

# Towards a better understanding of the Amazon Aquifer Systems for its protection and sustainable management

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

11108

**Countries**

Regional (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela)

**Project Name**

Towards a better understanding of the Amazon Aquifer Systems for its protection and sustainable management

**Agencies**

UNEP, IADB

**Date received by PM**

8/29/2024

**Review completed by PM**

9/30/2024

**Program Manager**

Taylor Henshaw

**Focal Area**

International Waters

**Project Type**

FSP

**PIF**  
**CEO**

**Part I - General Project Information**

**1. a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Partly, please address following:

(1) Please remove "Mixed & Others" from Project Sector field. CCM Only. Reach out to [ITSOP\\_GEF\\_Portal\\_technical\\_team@worldbankgroup.org](mailto:ITSOP_GEF_Portal_technical_team@worldbankgroup.org) for assistance.

(2) Please change Region to "Latin America and Caribbean"

(3) Please change project duration to 60 months (see reasons below)

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

**Agency Response**

1. "Mixed & Others" was removed from Project Sector field

2. The Region was not adjusted to "Latin America and Caribbean" because it has an impact on the options in the finance table (Table D). See response of the GEF Portal technical team:

Dear Natalie,  
Sorry for the delay. The project duration has been updated to 60 months. In regard to item no 2 this cannot be changed as they will impact the options in the finance table (Table D).

Regards,  
Priyanka Chandras Kamat

3. Duration was extended to 60 months, amendments were made in the activities (reflected in the workplan and budget), and PCU.

**b) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

**2. Project Summary.**

**a) Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected outcomes?**

**b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project and is it within the max. of 250 words?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes, but the GEBs are far too low for a \$15 million investment. Please include additional ha under improved sustainable practices and increase direct beneficiaries (and include new targets in summary section). Update summary in addition to Core Indicator section. Please discuss methodology approach and targets with GEF Sec.

Note: Agency response in PIF review sheet: *"The series of pilots are indicative at this stage and will be further developed with quantified information during PPG. Hence, given that the project is funded by IW, in the absence of more specific information, potential co-benefits and contributions to Core Indicator 4 on landscapes under improved practices were estimated very conservatively."*

(b) Partly. Please include a short summary of the barriers the project seeks to overcome through the project outputs and provide a high-level summary of the project activities and how they feed into TDA-SAP development.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b) Addressed.

## Agency Response

a. The GEBs for area of landscape under improved sustainable practices and the direct beneficiaries were increased. The summary and core indicator table were updated accordingly across the CEO Endorsement Package.

b. The barriers were included in the summary. A high-level summary of the project activities was also included.

### 3. Project Description Overview

**a) Is the project objective statement concise, clear and measurable?**

**b) Are the components, outcomes, and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?**

**c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the project components and budgeted for?**

**d) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?**

**e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10% (for MSP) or 5% (for FSP)? If above, is the justification acceptable?**

## Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) It would be worth reconsidering the phrasing in part. The objective sounds as if the project's activities are all studies that will eventually strengthen existing regional governance. This doesn't do justice to the SAP political document that will be designed and endorsed, which is action-oriented, not just leading to a common understanding.

(b) Partly

(i) Please remove (1) typo under Output 1.2.

(ii) Please specify in the table which stakeholders are agreeing on the TDA in Output 1.5

(iii) Please see comment on truncated gender sub-output under Output 2.2

(iv) The component numbering is backward for Component 3 and 4. Pilots should be Component 3 and SAP development should be Component 4. Please revise.

(v) Please strive for more ambition under capacity # people benefiting per Output 5.1.

(c)

Gender: Please clarify Output 2.2. (iii), which is truncated in the Table ("gender responsive" (UNEP). Please explain why none of the 8 pilots focus on gender perspectives.

KM: Yes

M&E: Partly. Outputs must be disaggregated. Please create unique outputs for M&E.

M&E costs are around 3.7%, which is above the average 2% for projects above \$10 million. Please revise down.

(d) Yes

(e) Yes

\*Please avoid using decimals in the financial values. Revise on resubmission.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b)

(i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Addressed.

(v) Addressed.

(c) Gender: Addressed

M&E: Addressed.

### Agency Response

(a) During the PIF phase, countries discussed a lot about how to present the objective according to their policies. We agree that the project should allow us to come up with an endorsed SAP. Outputs 1.5 and 4.1 show this. Considering that the objective statement is merely a summary, we have modified the objective in alignment with countries' decision while at the same time showing the action-oriented nature of the project. The project objective is consequently rephrased as: 'To get a common understanding of the Amazon Aquifer Systems (AAS) (TDA) -the invisible giant-, to strengthen existing regional governance, and to develop and endorse an integrated groundwater management approach (SAP) its protection and sustainable use, thereby enhancing water security and ecosystem resilience in the Amazon region?.'

