods.
Environmental and Social	Moderate	Environment: The project does not generate significant adverse environmental impacts. However, a potential risk could arise from the implementation of SLM activities in degraded habitats and secondary forests, which, if not carried out properly, could disturb natural habitats. The following considerations will be taken into consideration: Implement specific training programs to ensure that SLM activities in degraded habitats and secondary forests are carried out properly, minimizing the risk of disturbing natural habitats. Establish a continuous environmental monitoring system to oversee restoration activities and detect any adverse impacts in a timely manner, allowing for the immediate implementation of corrective measures. Adopt and promote best practices in sustainable land management, ensuring that standardized and effective procedures are followed. For further information refer to Annex F. Social: The project does not involve the voluntary or involuntary resettlement of people, nor does it restrict land use. However, there are social risks such as the resistance of local communities to adopt new SLM practices due to a lack of incentives or adequate technical support. The following considerations will be taken into consideration to mitigate the potential risks: Facilitate the active participation of local communities in the planning and execution of project activities, ensuring that their concerns and suggestions are taken into account. Develop incentive schemes and provide the necessary technical support to encourage local communities to adopt sustainable land management practices. Implement awareness programs to inform communities about the long-term benefits of sustainable land management practices and how these practices can improve their livelihoods. Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. For further information refer to Annex F.
Political and Governance	High	Ecuadorian politics and institutional instability are a constant in Ecuador. The unexpected election process to appoint a temporary president and parliament in 2023, following by the elections to appoint a 4-year government in 2025, as well as local government elections in 2026, may distract the government's and other stakeholders' interest & support to the project and its processes. Also, newly appointed authorities may change the political agenda and legal framework around social and environmental issues related to the project. WWF's policy team monitors these risks and anticipates institutional response strategies. The project will build strong working links with technical staff in the Ministry of Environment and other government institutions, to guarantee support even if there are radical changes in the top management structure. As much as possible, project awareness and training programs will target long term employees and permanent community members. Also, specific project activities will be aimed at the development and implementation of monitoring and integrated land planning procedures that persist even in the presence of

		high personnel turnover. Training activities may be relaunched during the project lifetime as needed.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Low	The project builds upon and strengthens current national and local institutional and policy frameworks related to protected areas and productive systems. The project will consolidate inclusive governance models for connectivity corridors, based on multi-actor and multi-sector dialog and coordination platforms.
Technological	Moderate	In component 4, the national knowledge hub that integrates and provides relevant and on-time information for the national connectivity corridor network, will be conceptualized, developed, and administered by the network members.
Financial and Business Model	High	The project has several outputs that underpin financial flows for conservation and SLM through public and private sector mechanisms. These mechanisms depend on one hand on the implementation and maintenance of government policies and public budget allocations, and on the other hand of private sector alliances and contributions. Considering the political and economic context of the country, these may fluctuate over time. The project will prioritize working and strengthening existing financial mechanisms, many of which have been already in place and functioning for years, and therefore have structural enabling conditions to be maintained over time. For new mechanisms (e.g PECC), the project will learn and build from other national and international experiences and develop controlled and monitored pilots previous its full implementation, to ensure mechanisms have the potential to unlock new financial resources on the wider landscape.
EXECUTION		
Capacity	Low	The project will partner with local NGOs with strong knowledge of local context and collaboration links already established with local governments and communities. Component 4 promotes project learning through a continuous monitoring and evaluation processes that will raise alerts and foster adaptive management.
Fiduciary	Low	WWF has strong international financial and operational procedures in place to avoid fraud, corruption, diversion of resources or other wrongdoing. WWF will execute extensive due diligence processes, establish clear procurement processes in grant agreements, monitor and build capacities of subgrantees (NCI, EcoMinga, FORAGUA) to ensure compliance with all its standards and procedures.
Stakeholder	Low	The project will apply a gendered, intergenerational, and intercultural approach, focusing on the roles and livelihoods of remaining groups of women, elders, and youth. Activities to strengthen capacities and promote participation of the civil society members have been included. In addition, once a year the project will be evaluated with the communities and the activities for the following year will be jointly planned. WWF will ensure

		activities are co-designed through community dialogue processes, using adult education methodologies for knowledge, and understanding of the technical proposals and the applicable legal frameworks.
Other		N/A
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	The risks listed in the table have been carefully assessed by the Implementing and Executing Agencies. The project team will work in risk management to avoid major impacts on the project outcomes and results. WWF Ecuador has vast experience in managing projects from multiple donors and its capable of responding to these risks.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Explain how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies, including the specific integrated program priorities, and country and regional priorities, Describe how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements, such as through NDCs, NBSAPs, etc.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how.

