

GEF-8 REQUEST FOR CEO CHILD ENDORSEMENT/APPROVAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL CHILD PROJECT INFORMATION	3
Project Summary	3
Child Project Description Overview	5
CHILD PROJECT OUTLINE	10
A. PROJECT RATIONALE	10
B. CHILD PROJECT DESCRIPTION	29
Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.....	48
Table On Core Indicators	53
Core Indicators	53
Key Risks	54
C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES	55
D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS	60
Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment:.....	60
Stakeholder Engagement	61
Private Sector	61
Environmental and Social Safeguards	61
E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS	61
Knowledge management	62
Socio-economic Benefits	62
ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES	62
GEF Financing Table	62
Project Preparation Grant (PPG)	62
Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation.....	63
Focal Area Elements	63
Confirmed Co-financing for the project, by name and type.....	63
ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENT	64
Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):.....	64
ANNEX C: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK.....	64
ANNEX D: STATUS OF UTILIZATION OF PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)	71
ANNEX E: PROJECT MAP AND COORDINATES	71
ANNEX F: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS DOCUMENTS INCLUDING RATING.....	72
ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE.....	73
ANNEX I: RESPONSES TO PROJECT REVIEWS	78

General Child Project Information

Child Project Title

Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome IP Regional Coordination, Knowledge Sharing and Support Project

Region	GEF Project ID
Regional	11278
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Regional	FSP
GEF Agency(ies)	GEF Agency Project ID
IUCN	
Project Executing Entity(s)	Project Executing Type
IUCN	GEF Agency
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	5/31/2024
Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	72
GEF Project Grant: (a)	Agency Fee(s) Grant: (b)
7,598,165.00	683,835.00
PPG Amount: (c)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (d)
200,000.00	18,000.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
8500000	40,516,390.00

Project Sector (CCM Only)

AFOLU

Rio Markers

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
Principal Objective 2	Principal Objective 2	Principal Objective 2	Significant Objective 1

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)

Mesoamerica has witnessed a 23% loss in its large intact forest landscapes – largely undisturbed primary forests - from 2000 to 2020^[11] This loss has had significant impacts on biodiversity, carbon storage, and the provision of essential ecosystem services. The Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome Integrated Programme (IP) and the Regional Coordination, Knowledge Sharing and Support Project (RCP) provides a programmatic approach to amplify the impact of the six national child projects in, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama in order to slow and reverse loss and degradation of critical remaining primary forests in the region, maintaining the globally important Critical Mesoamerican Forest Biome and providing benefits for biodiversity and climate change. While the RCP will enhance the impact of the national projects, it will report its findings at the biome level, including in terms of ecosystem extent and condition.

To achieve the above the Regional Coordination Project (RCP) is organized in the four components that are also reflected in the country projects. The components 1) Enabling conditions for the protection and conservation of primary forests, 2) Accelerated protection and restoration of primary forests, 3) Innovative finance and investment, 4) Coordinated and improved learning and regional collaboration. The regional project reflects the four GEF-8 levers of transformation: governance and policies, multi-stakeholder dialogue, innovation and learning, and financial leverage. Furthermore, it aligns with the GEF strategy on forests^[12], embracing the vision of addressing urgent climate, biodiversity, and land degradation crises while empowering Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). This empowerment is achieved through the maintenance, preservation, and restoration of the integrity and functioning of forest biomes. Consequently, the project promotes the integrity of Mesoamerica's critical tropical forests, maximizing multiple global environmental benefits related to carbon and biodiversity. It does so by strengthening the protection and governance of Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) – largely undisturbed primary forest landscapes - and addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation at the landscape level.

The RCP is essential for amplifying the efforts of country projects to the regional scale and maximizing the impact through regional-level priorities, capacity building and synergies to improve conservation of these key ecosystems. It contributes to the overall conservation of primary forest and catalyses GEF transformation through policy coherence through coordinated advocacy and integrating forest conservation in key policies (outcomes 1.1. and 1.2); innovation and learning through Component 4 and key analyses to support evidence-based decision making (Outputs 1.2.1 and 2.1.1); sustainable financing through mobilizing financial resources for forest conservation (Component 3); and participation and collaboration through the regional coordination platform (outcome 4.1), multisectoral platforms (Outcome 3.1). The RCP includes four components that supports outputs to be delivered on a regional level, with a specific focus on improving learning and regional collaboration, as well as supporting the six country child projects to enhance their results through multi countries strategies to promote regional policies and instruments to improve P.A managements in shared ecosystems and landscapes, promote sustainable livelihoods and deforestation free value chains. Engagement of non-IP countries (Costa Rica and Belize) through other platforms and projects

to formulate the agenda for primary forests, improve monitoring and reporting, and strengthen transboundary cooperation at regional level is part of the RCP key functions.