(b)

- i. The typo was removed from Output 1.2.
- ii. Stakeholders agreeing on the TDA on Output 1.5 were included in the table and the document.
- iii. Output 2.2 was modified to make it clearer. It now reads: "A gender responsive White Paper with recommendations for (i) improving national legal, technical, and institutional frameworks on groundwater management and regional coordination, and (ii) strengthening ACTO's cooperation role on groundwater resources management (UNEP)".
- iv. The component numbering was fixed in the Portal, however please note that this has been caused by a recurring glitch in the GEF Portal.
- v. As described in the CEO ER several capacity building activities will be performed across components but coordinated by Output 5.1. As indicated in the revised version of the Core Indicator 11, the total beneficiaries of the ASS project will be 271,013 people, where 38,125 people are benefited from capacity building activities (technical workshops from components 1 and 3, AAS certification, AAS Symposium and international conference, gender-based workshops).

(c)

Gender: Output 2.2 was amended. All pilots include gender responsive activities. References to the gender perspective are included in the projects as outcome 3.1 shows when mentioned: "A series of eight (8) pilots testing good management practices to reduce stress on the aquifer systems and increase water security in the face of climate change variability, with a gender responsive approach". In the project description, Component 3 is now more specific regarding developing a gender analysis in each project, as well as incorporating gender perspective and equitable benefit sharing between women and men across the interventions. Some of the pilot projects already include gender activities, but based on the Gender Action Plan, emphasis will be put to its implementation during the inception stage of the AAS project.

M&E: Two unique outputs were created for the M&E component.

M&E costs: Given the complexity of the project, the number of pilots, the wide geographical coverage etc., and in line with IAs procedures the project needs a higher percentage for M&E. It was thus maintained at 3.7%.

#### **4. Project Outline**

##### **A. Project Rationale**

- a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?**
- b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?**

**c) If this is an NGI project, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes

(b) Please include a stakeholders sub-section under project rationale that clearly describes the role of stakeholders in the system and how they will contribute to GEBs and other project outcomes.

It is well noted that the project has provided a stakeholder engagement plan. Please provide further information in the SEP on key stakeholders' role related to project components and outputs.

(c) N/A

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(b) Addressed.

Agency Response(b) A sub-section 'Stakeholders' was included in the revised version of the CEO Endorsement document. Appendix 3B with all the relevant stakeholders for the project by country and at regional level is describing their role, impact, influence, importance and how they will contribute to the project (by component) in addition to the engagement strategy.

#### **5 B. Project Description**

**5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the focus and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust approach? Are underlying key assumptions listed?**

**b) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?**

**c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described and proposed solutions and critical assumptions and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?**

**d) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified?**

**e) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?**

**f) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF**

guidelines?

**g) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive management needs and options (as applicable for this FSP/MSP)?**

**h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) and their roles adequately described within the components?**

**i) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component design and description/s?**

**j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?**

**k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes and how will that be addressed?**

**l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes

(b) Yes

(c) Partly, please address the following:

(i) Are there plans to work with the IAEA under Activity 1.4.3? IAEA is doing leading work in this field and it is understood that they would be contributing to the envisioned isotope work. Please discuss with GEFSec.

(ii) What is the purpose of the certification/MOOCs? Will trainees participate in the studies under the project? How does this advance the project objective/attainment of GEBs? GEF IW investments should not be used for purely academic purposes. Grouping this activity under TDA development does not seem justified.

(iii) What is the purpose of the AAS Symposium and international conference? How does this advance the project objective/attainment of GEBs? GEF IW investments should not be used for purely academic purposes. Grouping this activity under TDA development does not seem justified.

(iv) Please explain why there is a standalone activity on disseminating Amazon Groundwater White Paper at international events. What is the relevance of this and, if relevant, why is it not embedded in the knowledge management Component 5 activities?

(v) The annexed Component 3 Pilots description document is largely in Spanish. Please provide PDF in English. Annex will be reviewed on resubmission.

(vi) Please ensure submission refers to SAP as "Strategic Action Program" and not "Strategic Action Plan".



(vii) Please explain the benefits of spending project resources on disseminating the SAP at international events. How does this advance the project objective/attainment of GEBs?

(viii) Gender Action Plan should not just be a standalone activity but mainstreamed across activities. Please ensure/confirm Gender Action Plan activities are fully incorporated/documented in the project description section. See further gender comments below.

(ix) M&E. Please include M&E plan (annexed) under the Project Description section. The current M&E write up is not sufficient. Please match description to set of specific outputs that must be included under M&E component.

\*In general, there appear to be far too many meetings/conferences and workshops and not enough on the ground action in this project.

(d) Yes, but as indicated elsewhere, the Core Indicators measuring GEBs needs to be significantly increased for this investment to move ahead.

(e) Yes

(f) Partly. Please see budget comments re: PMC and misc overhead charges, several of which do not seem to be an effective use of GEF funds.

(g) Yes

(h) Yes

(i) Partly. Please ensure that beyond aiming for gender balance, gender experts are included in activities that involve consultations to capture gender perspectives. Under monitoring and reporting, please ensure reporting of gender-specific results beyond data disaggregated by sex. In Output 5.1, please ensure that best practice examples and lessons learned in advancing gender equality outcomes are captured, and widely shared including through the IW:LEARN platform.