(max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

Alignment with GEF-8 Programming strategies and country/regional priorities

- This project contributes directly to GEF 8 strategic goal #3 in the Biodiversity Focal Area: To improve conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of natural ecosystems. Within this focal area, the project is articulated with the following supported strategies: (1) financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of PA systems, and (2) biodiversity mainstreaming in priority sectors. The project design falls into the key strategic interventions of the Amazon, Congo & Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program, being the following the most relevant: (1) Expand the coverage of protected areas to safeguard globally significant biodiversity, carbon stocks and sinks, and improve ecological connectivity in the forest biomes (national, sub-national, transboundary); (2) Strengthen the management of existing protected areas and protected area systems (national and sub-national); (3) Develop integrated land-use planning, including information and monitoring systems to prevent large-scale exploitation and improve management of ecosystem service flows; (4) Develop financial and other incentives for forest conservation while promoting the elimination of perverse incentives that increase the pressure on primary forests; (5) Improve land tenure rights and policies; (6) Promote regional cooperation: South-South learning, technical exchanges, intergovernmental cooperation, knowledge management, and communication strategies. In the same line, the project design is fully aligned with the ASL3 Program entry points:**

- Strengthening conservation under different protection regimes.**

2. Enhancing sustainable production and landscape restoration.
3. Supporting governance, incentives, and policy transformations; and
4. Promoting capacity building, communications, and regional cooperation.

2. Likewise, this project contributes directly to GEF 8 strategic goals #1 Avoid and reduce land degradation through SLM and #2 Reverse land degradation through landscape restoration. Within this focal area, the project is articulated with the following supported strategies: (1) Avoid and Reduce Land Degradation: The strategy emphasizes sustainable land management (SLM) interventions to maintain ecosystem services, improve agricultural productivity, and protect livelihoods; and (2) Reverse Land Degradation: Efforts focus on landscape restoration, including restoring forests, preventing deforestation, and improving vegetative cover to rebuild ecosystem services.

3. Lastly, this project aligns with Objective 4 of the GEF-8 Climate Change Mitigation Focal Area Strategy, under Pillar I, focuses on promoting nature-based solutions (NbS) with high mitigation potential. This objective aims to leverage the natural environment's ability to sequester carbon and enhance ecosystem resilience, contributing significantly to climate change mitigation. Specifically, the project contributes to the following strategies: (1) Protection and Restoration of High-Carbon Sequestration Ecosystems: The objective emphasizes the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of ecosystems that have a high capacity to store carbon, such as intact forests, wetlands, peatlands, and coastal habitats (e.g., mangroves, seagrass meadows, and marshes). These ecosystems play a crucial role in capturing and storing atmospheric carbon, thus mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. (2) Scaling Nature-Based Solutions (NbS): GEF-8 supports the scaling up of NbS that help protect biodiversity and ecosystem services while reducing emissions. This includes actions to protect ecosystems from further degradation, reforestation, and sustainable land management practices that also enhance carbon sequestration.

Consistency and Alignment with CI Institutional Priorities

4. The project aligns with CI's institutional priorities and the Southern Cross. In particular, Nature for climate by contributing to carbon emissions mitigation and Nature Positive Economies as this project will strengthen conservation initiatives and work in providing practices that allow communities to use lands in a more sustainable way.
5. Additionally, Conservation International recognizes the immense relevance of the Amazon biome and the critical moment it's facing. Therefore, CI is committed contribute to preventing the "tipping point" in the Amazon by conserving 80% of the forest while ensuring increase prosperity and human well-being in the region by 2025. Consequently, the organization is working in protecting through new protected areas and conservation incentives, strengthening protection and management of both protected and other key areas and restoring forest loss.

6. In particular, CI's Country Program in Ecuador aims to protect natural resources in order to contribute to climate change mitigation and contribute to indigenous groups' wellbeing. As the Executing Agency of "Corredores de Conectividad Amazónicas" (ASL 2 project in Ecuador), Conservation International Ecuador has had a prominent role in the region and will be a key actor to engage with in the implementation phase.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed during Project Preparation as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the child Project Description (Section B).

Yes

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

Yes

If the child project expects to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment, please indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality:

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

Yes

Improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or

Yes

Generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.

Yes

2) Does the child project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during Project Preparation as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes has been clearly articulated in the Child Project Description (Section B) and that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed before CEO endorsement.

Yes

Select what role civil society will play in the Project:

Consulted only;

Member of Advisory Body; Contractor; Yes

Co-financier; Yes

Member of project steering committee or equivalent decision-making body ; Yes

Executor or co-executor; Yes

Other (Please explain)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the Child project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in section B “Child project description”?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguards

We confirm that we have provided information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed child project or program, including risk screenings/ assessments and, if applicable, management plans or other measures to address identified risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex E).

Yes

Please provide overall Project/Program Risk Classification

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
	Medium/Moderate		

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described during Project Preparation in the Project Description and that these activities have been budgeted and an anticipated timeline for delivery of relevant outputs has been provided. This includes budget for linking with and participation in knowledge exchange activities organized through the coordination platform.

Yes

Socio-economic Benefits

We confirm that the child project design has considered socio-economic benefits to be delivered by the project and these have been clearly described in the Project Description and will be monitored and reported on during project implementation (at MTR and TER).