The RCP will coordinate with the country child projects through the programmatic institutional processes such as the Programme Steering Committee, Regional Knowledge Management Platform. Additionally, it will capitalize on regional coordination institutions like SICA, while technical working groups will address specific issues. The RCP will also coordinate actions with the other Critical Forest Biomes IP, including especially the Amazon IP, and GEF secretariat.

The RCP will be directly executed by IUCN as a GEF agency with the support of regional partners including cooperation institution, NGOs with technical knowledge in the field and experience in the region.

https://iucnhq-my.sharepoint.com/personal/mujicaroseron_iucn_org/Documents/Documents/Bosques%20Criticos/GEF%20resubmission%201/Regional%20Resubmission%202/GEF-8%20CEO_Endorsement_Regional%20-%20IUCN_v3.docx - [ftnref1\[1\]](http://www.intactforests.org/data.if.html)
<http://www.intactforests.org/data.if.html>

[2] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05/GEF-StrategyOnForests-final_0.pdf

Child Project Description Overview

Project Objective

To conserve Mesoamerica primary forests through strengthened governance, protection, restoration, regional cooperation, and the mobilization of stable long-term funding, ensuring a sustainable flow of ecosystem services for people and planet

Project Components

1. Enabling conditions for the protection and conservation of primary forests

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,835,372.00	9,934,460.00

Outcome:

- 1.1: Strengthened regional governance mechanisms in support of primary forests conservation.
- 1.2: Key regional policy and regulatory instruments prioritize primary forest conservation.

1.3: Improved multisectoral platforms for forest conservation and management.

Output:

1.1.1: Awareness and advocacy plan for the protection and conservation of primary forests aimed at policy makers, sectoral entities and the private sector.

1.1.2: Reinforced agreements for cross-border collaboration in protected areas.

1.1.3: A regional agreement to operationalize the rural youth strategy of the SICA region 2022 - 2030 in primary forest landscapes.

1.2.1: Information to support fact-based decision making on forest conservation interventions.

1.2.2: Key regional instruments integrate gender transformative strategic actions for the protection and conservation of primary forests (ERAM and ERAS).

1.3.1: Regional multi-sector meetings of interest groups and sectors to agree on actions and objectives for the conservation of primary forests.

1.3.2: integrate indigenous peoples and local communities, women and rural youth in decision-making processes.

2. Accelerated protection and restoration of primary forests

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,272,596.00	8,061,671.00

Outcome:

2. 1: Improved protection and restoration of primary forests in protected and other priority areas.

2.2: Increased area of OECMs that protect primary forests integrity and expand functionality

Output:

2.1.1: Regional assessment of the risk of collapse and extension of critical Mesoamerican Forest biome.

2.1.2: Information on the contribution of protected areas and indigenous peoples to the conservation of primary forests and the advancement of the global biodiversity framework to support fact-based decision making.

2.2.1: Collaboration agreements for transboundary OECM within the framework of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

3. Innovative finance and investment

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,595,792.00	8,103,514.00

Outcome:

3.1: Increase in financial resources for the conservation of primary forests.

3.2: Increase in the number of forest-friendly initiatives.

Output:

3.1.1: High-level dialogue meetings to mobilize financial resources through bilateral, multilateral, private and philanthropic channels to sustain the long-term conservation of critical forest biomes.

3.1.2: Regional coalition to mobilize funds to accelerate the conservation of primary forests and the development of viable forest-related livelihoods.

3.2.1 Innovative business models to develop forest-friendly goods and services enhanced.

3.2.2: High-impact and promotional events to accelerate demand for products from sustainably managed secondary forests and deforestation-free raw materials from Mesoamerica.

4. Coordinated and improved learning and regional collaboration

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
2,304,643.00	11,271,903.00

Outcome:

- 4.1: Improved regional coordination for the protection and conservation of the primary forests.
- 4.2: Lessons on primary forest protection and conservation models are available worldwide.