(j) Yes

(k) Please confirm policy coherence elements. Are there any policies, regulations or subsidies that could counteract the intended project outcomes ? If so, how will that be addressed?

(l) Yes

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(c)

(i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Addressed.

(v) Addressed.

(vi) Addressed.

(vii) Addressed.

(viii) Addressed.

(ix) Addressed.

(d) Addressed.

(f) Addressed

(i) Addressed.

(k) Addressed.

## Agency Response

(c)

i. The IAEA is working in the region on technical cooperation projects (currently in Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador). Initial discussions were held on potential collaboration with the agency, particularly on Activity 1.4.3, and others as relevant (see collaboration email in the road map). Once the project is approved (in the inception phase) the collaboration will be formalized.

ii. Appendix 13 shows the details of the AAS certification which involves the development of several MOOCS inside of the ACTO's PRIC platform. The main topics for these courses are knowledge and governance. Given barrier 1 on 'Insufficient knowledge at transboundary level', it is necessary to develop extensive capacity building activities for ACTO and Country Members (CM) technical personnel. Simple webinars and one- or two-day workshops will not suffice. Rather one needs a more continuous and systemic process. The activities involved in Components 1 and 3 will produce state-of-the-art knowledge about the AAS processes and will simultaneously train ACTO and participating countries' personnel, especially for the pilots (Component 3). It is required that participants in the AAS certification (especially from ACTO and participating countries) visit the pilot sites and develop in-situ applied activities. Some countries (e.g., Ecuador, Bolivia) have expressed their interest in developing groundwater units by using the AAS project as a triggering process. Providing the countries with a more systemic capacity building program like the AAS certification will be very impactful in the long term.

As described in Appendix 13, two tracks are proposed for the AAS certification, one more technically based, and the other more governance-based. Therefore, the AAS project will also train regional decision makers, a capacity needed within ministries (requested by RADA, ACTO and country presidents who in 2023 signed the Belem Declaration) and emphasized by participating countries throughout the PPG process and during the PPG validation workshop in April 2024 (in Brasilia, Brazil).

In April 2023, USAID and ACTO carried out a workshop on strategic planning which stated that 'The lack of quality technical-scientific information hinders the design, implementation and evaluation of practices, public policies and regulatory frameworks to achieve sustainable development in the Amazon region?'. This attests to the need for combined knowledge and governance capacity building.

This has been reflected accordingly in the project document to emphasize the value of the AAS certification (especially in Appendix 13) which will include several teaching methodologies such as field visits to pilots and the development of MOOCs. Reference to the GEBs were added in Appendix 13 with examples on how to attain them. By performing several of the activities in all components, especially those related to local interventions or pilots (Component 3), the GEBs will be attained (as described in Appendix 13).

In Appendix 13, an item 'Audience?' was added. At least 50% of the participants in the AAS Certification should be professional related to the AAS project (from ACTO, CM and partners). Additionally, graduate students and professionals outside of the AAS project will be accepted into the AAS certification based on an application process. Preference will be given to regional participants.

Activity 1.5.1 Certification in Amazon Aquifer Systems will remain in Component 1. Components 1 and 3 are strongly related to developing technical activities (remote sensing, field measurements, groundwater modeling, among others), thus, placing the AAS Certification in Component 1 makes sense due to the importance of overcoming Barrier 1. However, the coordination of the AAS certification will be done by Output 5.1 (Component 5).

iii. Barrier 1 refers to the lack of knowledge which will be addressed mainly by components 1 and 3. The other barriers (shared groundwater governance, common protection strategy, and low public awareness related to protection and sustainable use) are addressed mainly by components 2, 4 and 5, which will require knowledge that the AAS project generates. ACTO has an ideal position, as they will not only deliver AAS knowledge but will translate it to decision makers. The AAS Symposium and international conference won't be just dedicated to purely academic purposes, but rather will cover all four barriers and all components described in the project. A new Appendix 16 named 'AAS Symposium and international conference: Knowledge and governance?' is added to clarify both the AAS Symposium and international conference by providing the objectives, descriptions, participants, partners, and themes for both meetings. Final design will be done during the inception stage.

iv. Activities 2.2.3. and 2.2.4. have been conceived independently. Activity 2.2.3 is about implementing a dissemination and communication strategy at the level of CM, seeking their firm appropriation of the document and its support. In the case of activity 2.2.4, a regional positioning at

an international level is sought. The necessary international presence of the project, the communication of its progress and achievements, are required to position the issue and the efforts beyond the region and thereby attract the interest of various actors, including financiers, who support the implementation process of the AAS SAP.

v. All pilots are now translated into English (see appendix 11).

vi. It was revised and now it reads "Strategic Action Program" and not "Strategic Action Plan" in the CEO Doc, annexes and appendices.