Socio-economic Benefits

1. The project aims to improve human well-being by addressing deforestation and forest degradation through effective conservation, strengthened governance, and SLM practices. By improving the management of 583,000 ha of globally significant biodiversity in selected protected areas, the project will help maintain essential ecosystem services such as water provision, soil fertility, and climate regulation, thereby enhancing the quality of life for local populations. Innovative financial mechanisms will secure long-term financial flows for conservation efforts, enhancing the capacity of local conservation areas for effective management.
2. Strengthening governance by fostering dialogue among key stakeholders, including women and youth, and integrating land use planning into policies and development programs will result in more effective and inclusive governance structures, equitable resource management, and increased community engagement, empowering local populations and promoting social cohesion. Continuous education and training will empower local governments, farmers and communities to participate actively in territorial governance.
3. Implementing SLM practices at the farm scale will enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security, and strengthen local economies by promoting the trade of sustainable products, regularizing land tenure, and increasing access to rural financial services. Associative production with increased market access to added-value products will create new economic opportunities, diversify household income, and improve living standards for local communities.
4. We confirm that the project design has considered socio-economic benefits to be delivered by the project and these have been clearly described in the Project Description and will be monitored and reported on during project implementation (at **PIR**, MTR and TE).

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

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

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing (\$)
CI	GET	Ecuador	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: IPs	Grant	3,557,225.00	320,150.00	3,877,375.00
CI	GET	Ecuador	Biodiversity	BD IP Matching Incentives	Grant	1,185,741.00	106,717.00	1,292,458.00
Total GEF Resources (\$)						4,742,966.00	426,867.00	5,169,833.00

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Was a Project Preparation Grant requested? true

PPG Amount (\$) 150000

PPG Agency Fee (\$) 13500

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
CI	GET	Ecuador	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: IPs	112,500.00	10,125.00	122,625.00
CI	GET	Ecuador	Biodiversity	BD IP Matching Incentives	37,500.00	3,375.00	40,875.00
Total PPG Amount (\$)					150,000.00	13,500.00	163,500.00

Please provide Justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
CI	GET	Ecuador	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	4,000,000.00
Total GEF Resources					4,000,000.00

Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
CFB Amazon IP	GET	4,742,966.00	19413667
Total Project Cost		4,742,966.00	19,413,667.00

Confirmed Co-financing for the project, by name and type

Please include evidence for each co-financing source for this project in the tab of the portal

Sources of Co- financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co- financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Civil Society Organization	ECOMINGA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	4000000

Others		FORAGUA	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2000000
Recipient Country Government		Decentralized Autonomous Government of Pastaza	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	895633
Recipient Country Government		Provincial Government of Azuay	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2000000
Recipient Country Government		Provincial Government of Loja	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2291460
Recipient Country Government		Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Tungurahua	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	483264
Recipient Country Government		Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Zamora Chinchipe	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	300000
Recipient Country Government		Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition - MAATE	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2952082
Civil Society Organization		Nature and Culture International - NCI	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1600000
Others		Private Technical Universtiry of Loja (UTPL)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	185000
Civil Society Organization		World Wildlife Foundation - WWF	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2000000
GEF Agency		Conservation International	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	706228
Total Co-financing					19,413,667.00

Please describe the investment mobilized portion of the co-financing

N/A

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENT

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Coordinator	Date	Project Contact Person	Telephone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	8/15/2024	Orissa Samaroo	12024128031	osamaroo@conservation.org
Project Coordinator		Daniela Carrion		dcarrion@conservation.org

Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template.

Name of GEF OFP	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
José Luis Naula Naula	GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministerio del Ambiente, Agua y Transición Ecológica	2/17/2023
Jose Luis Naula	Director of International Cooperation/ GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition	4/11/2023

ANNEX C: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Please indicate the page number in the Project Document where the project results and M&E frameworks can be found. Please also paste below the Project Results Framework from the Agency document. For the Integrated Programs' global/regional coordination child project, please include the program-wide results framework, inclusive of results specific to the coordination child project. For any country child project, please ensure that relevant program level indicators are included.

Objective:	Conserve, restore and promote the adoption of sustainable land management practices across 1,038,377 hectares of tropical montane forest landscapes along the Eastern Ecuadorian Andes, while enhancing Andean-Amazon habitat connectivity		
Indicator(s):	1. Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management (hectare): 577,289 ha of terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness. 2. Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectare): 461,088 ha of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity. 3. Area of land and ecosystems under restoration (hectare): 400 ha of landscapes under restoration practices. 4. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO₂e): -5,068,290 tCO₂-e Tons of carbon (CO₂-eq.) sequestered in the sector of Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (direct). 5. People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (count): 56,177 (29,023 women; 27,154 men) benefiting from GEF-financed investments.		
Expected Outcomes and Indicators	Project Baseline for Outcome indicators	End of Project Target for Outcome indicators	Expected Outputs, with Indicators and targets
Component 1: Effective conservation of protected areas and local conservation schemes			
Outcome 1.1.: Selected protected areas (PAs) from the SNAP and areas under local conservation schemes (not part of the SNAP) have overcome key management deficiencies. <i>Indicator 1.1.: Management Effectiveness Evaluation (EEM) and Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score in criteria related to financial sustainability and</i>	An EEM assessment has been carried out during 2023 by MAATE for the Sangay National Park (PNS) and two METT assessments have been performed by NCI for the Río Negro-Sopladora National Park (PNRNS). PNS has an EEM score of 66,7 with Monitoring and surveillance, Biodiversity management and budget allocation and adequacy Programs with the lower rankings. In the CELS, 15 private reserves, two of them currently part of the SNAP subsystem (Candelaria and Zuñag), have a METT score from 2021 in which all	By the end of the project, at least 10% increase in EEM or METT scores from Y1 baseline, in criteria related to financial sustainability and monitoring & surveillance, of selected protected areas and local conservation areas. (Total area of 557,289 hectares)	Output 1.1.1.: Financial mechanisms for PAs and local conservation areas management, in place. <i>Indicator 1.1.1.: Number of financial mechanisms strengthened for effective management of PAs and local conservation areas</i> <i>Target 1.1.1.: Two financial mechanisms.</i>

