

Connectivity corridors in two priority landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon Region

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10259

Countries

Ecuador

Project Name

Connectivity corridors in two priority landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon Region

Agencies

WWF-US

Date received by PM

2/26/2021

Review completed by PM

4/23/2021

Program Manager

Mark Zimsky

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

FSP

PIF
CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

NA

Agency Response

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

•3/15/2021

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•Please provide the two co-financing letters, from the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture.

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•Only when the cofinancing package is complete with this part of the proposal be evaluated.

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•Please also discuss how these large sums of money were calculated to be "in-kind" and recurrent expenditures.

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•Please also discuss the implications on achieving the project objectives caused by the lack of any cash cofinancing other than the grant from CI.

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•4/2/2021

•Cleared.

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency:

3/31/2021

The co-finance letter from the Ministry of Environment and updated co-finance letters from WWF and SCTEA (to show grant and in kind) have been uploaded in the portal.

The co-financing figures have been updated, the investment mobilized total figure has been increased, from USD1M to USD23M, and an explanation of how these co-financing figures have been calculated is included in the Project Document, pages 126 and 127.

In brief, the project now shows a total co-financing of USD45,061,551, from which USD22,061,551 is in kind / recurrent expenditures and USD23,000,000 is in grants / investment mobilized.

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

Yes, but as noted above on the section on cofinance we are concerned about the limpact of the lack of leverage of additional cash resources to the acheivement of the objectives. Please clarify. Also please clarify if this is also due to the limited impact in terms of hectares under improved management as measured by the core indicators.

4/2/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

3/31/2021

See comment above. Co-financing figures have been updated and the investment mobilized has been substantially increased, as the team was able to identify that much of the previously identified in kind is actually grant financing.

Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Core indicators

**7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E?
Do they remain realistic?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

Please provide a METT score for the protected areas and the names of the protected areas.

Please explain why such a large overall investment is having such a small impact when measured in hectares. This does not seem to be a very good return on investment.

4/2/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

3/31/2021

The project is not going to directly work on improving the management of existing protected areas, it is going to work on creating two new protected areas (two new connectivity corridors) and ensuring the management tools, the governance system and skills are in place for the future management of those new PAs. At the end of the project, when (and if, depending on FPIC process) the two new PAs have been formally designated, the project could calculate the baseline METT of these two new protected areas.

We have reviewed the Core Indicators and increased the target of Core Indicator 4.1. Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity from 18,000 ha to 118,000 ha. Please see description of how the targets of the Core Indicators have been calculated in page 130 and 131 of the Project Document and in the Results Framework on page 160.

This target has been increased by 100,000 ha. The reasoning for this is that the project is going to be working with local governments in both project landscapes, to update local Land Use Plans, for those plans to mainstream and prioritize the conservation and sustainable use of the two connectivity corridors to be created. The project will influence those LUPs, to include in their objectives and priority investments, the conservation and management of the two new corridors. Those land use plans will be approved during the lifetime of the project, and therefore we can claim that we will be

improving landscape management to improve biodiversity in an additional area of 100,000 ha.

The total target for Core Indicator 4.1 = 118,000ha.

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Stakeholders

Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase? Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared. Includes discussion of COVID risks and mitigation strategies as well.

Agency Response
Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Knowledge Management

Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
4/28/2021

In the section labeled ANNEX E in the portal, a complete budget must be inserted, you can not refer to the documents section.

Please institutionalize this element of CEO endorsements in all WWF-US projects so it does not delay any other projects. When inserting the budget please make sure it is legible and fits within the page and does not extend over the margins. We suggest that you present the budget in Portal by component instead of by output so the budget will be narrower and fit in Portal.

As per paragraph 2 ? page 42 of the Guidelines, ?The Budget Template in Appendix A should be completed by the Agency and submitted at the time of CEO Endorsement/Approval as an annex in the Portal. ?The same Budget Template in excel format should be uploaded in the Portal - section ?Documents?.

4/28/2021

The budget column under "detailed description" must be in English. Please resubmit.

Agency Response

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

NA.

Agency Response
CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

NA.

Agency Response
Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response
Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
3/15/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

NA.

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/15/2021

No. Please include cofinance letters that are missing and respond to the questions about the impact on achieving the project objectives caused by the lack of any significant cash cofinance and how the project proposes to mitigate that impact and/or adjust to that reality.