vii. Organizing international events to present the SAP is key to ensuring that all drivers of change are considered, and their relevant stakeholders are fully engaged in the transformative solutions and required reforms. This will facilitate the development of a robust SAP and deliver on GEBs. While regional socialization is essential, global outreach will significantly increase the project impact and the robustness of the SAP. The sustainable use of water and resources in the Amazon is not only contingent on governments commitments and the cooperation agreements that the 8 countries can reach. The Amazon region attracts external stakeholders whose business interests will have impacts on the management of the aquifer e.g. international corporations (soy, cattle, gold, etc.). Fostering international partnerships and collaboration to reduce soil degradation, pollution and cope with climate change is key and organizing international SAP events would contribute to stakeholder inclusiveness and meaningful participation of those stakeholders who might be difficult to actively involve otherwise.

viii. The CEO endorsement has been reviewed to mainstream gender activities across all components.

ix. Two M&E outputs were added and described under the Project Description section.

The workplan (Appendix 7) shows the activities for all components. Several of the activities in the Outputs for components 1 and 3 involve field activities such as:

- Output 1.4 from Component 1 involves field-based activities, especially those related to the priority zones (see Figure 4 of CEO Endorsement document).
- All the pilot studies (Appendix 11) show field sites where PCU, ACTO, CM, participants from the AAS Certification (see Appendix 13) will visit to perform field measurements or to develop in-situ discussions.
- All pilot studies are proposing to develop workshops with local stakeholders where PCU's and CM's staff will also be participating.
- During the AAS Symposium and AAS international conference, hands-on short courses will be organized to train ACTO's, CM's. staff and partners.
- Several of the dissemination and capacity building activities in components 2, 5 and 5 will be performed in different countries, especially at field sites where pilots are carried out.

(d) The amount of ha under improved sustainable practices were increased from 3,950 ha to 132,649 ha as described by Core Indicator 4. The direct beneficiaries increased from 2,255 to 271,013 people as described by Core Indicator 11.

(f) Annex G shows the revised budget according to GEF guidelines.

(i) Gender experts will be included in activities involving consultations to capture gender perspectives. In the monitoring and evaluation appendix, besides the disaggregation by sex related to the workshops carried out, other gender-specific results are incorporated (Appendix 5). Output 5.1 will consider best practices and lessons learned in gender equity, sharing them on the IW:LEARN platform.

(k) As part of Component 2, an analysis of the regional assessment regarding policies, institutional and legal framework will be carried out to propose recommendations for any gap found, or situation that may affect the development of the project, considering policy coherence in each country and regionally.

## **5.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project**

**a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?**

**b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?**

**c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed projects/programs (such as government and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the project area, e.g.).**

## **Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes, but please address following:

(i) Project Steering Committee: The Executing Agency and PCU should only be observers and contributors to PSC and not full members, as they are to take direction from the PSC rather than provide direction. Please clarify in document.

(b) N/A

(c) Yes

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed. But please see comment 2 under Section 9.2 of the review sheet.

## Agency Response

(a)

(i) PSC and EA: Amended both in the CEO Endorsement Document (section: Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project) and in Appendix 6-Implementation Arrangement and Coordination.

### Agency response 5 December 2024

As it is not possible to paste a response in section 9.2 as mentioned above, please note the following.

A collaboration dialogue has been established between ACTO and IAEA. IAEA support will undoubtedly be very important for the project, and ACTO is committed to look for the best ways to involve them in the relevant activities of components 1 & 3.

#### 5.3 Core indicators

**a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology and adhering to the overarching principles included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01)?**

**b) Are the project's targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators and additional listed outcome indicators) /adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?**

**Are the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) No, the methodologies for calculating Core Indicators 3 and 11 need to be revisited. The targets are far too low for a \$15M GEF investment. See below. Please speak with GEF Sec regarding methodology and targets.

(b) No, the core Indicator 3 and 11 targets are too low for this investment. It is expected that the targets would be increased once the pilots sites are determined. Please revise.

Please explain why Core Indicator target for 7.1 has reduced from "2" to "1".

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b) Addressed.

## Agency Response

(a) and (b) The methodology was revised and the amount of ha under improved sustainable practices were increased from 3,950 ha to 132,649 ha (Core Indicator 4), and direct beneficiaries increased from 2,255 to 271,013 (Core Indicator 11).

Core Indicator 7 was also revised, now 7.1 = 3, 7.3 = 2 and 7.4 = 4.

#### **5.4 Risks**

- a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk to outcomes and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category? Are mitigation measures clearly identified and realistic? Is there any omission?**
- b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?**
- c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately assessed and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes

(b) Yes

(c) Yes

\*Please see SRIF comments below.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

**5.5 For NGI Only: Is there a justification of the financial structure and of the use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

**6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities**

**6.1 a) Is the project adequately aligned with Focal Area objectives, and/or the LDCF/SCCF strategy?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

**6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors).**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes

#### Agency Response

**6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(1) Please confirm this project will not be contributing to any of the targets under the GBF, as no description is present in the submission.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response (1) Yes, it will be contributing to target 7, the CEO ER has been amended accordingly.