<i>monitoring & surveillance, for selected protected areas and local conservation areas.</i>	reserves are below a minimum score required by the METT tool to consider any reserve under an effective management scheme. Overall, all reserves assessed share the limitation of having limited funding for implementing management actions to increase conservation effectiveness. Updated METT score for EcoMinga Reserves by July 2024 show an increment in management efficiency but still lower than the required target (Candelaria 71, Zuñag 62, Río Anzu 48). In the CCSP, METT assessments have not been previously applied in any of local conservation areas (i.e., conservation and sustainable use areas). Nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives currently support twenty local conservation areas that contain 7,907 ha of montane forests within the Llanganates-Sangay Connectivity Corridor (CELS). These initiatives had an average annual total income of U\$ 6,814 in 2022 and 6,246 U\$ in 2023. These incomes are insufficient to cover the management needs of the reserves. Currently, these reserves lack a financing gap analysis to ensure efficient management. Potential to increase this income through establishing business models and alliances has been identified. Within the Sangay-Podocarpus Connectivity Corridor (CESP), protected areas are partially financed from FORAGUA and from Municipalities (related to municipal ordinances for the creation of local conservation areas).		Output 1.1.2.: Nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives strengthened to increase financial flows for PAs and local conservation areas' effective management. <i>Indicator 1.1.2.: Number of local conservation areas with increased financial flows from NBT initiatives</i> <i>Target 1.1.2: Five local conservation areas with increased financial flows from NBT initiatives.</i> Output 1.1.3.: PNS and PNRNS adopt the SMART tool to address key management deficiencies related to monitoring & surveillance. <i>Indicator 1.1.3.: Number of reports provided by the SMART platform for each national park that integrates the SMART mobile module related to surveillance & control and environmental crimes</i> <i>Target 1.1.3.: One complete annual report per national park.</i> Output 1.1.4 Key management deficiencies identified and addressed in five local conservation areas. <i>Indicator 1.1.4.: Number of management deficiencies identified and addressed.</i> <i>Target 1.1.4.: At least two management deficiencies addressed per selected protected area.</i>
Component 2: Inclusive governance in two connectivity corridors			
Outcome 2.1: Landscape management mechanisms strengthened, to foster shared objectives in territorial development.	In the CELS: two working groups at early stages of development (Tourism and Research groups). An MoU between Tungurahua, Morona Santiago and Pastaza provincial governments has been signed to foster a collaborative management platform for the CELS.	461,088 ha managed through landscape shared objectives and mechanisms that reduce threats to mountain	Output 2.1.1.: Local working groups in both corridors, with annual work plans formulated and under implementation with the effective participation of disadvantaged