Output:

- 4.1.1: Regional coordination platform for the protection and conservation of primary forests.
- 4.1.2: Long-term regional communication plan to mobilize support for the conservation of primary forests and critical forest biomes
 - 4.2.1: Mesoamerican knowledge platform on critical forest biomes.
 - 4.2.2: Lessons learned from the Child Project and its contributions to the Integrated Programme, forest management and governance models and integration of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and rural youth in decision-making processes documented and disseminated at regional and global levels.
 - 4.2.3: South-South cooperation/knowledge exchange with other critical forest biomes.
 - 4.2.4: Demand-driven gender-responsive annual regional knowledge sharing workshops.
 - 4.2.5: Harmonized annual program planning, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
227,945.00	1,215,492.00

Outcome:

M&E

Output:

M&E

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1. Enabling conditions for the protection and conservation of primary forests	1,835,372.00	9,934,460.00
2. Accelerated protection and restoration of primary forests	1,272,596.00	8,061,671.00
3. Innovative finance and investment	1,595,792.00	8,103,514.00
4. Coordinated and improved learning and regional collaboration	2,304,643.00	11,271,903.00
M&E	227,945.00	1,215,492.00
Subtotal	7,236,348.00	38,587,040.00
Project Management Cost	361,817.00	1,929,350.00
Total Project Cost (\$)	7,598,165.00	40,516,390.00

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

Global Environmental Problem

Primary forests^{[1]3} - often undervalued – are crucial natural systems worldwide, playing a vital role in maintaining the hydrological cycle, serving as significant carbon sinks, and exhibiting heightened functional diversity and ecosystem integrity^{[2]4}. Intact forest landscapes (IFL), largely undisturbed areas of primary forest spanning at least 500 km², house high biodiversity levels, store substantial carbon, and provide essential ecosystem services. In 2020, IFLs accounted for roughly 20% of global forest cover^{[3]5}. Despite their significance, IFLs are dwindling rapidly, experiencing a 12% decline in total area, equivalent to a loss of 1.5 million km² between 2000 and 2020^{[4]6}. Logging, agricultural expansion, ranching, infrastructure development, fires, and mining are the primary global drivers of intact forest landscapes' loss^{[5]7}.

Encompassing the southeastern states of Mexico and seven Central American countries, Mesoamerica is a global hotspot with Critical Forest Biomes. Despite its small geographic area, Mesoamerica is the second most important hotspot (out of 25 identified hotspots worldwide) diversity and endemism.^{[6]8} It is the habitat of around 5000 endemic plant species, representing approximately 8% of the world's biodiversity and hosting 17% of all terrestrial species^{[7]9}. The region hosts a significant diversity of reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, and non-fish vertebrates. Additionally, it is a critical convergence point for three of the Western Hemisphere's four migratory bird routes.^{[8]10} Additionally, Mesoamerican forests host threatened and vulnerable species including the cocobolo (*Dalbergia retusa*), the Central American river turtle (*Dermatemys mawii*), the keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*), the white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari*), the harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) and the jaguar (*Panthera onca*^{[9]11}). Geographically, the region serves as a bridge between the Nearctic and Neotropic realms, incorporating diverse ecosystems ranging from Pacific and Caribbean coastal-marine areas to extensive mountain chains with varying altitudes and rainfall patterns. The area comprises three biomes, 20 life zones, and 33 ecoregions, including rainforests,

cloud forests, dry forests, and pine forests. Notably, the Selva Maya represents the largest continuous expanse of tropical rainforest in the Americas after the Amazon. ^{[10][12]}

Five major forests can be found in Mesoamerica: The Selva Maya (shared by Belize, Guatemala and Mexico), Moskitia (shared by Honduras and Nicaragua), Indio Maíz – Tortuguero (shared by Nicaragua and Costa Rica), La Amistad (shared by Costa Rica and Panama), and El Darien (shared by Panama and Colombia). These forests, which are amongst the largest tropical forests in the Americas, provide vital environmental services, such as carbon capture and biodiversity conservation, and are crucial for the livelihoods of rural communities. Other important primary forest areas include the Santa Fe National Park and the Chagres National Park in Panama, the cloud forests of the Montecristo massif Trifino (shared between El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras), the Lacandón rainforest that stretches along Chiapas (Mexico) and Guatemala, and the cloud forests of Sierra de las Minas in Guatemala.