#### **7 D. Policy Requirements**

##### **7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Partly, please see below comments on Gender Action Plan and Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response Amended in the CEO document and appendices.

##### **7.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes, but please ensure/confirm Gender Action Plan activities are fully incorporated/documented in the project description section.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response Included in the CEO document and appendices.

##### **7.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?**



#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes, but the plan is very generic. Please revisit the plan and better tailor it to project activities. Please weave in analysis from Stakeholder Engagement Matrix. As noted above, please provide further information in the SEP on key stakeholders' role related to project components and outputs.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

**Agency Response** The SEP (Appendix 3A) should be read in conjunction with App 3B where all the relevant stakeholders for the project by country and at regional level are listed, describing their role, impact, influence, importance and how they will contribute to the project (by component). The matrix provides detailed content to implement the SEP. Given the length of the information presented per country and on a regional basis, it will prove difficult to weave the matrix into the plan. Summary excerpts from the matrix have however, been embedded into the SEP.

#### **7.4 Have the required applicable safeguards documents been uploaded?**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Partly:

(1) IDB SRIF document uploaded to Portal includes cover page only. Please include detailed SRIF in Documents tab.

The project's overall ESS risk is classified as low. The UNEP SRIF notes "there is need for an Indigenous Peoples Plan scaled to the project in terms of scope. Engagement of the IPs and other stakeholders should be undertaken throughout the project cycle. On-the-ground interventions will require E&S assessments and development of ESMP once the locations for the pilots are known". The Suriname pilot involves working with indigenous communities. During inception phase, an Indigenous Peoples Plan will be developed. However, "Explanation of risk and mitigation measures" in the environmental and social risk section of the Key risks table is not consistent with the SRIF. Please revise summary of mitigation measure in the Key risk table consistent with SRIF.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Not addressed. The two SRIFs classify the project as "Low Risk" yet the risk table classifies Environmental and Social Risk as "Moderate". Please reclassify risk in table to "Low" to align with SRIFs.

6th of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

#### Agency Response

(1) In accordance with IDB's Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF) the IDB assigns a risk classification, using an Environmental and Social Risk Rating (ESRR) that is based on a four-level risk rating: low, moderate, substantial, or high. This project was classified as 'low risk' by the IDB, based on the following reasons:

- This project will finance prefeasibility or feasibility studies of specific investment projects that includes environmental and social studies. The terms of reference and outputs of these studies should be consistent with the applicable ESPF requirements. The investment project for which financing will be provided for the prefeasibility or feasibility studies is expected to have minor/no level of direct impacts.
- The Borrower/Executing Agency has good organizational capacity and competency for E&S management. There are no contextual risks associated with the investment project for which financing will be provided for the prefeasibility or feasibility studies (e.g. political instability, oppression of communities, armed forces in the project area).

According to the IDBs ESPF, low risk is assigned to those projects that have a low risk due to a combination of project exposure to low intensities of natural hazards or climate change and/or low project criticality and vulnerability to those hazards, and a low potential for exacerbating risk. Natural hazards, including the effects of climate change, are not likely to occur during the project execution (construction) and/or the operational life of the project, and/or is associated with a low severity of impact. The corresponding impacts that occur do not lead to a disruption of the normal functioning of the project and can be corrected as part of the project maintenance and operation work. The occurrence of these hazards does not significantly impact project performance. A DRA is not required in these circumstances.

This risk classification will be reassessed throughout the project cycle and adjusted in accordance with the developments and circumstances of implementation and findings of the IDB's monitoring and supervision. Key factors considered in the ESRR are cause (direct environmental and social impacts), contribution (indirect environmental and social impacts), and additional areas of risk that may be relevant to the delivery of environmental and social mitigation measures and outcomes. These could include legal and institutional considerations; the nature of the mitigation measures and technology being proposed; governance structures and legislation; and contextual factors relating to stability, conflict, or security, among others.

The Risk table was amended to reflect the SRIF considerations on social risks.

#### Agency response 5 December 2024

The two risks were re-classified to ensure consistency across the SRIF and the Portal risk table.

## 8 Annexes

### Annex A: Financing Tables

**8.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that**

apply):

**STAR allocation?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

**Focal Area allocation?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

**LDCF under the principle of equitable access?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

**SCCF A (SIDS)?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

**SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

**Focal Area Set Aside?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

**8.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)**

**a) Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): No, PPG table must be itemized, not simply totals for UNEP and IDB work. In other words, "IDB PPG Grant" and "UNEP PPG Grant" are not eligible PPG

activities. Please provide the details of the activities implemented during the PPG phase using the eligible activities included in Guidelines.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency ResponseThe PPG table was itemized and amended in the portal.

### 8.3 Source of Funds

**Does the sources of funds table match with the amounts in the OFP's LOE?**

**Note: the table only captures sources of funds from the country's STAR allocation**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response

**8.4 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type: Are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?**

**e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): Partly

(1) Bolivia. There are three sources of co-financing from Bolivia listed in the letter: Ministry of Environment and Water in-kind and public investment, and from Mining Geological Service. Please disaggregate this co-financing in the co-financing table and properly name sources.