<i>Indicator 2.1.: Number of hectares managed through shared objectives and mechanisms that reduce threats to mountain forests and ecosystem services.</i>	92,148 ha of the CELS corridor are under the process of being included within the land use plans (PDOTs for their Spanish acronym) of three provincial governments and four municipalities. In the CESP: Six technical working groups are operational but lacking a management structure. Groups have limited planning and coordination instruments to address issues related to project objectives. 16 municipalities have already included in their PDOTs the conservation corridor. MAATE is currently working on the guidelines to develop the management plans for connectivity corridors. These guidelines will be mandatory and are expected to become effective in 2024 through an amendment to Ministerial Decree 019.	forests and ecosystem services.	population (i.e., women and youth). <i>Indicator 2.1.1: Number of workplans of local working groups, that are under implementation, and that incorporate tailored actions proposed by women, youth, and other disadvantage groups.</i> <i>Target 2.1.1: At least 10 annual workplans under implementation</i> Output 2.1.2: Key stakeholders actively participate in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms established for each connectivity corridor. <i>Indicator 2.1.2: Number of stakeholders participating in multi-stakeholder coordination platforms.</i> <i>Target 2.1.2: At least 100 stakeholders participating (30% of which are woman and youth).</i> Output 2.1.3: Participatory management plans for the two corridors are under implementation. <i>Indicator 2.1.3: Number of participatory management plans under implementation.</i> <i>Target 2.1.3: Two, one per connectivity corridor.</i> Output 2.1.4.: Local promoters, key local government personnel and other relevant local stakeholders trained to implement management plan actions (good governance, conservation areas management and SLM practices).
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			<i>Indicator 2.1.4.: Number of people trained.</i> <i>Target 2.1.4.: At least 250 (30% are women and youth).</i>
Component 3: Incentives for SLM practices in two connectivity corridors			
Outcome 3.1.: Key areas that promote connectivity are under sustainable land management (SLM) practices and ecological restoration. <i>Indicator 3.1.: Number of ha under SLM practices (e.g. agroforestry, silvopasture and restoration).</i>	47 hectares of 76 local producers in the CELS have adopted SLM practices. These actions have improved soil health and fertility, increased agricultural yield within the same land parcel, and reduced agrochemical dependency, improving farmers' health and quality of life. Regarding land tenure regularization, EcoMinga oversaw the resolution of land tenure in 14 properties due to disagreements over land tenure rights among neighbors. These properties, covering 513 hectares, were successfully resolved. Currently, EcoMinga is working on regularizing the land tenure of seven additional properties covering 418 hectares. In the CESP, Municipalities through FORAGUA finance SLM and restoration practices in approximately 1,100 ha. Currently, efforts are focused on certifying deforestation-free practices, while traditional methods such as monocultures and pesticide usage persist in the areas supported through this fund.	600 ha under SLM practices and 400 ha of degraded lands and secondary forests under restoration.	Output 3.1.1.: Local and national financial mechanisms channeling resources for SLM practices in priority areas that enhance connectivity. <i>Indicator 3.1.1.: Amount of in-cash contributions derived from financial mechanisms leveraged by the Project for SLM practices.</i> <i>Target 3.1.1.: At least U\$ 1.000.000 mobilized.</i> Output 3.1.2.: Conservation agreements with individual or with second-degree associations to promote sustainable land management (SLM). <i>Indicator 3.1.2.: Number of local producers and/or households involved in conservation agreements.</i> <i>Target 3.1.2.: At least 100 local producers (20% women) are involved in conservation agreements.</i>
Outcome 3.2: Stakeholders in selected value chains have access to financial incentives for SLM. <i>Indicator 3.2: Number of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex) have access to incentives and mechanisms that strengthen SLM in value chains.</i>	In the CELS, the commercial offer of the 76 producers has been identified; the demand for 20 tour operators has been determined; a portfolio of clients has been approached and commercial alliances have been established with two tourism operators. The 76 local producers in the CELS are in the way to establish and association and are currently operating a rural informal savings and loans mechanism.	250 beneficiaries (40% women)	Output 3.2.1.: Access to markets that favor added-value sustainable produced products, enhanced. <i>Indicator 3.2.1.: Number of products that are commercialized with an added value.</i> <i>Target 3.2.1.: At least 4.</i> Output 3.2.2.: Local producers with access to financial services (e.g., rural informal savings) to support SLM practices and/or commercialization of sustainable products.

			<i>Indicator 3.2.2.: Number of local producers (disaggregated by gender) with access to rural informal savings mechanisms or credits.</i> <i>Target 3.2.2.: At least 100 local producers (30% women).</i>
Component 4: Communications & Knowledge management			
Outcome 4.1: Information, tools and lessons learned on conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity, disseminated. <i>Indicator 4.1.: Number of stakeholders that have been provided with information, tools and lessons learned on conservation and sustainable land management for Andes-Amazon connectivity (at least 30% women).</i>	In the CELS a communication campaign to promote the corridor among citizens was implemented in 2022, based on an image (logo) developed by WWF and key stakeholders. Also, WWF has engaged local governments, MAATE and other local organizations to develop joint communication materials and media content around the CELS. In the CCSP, also an image was developed, and a web page was created with key information of the corridor. Digital materials and videos of the corridor have been presented in symposiums, workshops. Lastly, three books about the corridor's biodiversity have been produced and disseminated. National Connectivity Corridors Group created in 2023 to establish synergies and expand knowledge and experiences on ecological connectivity in Ecuador. One of the objectives of this national group is to establish and strengthen a community of practice that generates recommendations and technical inputs to national and local stakeholders. Webinars and the First National Connectivity Corridors Symposium have been implemented by the group in 2024. ASL Regional Project aims to strengthen capacity and coordination for improved integrated landscape management and conservation in the Amazon. Through its knowledge management component, it promotes face to face and virtual activities, including online courses, studies, specific workshops and study tours to provide program beneficiaries with opportunities to learn and share knowledge.	At least 15,000 local, national and regional stakeholders (at least 30% women).	Output 4.1.1.: Strategic communication, including approaches and methodologies with cultural and gender relevance, to enhance conservation and sustainable land management. <i>Indicator 4.1.1.: Number of persons reached by strategic communication activities.</i> <i>Target 4.1.1.: 10,000 people. (50% women)</i> Output 4.1.2 National knowledge platform strengthened to promote connectivity corridors as a key tool to landscape management. <i>Indicator 4.1.3.: Number of digital knowledge platforms implemented and disseminated among key stakeholders.</i> <i>Target 4.1.3.: One</i> Output 4.1.4.: Knowledge contributions to ASL IP and other regional and national initiatives, to scale up and replicate actions that enhance Andes Amazon connectivity. <i>Indicator 4.1.4.: Number of knowledge contribution products (including those that incorporate gender and inclusion issues) delivered through Amazon Sustainable Landscape (ASL) IP and other regional and national</i>