Figure 1, LOCATION OF THE MESOAMERICAN INTACT FOREST LANDSCAPES. SOURCE: IFL MAPPING TEAM (2020).

Mesoamerica’s remaining primary forests are mostly within protected areas, traditional lands and territories of indigenous peoples and local communities. Among remaining IFLs, 90% are contained within some form of protected areas classification, and around half of primary forests are Indigenous lands.^{[11]13}

Table 3, Projected area coverage of ifls in IP Participating countries.

Country	IFL extent 2016 (ha)*	IFL Protected Area 2016 (ha)**	% of IFLS in Pas (2016)
Mexico	1,430,428	1,207,278	84%
Guatemala	476,603	474,277	100%
El Salvador		0	
Honduras	461,241	458,385	99%
Nicaragua	613,131	616,478	101%
Panama	1,340,200	999,688	75%
Subtotal IP countries	4,321,603	3,756,107	87%

* <http://www.intactforests.org/data.ifl.html>

** Mackey, B., DellaSala, D.A., Kormos, C., Lindenmayer, D., Kumpel, N., Zimmerman, B., Hugh, S., Young, V., Foley, S., Arsenis, K. and Watson, J.E.M. (2015), Policy Options for the World’s Primary Forests in Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Conservation Letters, 8: 139-147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12120>

Despite their status, these forests face different threats that lead to deforestation and degradation. High rates of IFL loss have occurred despite most IFL area (87% for the region as a whole) being under some form of protection.

On a regional level, the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are linked with illegal activities (illegal cattle ranching, logging, mining, trafficking), human expansion in the form of agriculture, settlements and infrastructure development, and climate change.^{[12]14} These drivers accentuate environmental problems, e.g. agricultural expansion and the increase of human settlements contribute to the introduction of invasive species (e.g., cats, dogs), increased human-wildlife interaction and conflict, and eventually an increased risk of zoonosis and infections of wildlife.^{[13]15} For example, a study^{[14]16} found that domestic horses in the Maya Biosphere Reserve were infected with the Equine Infectious Anaemia virus, posing a risk of spillover to tapirs.^{[15]17} Moreover, these drivers reenforce vicious cycles, further accelerating deforestation. Illegal activities such as drugs, human and wildlife trafficking, as well as extortion and money laundering,^{[16]18} are a significant driver for converting forested land to pastures for cattle ranching.

Table 4, INTACT FOREST LANDSCAPES (IFL) COVERAGE AND LOSS 2000-2020.

Country	IFL extent in 2000 (ha)	IFL extent in 2013 (ha)	IFL extent in 2016 (ha)	IFL extent in 2020 (ha)	IFL area reduction 2000-2020 (%)
Mexico	1,499,074	1,456,957	1,430,428	1,404,675	6%
Guatemala	567,951	492,289	476,603	384,695	32%
El Salvador	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Honduras	676,114	481,409	461,241	352,674	48%
Nicaragua	1,027,237	636,228	613,131	475,968	54%
Panama	1,444,654	1,344,293	1,340,200	1,318,333	9%
Subtotal IP countries	5,220,000	4,411,175	4,321,603	3,936,346	25%
Costa Rica	319,092	309,576	309,359	305,509	4%
Belize	424,914	404,684	369,043	358,432	16%
TOTAL, Mesoamerica	5,959,037	5,125,435	5,000,006	4,600,287	23%

SOURCE: ILF MAPPING TEAM (2020) DATA.

Drivers of Mesoamerican deforestation and forest degradation

The degradation and loss of Mesoamerican intact forest landscape – largely undisturbed primary forests - is driven by i) conversion of natural habitat for agriculture, infrastructure development, and settlements; ii) illegal activities including logging, mining, trafficking, land appropriation; iii) wildfires, and iv) accelerating climate change. All the above contribute to undermining the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) ^{[17][19]} leading to a cycle of further accelerated deforestation rate.

i) Conversion of natural habitat due to agriculture, infrastructure and settlements