(2) Brazil. There are seven sources of co-financing listed in the co-financing letter. Please disaggregate this co-financing in the co-financing table and properly name sources. Please submit a co-financing letter separately for each name of co-financier in the Brazil letter for amount of \$48,480,960.22. Each line of source of co-financing in the letter needs to be submitted from the original co-financier separately.

(3) Colombia: There are four sources of co-financing listed in the co-financing letter. Please disaggregate this co-financing in the co-financing table and properly name sources.

(4) Ecuador: There are five sources of co-financing listed in the co-financing letter. Please disaggregate this co-financing in the co-financing table and properly name sources. Please submit a co-financing letter separately for each name of co-financier in the Ecuador letter for amount of \$16,196,806.16. Each line of source of co-financing in the letter needs to be submitted from the original co-financier separately.

- (5) Guyana: There are four sources of co-financing listed in the co-financing letter. Please disaggregate this co-financing in the co-financing table and properly name sources. Letters from original sources must be included (WMO). A new co-financing letter(s) is required.
- (6) Peru: Specify sources of co-financing in co-financing table.
- (7) Suriname: "Project Idea" is not a source of co-financing. "Government" is not a proper classification of co-financing. World Bank co-financing, as original source, must be through a separate co-financing letter. Please secure new letter(s).
- (8) ACTO: Three sources of co-financing are listed in the letter. Letters from original co-financiers are required. Please secure.
- (9) IDB: "Other" (\$12M) needs to be explained in the co-financing letter. Please secure new letter.
- (10) Suriname: Original letter from Caribbean Development Bank is required. Please secure.
- (11) Please submit a co-financing letter separately for each name of co-financier in the Geological Service of Brazil letter for amount of \$16,060,000. Each line of source of co-financing in the letter needs to be submitted from the original co-financier separately.

\*In Investment Mobilized field below co-financing table, please detail each investment mobilized co-financing one-by one, including how the co-financing will contribute to project outcomes.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

- (1) Addressed.
- (2) Addressed.
- (3) Addressed.
- (4) Addressed.
- (5) Addressed.
- (6) Addressed.
- (7) Addressed
- (8) Addressed.
- (9) Addressed.
- (10) Addressed.
- (11) Addressed.

Please provide responses to each of the following comments

- a. Please submit a cofinancing letter separately for each name of co-financier in the Brazil letter for amount of USD 48,480,960.22. Each line of source of cofinancing in the letter needs to be submitted from the original co-financier separately.
- b. Please submit a cofinancing letter separately for each name of co-financier in the Ecuador letter for amount of USD 16,196,806.16. Each line of source of cofinancing in the letter needs to be submitted the original co-financier separately.
- c. Please submit a cofinancing letter separately for each name of co-financier in the Geological Service of Brazil (GSB) letter for amount of USD 16,060,000. Each line of source of cofinancing in the letter needs to be submitted the original co-financier separately.

6th of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

## Agency Response

- (1) Bolivia. The co-financing table was amended to properly present the three sources of co-financing.
- (2) Brazil. A new CF letter was submitted.
- (3) Colombia: The co-financing table was amended to properly present the three sources of co-financing.
- (4) Ecuador: A new CF letter was submitted.
- (5) Guyana: A new CF letter was submitted.
- (6) Peru: Sources of co-financing in co-financing table were specified.
- (7) and (10) Suriname: A new CF letter was submitted.
- (8) ACTO: A new CF letter was submitted.
- (9) IDB: A new CF letter was submitted to explain the USD 12M.
- (11) Geological Service of Brazil: A new CF letter was submitted.

\*Investment Mobilized was detailed including how the co-financing will contribute to project outcomes.

Agency response 5 December 2024

Please note that as at 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2024, all the three below mentioned resubmitted CF letters were new, addressing the previous round of comments. Therefore, in response to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December comments, please note the following clarifications:

- a. The co-financing from the Brazilian Water Agency (ANA) totals 48M and corresponds as broken down in the co-financing letter to ANA led and funded initiatives which will contribute directly to the Amazon Aquifer project. Of that 466,135 corresponds to recurring expenditures from ANA.
- b. The co-financing from the Government of Ecuador accounting 17M corresponds to 912K of recurring expenditures from the government and the balance of 16M corresponds to an on-going initiative of the government as public investment from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition and its Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology as defined in the co-financing letter footnote.
- c. The co-financing from the Brazilian Geological Survey amounting 16M corresponds as defined in the Co-financing letter to on-going initiatives all financed by SGB.