4/12/2021

No. Please address these issues and resubmit:

1. On Project Information: The implementation/ completion dates sum up to 61 months. Please correct the duration or the completion date to 09/30/2026.
2. In Institutional arrangement and Coordination it is said that CI will co-execute. However, in Project Information CI's participation is absent. Please include CI and select the Executing Partner Type as appropriate.
3. Table A ? Focal / Non-Focal Area Elements should only include IP SFM Amazon
4. On the PMC Proportionality: there is not proportionality in the co-financing contribution to PMC. If the GEF contribution is kept at 5%, for a co-financing of \$43,836,551 the expected contribution to PMC must be around \$2,191,827 instead of \$1,225,000 (which is 2.8%). As the costs associated with the project management have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to the PMC, the GEF contribution and the co-financing contribution must be proportional, which means that the GEF contribution to PMC might be decreased and the co-financing contribution to PMC might be increased to reach a similar level. Please amend either by increasing the co-financing portion and/or by reducing the GEF portion. Also the PMC budget does not include what the 1,225,000 USD will be used for.
5. On Co-financing: The letter from Amazon Special Territorial Circumscription specifies that their co-financing is ?investment mobilized? as also indicated by the kind of activities and support. Please revise that entry in table C.
6. Monitoring and Evaluation budgeted Plan must be uploaded in Portal.
7. The budget is requested must be uploaded in the Portal.
8. The M&E Budget represents 14,73% of the total project budget when the suggested is 3% as per the guidelines. Please revise accordingly.
9. The project will provide grants ? however, it was not possible to find any section describing the involvement of the GEF Agency for applying its Fiduciary Standards in managing these grants. Please clarify.
10. Budget: several items associated with the execution of the project (i.e. normal internet, Regular office operating costs associated with normal project implementation, Project office rent Palora and Putumayo, Costs specific to CI's Ecuador office (Quito) that support the operation of its portfolio of projects) as well as project staff (Project Manager, Financial and Administrative Assistant Palora, Financial and administrative Assistant Putumayo, the costs associated to salaries of CI's country office staff that are part of the execution of the project) must be charged to the Project Management Costs of both ?the GEF portion and the co-financing portion? (see Guidelines paragraph 5 ? page 49) ? please amend.

4/28/2021

All issues have been addressed except for point 7 about uploading the budget into the portal. See section above on Annexes. Please revise and resubmit.

4/28/2021

The budget column under "detailed description" in the portal budget must be in English. Please resubmit.

4/28/2021

Project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	3/15/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/12/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/28/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

The objective of this project is to improve the ecological connectivity of two priority landscapes of the Ecuadorian Amazon, through the establishment of two connectivity corridors and associated management mechanisms, to ensure the long-term biodiversity conservation of its ecosystems.

The two proposed project landscapes, the Putumayo Aguarico and the Palora Pastaza, include the two main Ecuadorian tributaries of the Amazon River (The Napo and

Pastaza rivers) and play a significant role in connecting areas of high conservation value, acting as biological corridors, providing buffers for Protected Areas (PAs), and supplying other globally important ecosystem services.

The project will build on the most important public and private interventions that, in the two project landscapes, are working to promote (i) biodiversity conservation and ecological connectivity; (ii) sustainable agriculture practices and bioeconomy initiatives; (iii) territorial planning processes and coordination of stakeholders.

The project will be implemented over a period of 5 years and includes 4 interrelated components.

Component 1 seeks to implement a technical analysis to select the best connectivity corridor route, based on geospatial, social, economic, cultural, ecological, and political criteria.

Component 2 seeks to decrease threats to connectivity in the two proposed corridors, by promoting sustainable agriculture production practices in key areas of the corridors, based on the assessments done in Component 1.

Component 3 seeks to establish the enabling conditions for effective and participatory corridor management.

Component 4 focuses on developing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation plan that will allow for effective and efficient project management and provide information for effective decision-making within the adaptive management of the project.

The project will lead to the creation of 50,000 ha of new PAs (two connectivity corridors) and associated management instruments; the improved management of 20,000 ha of landscape, through the promotion of sustainable land management practices in productive systems, and improved management of forests associated to bioeconomy activities, to benefit biodiversity; and 212,644 tonCO₂ emissions reduced from avoided deforestation and degradation by project activities.

Local-level consultations, workshops, meetings will only be undertaken if they comply with national to local government guidelines and WWF guidelines, and follow COVID-19 safe protocols.

Given the particularities that currently exist due to the pandemic, the use of virtual technologies and methodologies for remote stakeholder consultations will be available, reflecting each area's specificities and actor's particularities, to ensure that if face to face meetings are not possible, the project can advance implementation effectively with the use of remote meetings, as much as possible.

The economic, social, environmental, and cultural conditions of the pandemic, COVID 19, and the associated assumptions, will be monitored by the project, for an early identification of related risks, and to adjust the project intervention accordingly, with mitigation measures that ensure achievement of desired impact. During the start-up of the project, the Project Steering Committee will discuss and monitor measures to ensure government and project partner ownership and timely participation. The landscape advisory groups will be platforms that will allow coordination between different government sectors around activities of the project and will allow for an early identification of risks and associated mitigation measures.