Cattle ranching is a major driver of deforestation in Central America.^{[18][20]} In most of the countries there is severe deforestation due to colonization by people from other areas of the country to produce meat cattle, dairy products, and short-cycle crops like maize and beans.^{[19][21]} Colonization to develop agriculture

production and cattle ranching affects the Darien ^{[20]22} and the Honduran Moskitia.^{[21]23} In Guatemala in the Laguna del Tigre National Park and the Sierra del Lacandón National Park, cattle ranching accounted for 87% and 67% of deforestation respectively^{[22]24}. It is estimated that in the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve (Nicaragua), the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (Honduras), the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve (Nicaragua), and the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Guatemala), at least 12,000, 65,000, 370,000, 440,000 animals are raised respectively^{[23]25}. Among other impacts, cattle ranching also pollutes and degrades aquatic habitats^{[24]26} and contributes to jaguar killings due to the perceived risk of predation on cattle and livestock^{[25]27}. Illegal cattle ranching is linked with the cattle trafficking value chain where illegal cattle can be laundered into the legal distribution chain and sold into the domestic markets or smuggled to neighbouring countries^{[26]28}. There is an unquantified amount of cattle that is trafficked to Mexico for domestic consumption and for export to the USA.

The development of infrastructure and settlements also contributes to fragmentation of the primary forests and facilitates access to core undisturbed areas. Planned public infrastructure developments like roads and dams include the extension of the Pan-American Road between Yaviza and Pinogana in the Darien.^{[27]29} Here, a key problem is the development of infrastructure projects without proper evaluation of the environmental and social impacts. Two major projects may impact the IFLs in the near future, the Maya Train in Mexico in the Selva Maya^{[28]30} and the Colombia - Panama electrical interconnection, through the Darien.^{[29]31} In addition, opening of illegal roads for colonization (e.g., Bosawas) and illegal activities (e.g., trafficking of drugs, persons, timber, and cattle) as well as the establishment of clandestine airstrips also play a role in fragmentation and degradation of Mesoamerican forests.

Illegal activities

Illegal activities are a significant driver that leads to the fragmentation and loss of forest landscapes. In Selva Maya, Moskitia and Indio Maiz, illegal logging and agricultural expansion are elements of a land grabbing pattern implemented by illegal groups that transform public or communal remote forestland into private large holdings.^{[30]32} Organized crime also has been taken advantage of pro-growth policies that incentivized

productive activities like large-scale agriculture, cattle ranching, forest production and mining^{[31]³³}. The global increase in demand for tropical timber, meat and mineral will further increase pressures on Mesoamerican critical forest biomes in the following decades.^{[32]³⁴}

“Narco-deforestation” is another illegal activity related driver in Central America. ^{[33]³⁵} Between 15% and 30% of annual national forest loss in Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua over the past decade can be attributed to cocaine trafficking with 30% to 60% of this deforestation occurred within nationally and internationally designated protected areas.^{[34]³⁶} Research suggests that the timing of increased drug trafficking in Honduras is highly correlated with anomalous forest loss, significantly differing from patterns of background forest loss^{[35]³⁷}. In the Darien, illicit activities like illegal logging and the trafficking of humans, drugs and arms are driving deforestation and changing rural livelihoods.^{[36]³⁸}

Illegal and unregulated hunting and the collection of non-wood forest products also contribute to degrade the IFLs. The populations of the Central American river turtle have been decimated by their harvesting for meat in the Selva Maya in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.^{[37]³⁹} Recent trends in wildlife trafficking include more organized crime groups, the use of clandestine border paths, an increased demand for high value tropical timber such as cocobolo, and an increased demand for rare or newly identified Mesoamerican reptiles and amphibians.^{[38]⁴⁰} Also, trafficking of jaguar parts may be developing and linked to killings by ranchers and farmers, despite the advances in human-jaguar/jaguar-livestock conflict reduction measures.^{[39]⁴¹} Arias et al., (2020)^{[40]⁴²} found that in Guatemala and Belize, jaguar trade is a domestically focused and opportunistic activity.

Illegal mining affects core areas in the Selva Maya and Indio Maiz. For example, in Indio Maiz several sites of illegal artisanal gold mining have been identified in core areas like La Chiripa mountain.^{[41]⁴³} Illegal mining contributes to habitat fragmentation, water pollution and wildlife harvesting.