#### **Annex B: Endorsements**

**8.5 a) If ? and only if - this is a global or regional project for which not all country-based interventions were known at PIF stage and, therefore, not all LOEs provided:**

**Has the project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2024 (thenshaw):  
Provided at PIF stage

#### **Agency Response**

**b) Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2024 (thenshaw):  
Provided at PIF stage

#### **Agency Response**

**c) Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2024 (thenshaw):  
Provided at PIF stage

#### **Agency Response**

#### **Annex C: Project Results Framework**

**8.6 a) Have the GEF core indicators been included?**

- b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; do the targets correspond/are appropriate in view of total project financing (too high? Too low?)
- c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated?
- d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes

(b) See (d)

(c) See (d)

(d) Please screenshot Results Framework, as the cut and paste version does not align across columns. A full assessment of the Project Results Framework will be carried out on resubmission.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): Addressed.

## Agency Response

(d) From our end, even in review mode, we see it (see screenshot below). However, we pasted a revised version in the Portal.

## 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. Paste below the Project Results Framework from the Agency document.

| Component 1: Consolidation and expansion of the current understanding in the functioning of and threats to the Amazon Aquifer Systems (AAS) |  |  |   |                          |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--------------------------|---|--|
| Project Outcome   | Outcome Indicators   | Baseline   | Targets and Monitoring<br>Milestones  | Means of<br>Verification | Assumptions &<br>Risks  | Relevant PoW<br>Outcome(s) and<br>indicator(s) |
| <b>Outcome 1</b><br><br>Improved technical-<br>scientific knowledge   | 1. TDA approved by<br>CM and informing<br>management decisions | The limits, the<br>hydraulic behavior, the<br>interconnections | 1. TDA report validated by key<br>stakeholders and CM (Yr 3, see<br>Output 1.5) | Country reports.         | <b>Assumptions:</b><br><br>All CM support the<br>development of | Same as above.                                 |



**Annex E: Project map and coordinates**

**8.7 Have geographic coordinates of project locations been entered in the dedicated table? Are relevant illustrative maps included?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

Yes

**Agency Response**

**Annex G: GEF Budget template**

**8.8 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line?**

**b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&E and PMC)?**

**c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(a) Partly. A full review of budget will be conducted once the complete table is uploaded.

(i) The budget table is missing the Component 1 information and the column indicating the executing entity for each activity. The way the budget table is presented it seems that the implementing agencies are the ones executing the activities. We suggest the agency to use the template provided in the Guidelines on the Project Cycle and include the details on the executing entity for each activity and remove the columns for outputs (leaving only components) as well as removing the breakdown by agency. The above steps will make the budget table visible in the CEO Endorsement Request PDF (which is the document that is web posted).

(ii) Component totals must be displayed in the table and match the Project Description Overview Table.

(b) No

(i) TOR states lead position is "Regional Project Coordinator", yet Budget Table states position is called "Regional Project Coordinator & Technical Advisor", and includes salary from the components. The position TOR does not reference technical elements. Please explain/revise accordingly. Per Guidelines, the costs associated with the project's execution, management and administration must be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC.

(ii) Budget Table includes line items for both "Administrative and Financial Management" and "Admin and Finance Assistance", yet there is only one TOR position for these responsibilities "Administrative and Financial Officer". Please revise. Per Guidelines, the costs associated with

the project's execution, management and administration must be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC.

(iii) TOR for Admin and Financial Officer does not include technical responsibilities, yet positioned is partly mapped to components. Further, there are additional responsibilities under this Admin and Financial Officer TOR for "Technical Assistance", which includes a separate listing of qualifications. Please clarify/revise. Per Guidelines, the costs associated with the project's execution, management and administration must be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC.

(iv) "Other Staff" is not a valid category and should be removed. Please revise.

(v) "Water Resources Management Specialist" is not listed in the Budget Table, yet a TOR is provided. Please explain/revise.

(vi) "Technical Specialist in Aquifer Systems" is listed and budgeted for in Budget Table, yet is not included in the project TORs annex. Please explain/revise.

(vii) Please explain why all positions include salary mapping to Component 3.1.1.

\*Given the convoluted nature of the budget table and TORs, please prepare and include a matrix of positions and their associated activities across components, M&E and PMC.

(viii) Please explain "Other Operating Costs" in Budget Table. Only \$8,000 in the table is mapped to a column, yet \$68,000 is listed as total. Please explain. "Other operating costs" must be charged to PMC, not to project components.

(ix) In budget notes, please explain "Utilities", "Communications", "EA targeted assistance", "Maintenance of furniture & equipment", "Running Cost Office", Data processing and automation", "Operational Equipment Supplies", "Office Automation Equipment, "Office Furniture and Equipment". Some of these line items are not typical for a GEF investment. Overhead costs seem excessive.

(x) Printing and design services of \$447,000 is far too excessive. Please justify these costs.

(xi) Please explain why "Travel of Meeting Participants" is listed as a PMC cost.

(xii) Please explain why "Travel of Consultants and Experts" is listed as a PMC cost.

(xiii) Please explain why there are "Travel of Consultants & Experts", "Travel of Meeting Participants" and Study Tours/Seminars/Training" and "Meeting Costs" mapped to M&E.