			initiatives aimed at scaling up or promoting replication. Target 4.1.4.: At least one for each component, and at least one of them will focus on gender and inclusion issues.
Component 5: Monitoring and evaluation.			
Outcome 5.1.: A gender-responsive and inclusive project monitoring and evaluation framework is developed and utilized to inform decision-making and adaptive project management Indicator 5.1.: # of M&E plans developed and implemented.	WWF has an M&E monitoring system in place that can provide the required support for adequate project management and strategic decision-making.	One M&E Plan developed and implemented-	Output 5.1.1.: Periodic M&E reports to CI-GEF Agency, the project Steering Committee and GEF, to inform the project's adaptive management. Indicator 5.1.1.: Number of progress reports submitted. Target 5.1.1.: 16 financial and 8 technical progress reports. Output 5.1.2 Project external evaluations conducted to assess the achievements and challenges of the project, in accordance to GEF and CI-GEF Evaluation Policy. Indicator 5.1.2.: Number of Midterm and terminal evaluation reports submitted. Target 5.1.2. Two evaluation reports (one midterm and one terminal).

ANNEX D: STATUS OF UTILIZATION OF PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Provide detailed funding amount of the PPG activities financing status in the table below:

Project Preparation Activities Implemented	GETF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)		
	Budgeted Amount	Amount Spent To date	Amount Committed
Professional services: 2 - NCI consulting team	32,000.00	17,565.00	14,435.00
Personnel- Project Design and Coordination	13,775.00	334.00	13,441.00
Professional Services: 1 - ProDoc Development Consultancy	89,800.00	62,400.00	23,400.00
Travel-Meetings and Events: Results Framework and Theory of Change Workshop; Executing Arrangements and Safeguards Plans Workshop	14,425.00	3,026.00	11,399.00

Total	150,000.00	83,325.00	62,675.00
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ANNEX E: PROJECT MAP AND COORDINATES

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

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Upper left corner	-78.328	-1.196	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Left midpoint	-78.328	-2.786	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Lower left corner	-78.328	-4.330	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Upper right	-77.752	-1.196	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Right midpoint	-77.752	-2.786	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Lower right corner	-77.752	-4.330	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Please provide any further geo-referenced information and map where project interventions are taking place as appropriate.

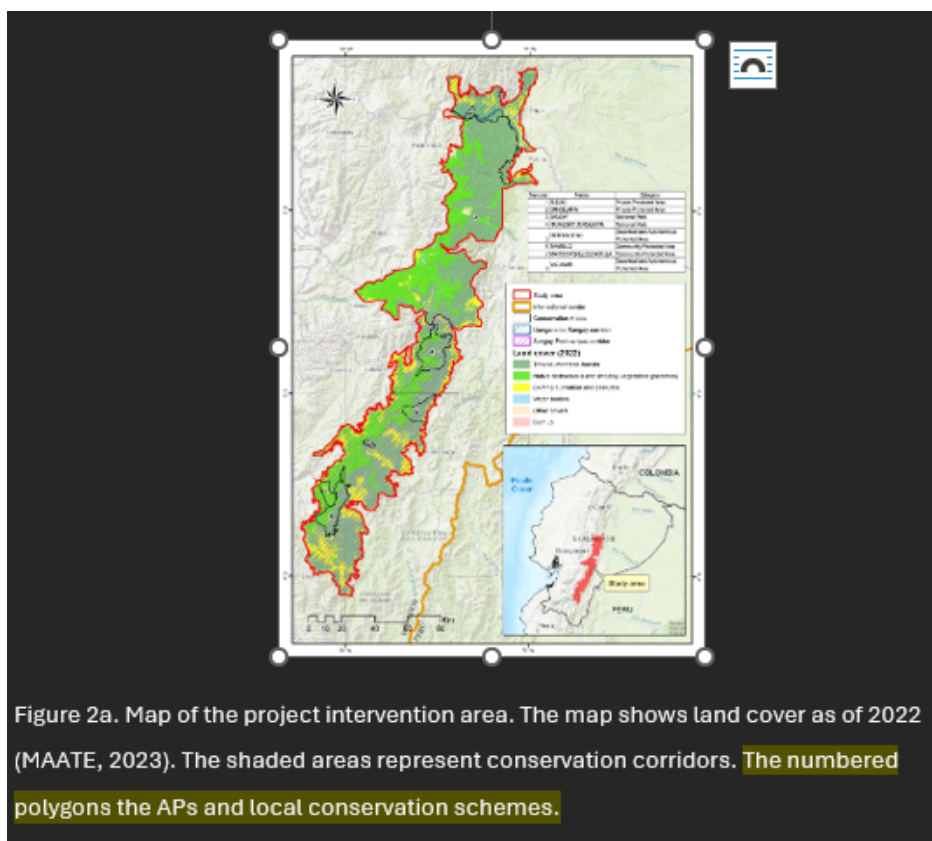


Figure 2a. Map of the project intervention area. The map shows land cover as of 2022 (MAATE, 2023). The shaded areas represent conservation corridors. The numbered polygons the APs and local conservation schemes.