(xiv) Please explain the "Transfers & Grants to... Agreements" modality/financial flows for Component 3.1 (\$3,643,232). Please provide details regarding what the agreements entail.

(xv) Please explain why "Technical National Focal Points (7)" are mapped to Output 1.1.5 and 3.1.1 and not to other outputs.

(c) No, please see above. Certain TORs are missing/mislabelled.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(a)

(i) Addressed. If possible, please include screenshot of revised budget table in the portal under **"Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here"**.

(ii) Addressed.

(b)

(i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Addressed.

(v) Addressed.

(vi) Addressed.

(vii) Addressed.

(viii) Not addressed. Budget table notes are not reflected. Please revise.

(ix) Not addressed. Budget table notes are not reflected. Please revise.

(x) Addressed.

(xi) Addressed.

(xii) Addressed.

(xiii) Addressed.

(ixv) Not addressed. Budget table notes are not reflected. Please revise.

\*\*\*\*\*Budget notes are listed in the Excel version uploaded to Documents tab but not included in portal upload. Please revise.

(xv) Addressed.

(c) Addressed.

6th of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(i) Addressed.

(viii) Addressed.

(ix) Addressed.

(ixv) Addressed.

## Agency Response

(a)

(i) The budget was adjusted using the table provided in the Guidelines on the Project Cycle and includes details of the executing entity. The breakdown by agency was also removed. It is our understanding that this project is not due for recirculation to council.

(ii) Component totals are displayed in the table and match the Project Description Overview Table.

(b)

(i) TOR were revised and amended for the staff. The management and administration costs are covered by the PMC portion.

(ii) TOR were revised and amended for the FMO and admin assistant. The management and administration costs are covered by the PMC portion.

iii) The management and administration costs are covered by the PMC portion.

(iv) "Other Staff" was removed.

(v) TOR were revised and amended for the staff.

(vi) TOR were revised and amended for the staff.

(vii) Salary mapping to Component 3.1.1 was revised and amended for the staff.

\*Given the convoluted nature of the budget table and TORs, please prepare and include a matrix of positions and their associated activities across components, M&E and PMC.

(viii) "Other Operating Costs" was explained in the Budget Table and is charged to PMC.

(ix) All expenditures have a detailed description in the Budget Table.

(x) Printing and design services costs were revised and amended.

(xi) "Travel of Meeting Participants" costs were revised and amended.

(xii) "Travel of Consultants and Experts" costs were revised and amended.

(xiii) "Travel of Consultants & Experts", "Travel of Meeting Participants", "Study Tours/Seminars/Training" and "Meeting Costs" were revised and amended.

(xiv) Details for the "Transfers & Grants to... Agreements" for Component 3.1 (\$3,643,232) were detailed in the budget table. Agreements refer to the execution of the eight pilot studies. Appendix 11 shows the details of the activities and sub activities for each pilot. A summary of these activities is provided by Appendix 7-workplan.

(xv) The components that require the support of national focal points ("Technical National Focal Points (7)") are 1 and 3. The other components are more related to regional or decision-making actions, hence the budget reflects that.

(c) TOR were revised and amended for the staff.

#### Agency response 5 December 2024

(i) A screenshot of the revised budget table and the notes were pasted in the **"Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here"** section.

(viii) Budget table notes are now reflected in the budget both in the Portal in word copy and in the **"Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here"** section.

(ix) Budget table notes are now reflected in the budget both in the Portal in word copy and in the **"Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here"** section.

(ixv) Budget table notes are now reflected in the budget both in the Portal in word copy and in the **"Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here"** section.

#### Annex H: NGI Relevant Annexes

**8.9 a) Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to assess the following criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.**

- b) Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows?  
If not, please provide comments.
- c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Additional Annexes

## **9. GEFSEC DECISION**

### **9.1. GEFSEC Recommendation**

**Is the project recommended for approval**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw): No, please revise and resubmit. Thank you.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw): No, please address above comments and resubmit. Thank you.

6th of December 2024 (thenshaw): Yes

### **9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

28th of September 2024 (thenshaw):

(1) All technical studies and white papers supported by this investment are important inputs to advancing the planned TDA-SAP process. The submission seems incorrect in stating "... the activities of each component can start simultaneously, without interference...". It is expected that all studies and white papers financed will be completed and then utilized in TDA-SAP development activities toward the later years of the project. Please confirm the work plan will account for this approach.

2nd of December 2024 (thenshaw):

(2) Please consider engaging the International Atomic Energy Agency as a partner to execute some activities of the project.

### **9.3 Review Dates**

|   | CEO<br>Approval  | Response to Secretariat<br>comments |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>First Review</b>                         | <b>9/28/2024</b> |                                     |
| <b>Additional Review (as<br/>necessary)</b> | <b>12/2/2024</b> |                                     |
| <b>Additional Review (as<br/>necessary)</b> | <b>12/6/2024</b> |                                     |
| <b>Additional Review (as<br/>necessary)</b> |                  |                                     |
| <b>Additional Review (as<br/>necessary)</b> |                  |                                     |