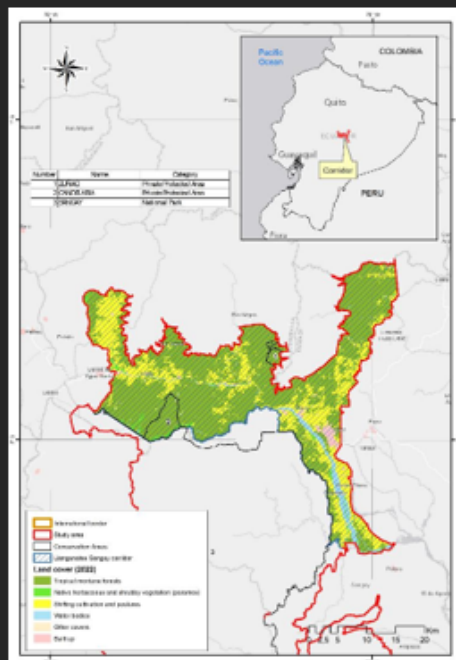


Figure 2b. Map of connectivity corridor Llanganates Sangay (CELS). The map shows land cover as of 2022 (MAATE, 2023). **The numbered polygons the APs and local conservation schemes.**

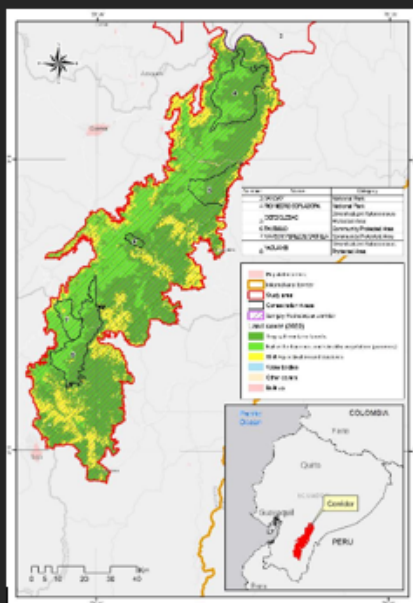


Figure 2c. Map of connectivity corridor Sangay-Podocarpus (CCSP). The map shows land cover as of 2022 (MAATE, 2023). **The numbered polygons the APs and local conservation schemes.**

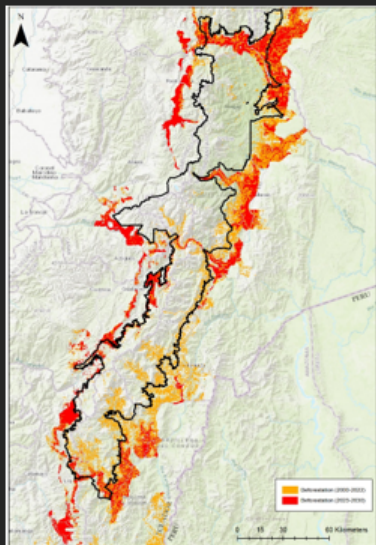


Figure 3. Cumulative 2000-2022 and projected (2023-2030) deforestation in the project intervention area. Sources: (1) Ministry of Environment of Ecuador, Forest monitoring unit; (2) Sierra *et al.*, (2023). Deforestation Scenarios for 2030 for continental Ecuador.

ANNEX F: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS DOCUMENTS INCLUDING RATING

Attach agency safeguard datasheet/assessment report(s), including ratings of risk types and overall project/program risk classification as well as any management plans or measures to address identified risks and impacts (as applicable).

Title

Appendix4_Stakeholder Engagement Plan_20240807_clean (1)
 11062024 ESS Screening Report ASL Ecuador 2nd Submission
 11062024 ESS Screening Form Ecuador ASL 2nd Submission
 20240807 Appendix 6_ASL III Accountability and Grievance Mechanism Plan
 20240807 Appendix 3_Analysis & Gender Mainstreaming Plan

ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE

Please upload the budget table here.

Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here

Expenditure Category	Detailed Description	Component (USDeq.)								Total (USDeq.)	Responsible Entity
		Component 1	Component 2	Component 3		Component 4	Component 5	Sub-Total	PMC		
		Outcome 1.1	Outcome 2.1	Outcome 3.1	Outcome 3.2	Outcome 4.1 KM	Outcome5.1 M&E				
	Personnel - Project Manager/Technical Lead	93,771	30,917	30,917	30,917	38,556	12,049	237,128	3,849	240,977	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Policy and Governance Specialist	-	142,328	-	-	15,814	-	158,142		158,142	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Sustainable Production Specialist	-	-	91,571	91,571	-	-	183,142		183,142	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Financial and Administrative Assistant							-	136,554	136,554	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Knowledge Management Officer	8,233	24,700	4,117	4,117	41,167		82,334		82,334	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Safeguards & Gender Specialist	-	39,159	19,579	19,579	-		78,317		78,317	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	88,358	88,358		88,358	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Operations Director	11,386	11,386	11,386	7,125			41,283	5,306	46,589	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel - Communications Manager	20,332	20,332	10,166	10,166	20,332		81,330		81,330	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Ecuador Zero Carbon Program (PECC) Assessment	58,300						58,300		58,300	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Develop the financial mechanism	56,100						56,100		56,100	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Implement nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives	28,000						28,000		28,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Sangay National Park (PNS) and Rio Negro-Sopladora National Park (PNRNS) adopt the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART)	28,000						28,000		28,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Personnel and Professional Services	Consultancy- Facilitators for workshops for key stakeholders in coordination platforms established for Llanganates-Sangay connectivity corridor (CELS)		22,000					22,000		22,000
Consultancy- Specialists to systematize the workshops for the participatory management plans for Llanganates-Sangay connectivity corridor (CELS)			16,650					16,650		16,650	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Instructor for Ecuador Zero Carbon Program (PECC) capacitation and systematization			6,640					6,640		6,640	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Good governance capacitation to CELS. Includes development and systematization of the course			14,840					14,840		14,840	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Gender Mainstreaming Plan			58,000					58,000		58,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Stakeholder Engagement Plan			44,700					44,700		44,700	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Women's Leadership Capacity Development			100,052					100,052		100,052	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Implementation of the grievance mechanism			37,300					37,300		37,300	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
Consultancy- Establish enabling conditions for conservation agreements				348,000	-			348,000		348,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Local producers with financial services access to support Sustainable Land Management (SLM) practices and/or commercialization of sustainable products			-	111,238			111,238		111,238	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy for strategic communication, including approaches and methodologies with cultural and gender relevance, to enhance conservation and sustainable					120,000		120,000		120,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy for national knowledge platform strengthened to promote connectivity corridors as a key tool to landscape management					90,000		90,000		90,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy for knowledge contributions to ASL IP and other regional and national initiatives, to scale up and replicate actions that enhance Andes Amazon connectivity.					75,000		75,000		75,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Mid-term Review of the project						40,000	40,000		40,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Terminal Evaluation of the project						60,000	60,000		60,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Consultancy- Annual Project Audit							-	44,362	44,362	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Total Personnel and Professional Services	304,123	569,005	515,737	274,713	400,870	200,407	2,264,855	190,071	2,454,925	

Travel, Meetings and Workshops	Annual Work Plan Formulation Workshops		10,521					10,521		10,521	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Llanguanates-Sangay connectivity corridor (CELS) Platform Workshops		34,443					34,443		34,443	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Sangay-Podocarpus Connectivity Corridor (CCSP) Platform Workshops		9,240					9,240		9,240	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Development of the CELS Management Plan		9,506					9,506		9,506	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Ecuador Zero Carbon Program (PECC) Capitalization Workshop		3,670					3,670		3,670	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Good governance Capacitation Workshop		9,520					9,520		9,520	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Sustainable Land Management & Restoration Workshops		4,100					4,100		4,100	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Exchange Events	22,000	-	11,000	11,000	22,000		66,000		66,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	ASL Annual Conferences and IP Meetings/Events for 5 years					44,000	-	44,000		44,000	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Inception Workshop					-	12,724	12,724		12,724	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Closing Workshop					-	12,724	12,724		12,724	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Steering Committee meetings							-	16,584	16,584	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Total Travel, Meetings and Workshops	22,000	81,000	11,000	11,000	66,000	25,448	216,448	16,584	233,032	
Grants and Agreements	Regional Water Fund (FORAGUA)	87,000	-	656,000	74,800			817,800		817,800	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	ECOMINGA	124,500	-	-	-			124,500		124,500	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Nature and Culture International (NCI)	232,470	339,953	97,000				669,423		669,423	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAATE)	-	22,190					22,190		22,190	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Private Technical University of Loja (UTPL)	-	117,543					117,543		117,543	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Local and national financial mechanisms channel resources for sustainable land management (SLM) and restoration practices in priority areas that enhance connectivity.	-	-	188,000	37,400			225,400		225,400	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Nature-based tourism (NBT) initiatives strengthened to increase financial flows for protected areas and local conservation areas' effective management.	48,200						48,200		48,200	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Total Grants and Agreements	492,170	479,686	941,000	112,200	-	-	2,025,056	-	2,025,056	
Equipment	Cellphones to carryout technical activities	510	620	780	512	330		2,752		2,752	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	GPS to carryout technical activities	90	115	140	95	60		500		500	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Computers to carryout technical activities	1,380	1,695	2,120	1,400	905		7,500		7,500	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Total Equipment	1,980	2,430	3,040	2,007	1,295	-	10,752	-	10,752	
Other Operating Cost	Telephone Service							-	19,200	19,200	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Ecuador
	Total Other Operating Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19,200	19,200	
Grand Total		820,273	1,132,121	1,470,777	399,920	468,165	225,855	4,517,111	225,855	4,742,966	

ANNEX I: RESPONSES TO PROJECT REVIEWS

From GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies, and Responses to Comments from Council at work program inclusion and the Convention Secretariat and STAP at PIF.

N/A