Illegal activities, narco-deforestation particularly, are strongly linked with loss of habitat due to agricultural expansion, since profits from drugs transit are sometimes laundered by clearing forested land for agribusiness.^[42]⁴⁴

Wildfires

Wildfires are another key driver for deforestation in Mesoamerica. Between 2009 and 2019, the region experienced 80,000 fires, affecting 26.2 million hectares.^[43]⁴⁵ Wildfires are largely connected to human activities, principally fire is used to clear forestland to establish new agricultural areas. Another key action is agricultural burning during the dry season.^[44]⁴⁶ Swidden agriculture is a traditional practice that is still used in the surrounding areas of the intact forests' landscapes ^[45]⁴⁷ in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Panama. Swidden agriculture contributes to forest degradation in the Laguna del Tigre National Park in Guatemala. Wildfire can greatly affect intact forests landscapes, for example, in 2018, a forest fire destroyed about 5000 ha in Indio Maíz.^[46]⁴⁸ In 2021, fires affected both the periphery of all the intact forest landscapes and the inside in the Moskitia and Indio Maíz. The emissions from agricultural burning and forest fires impact the hydrological and biogeochemical cycles in the tropics and contribute to global climate change.^[47]⁴⁹

Climate change

Climate change is an underlying driver of primary forest degradation and loss. Mesoamerica is very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.^[48]⁵⁰ According to the IPCC latest report (AR6), climate change is already exacerbating socioeconomic vulnerability in Central America as the countries have high levels of inequality. Extreme weather events, increased food insecurity, heat stress, decreasing water availability and changes in agricultural and forestry productivity are some of the climate change impacts that will affect the region. According to the ND-GAIN Index 2023, among the countries participating in the IP, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua have a high level of vulnerability and lower level of readiness, which means they have a great need for investment and urgency for adaptation action. The effects of ENSO are leading to droughts and more active hurricane season, and impacts are expected to be more severe in the future.^[49]⁵¹

The heightened susceptibility of the region, coupled with the influences of climate change, is anticipated to result in substantial consequences. Noteworthy effects encompass human and economic setbacks, alterations in water resources, and a rise in food insecurity. Rural livelihoods, notably those of Indigenous

Peoples residing in mountainous areas, are expected to experience an overall decline in production, yield, viable farming space, and water accessibility. The impacts of climate change will result in a diminished diminishing distribution of indigenous species as the region contracts, leading to a significant reduction in various ecological aspects.^{[50]52} Net primary productivity in tropical forests is also expected as a result of temperature increase, precipitation reduction and droughts. ^{[51]53}

The above drivers **undermine the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)**. Unsustainable Resource Extraction through illegal activities (but also through other type of large-scale projects) can lead to displacement of people from their homes, disrupting their traditional practices and access to vital resources. The resulting environmental damage jeopardizes the livelihoods of individuals who rely on these resources for subsistence and income generation^{[52]54}. Weak land tenure recognition and enforcement also contributes to undermined livelihoods. While there is a gradual improvement in the recognition of IPLCs land tenure (e.g. in the case of Honduras), in many cases the existing legal frameworks and its enforcement often fail to adequately recognize and protect indigenous land rights. ^{[53]55}

In addition to the above, socioeconomic marginalization is aggravating impacts of illegal activities, land tenure and climate change. Indigenous communities often face limited access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, which can hinder their economic opportunities and perpetuate a cycle of poverty and marginalization. Moreover, IPLC are often excluded participation in decision-making processes having limited mandates or lacking the means to enforce decisions. ^{[54]56}

The impoverished living conditions experienced by rural communities compel them to rely on local natural resources to sustain their families and the expanding population. Generally, there are few opportunities for livelihoods dependent on existing forests. Land tenure insecurity exacerbates this situation, with incomplete recognition and enforcement of Indigenous land tenure rights across all five Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs). The challenging living conditions in various parts of the countries also incentivize landless peasants to encroach upon forest areas, as observed in Indio Maiz and the Darien.

Overall, there is weak land governance. The five IFLs are geographically remote, characterized by a feeble institutional presence of government entities and authorities, along with limited enforcement of regulations. Policies promoting economic growth also contribute to the current scenario, particularly due to a lack of inter-sectoral coherence and dialogue in policy development and decision-making, as well as insufficient integration of environmental considerations into these processes. Lastly, the aforementioned conditions

provide fertile ground for the emergence of illicit economies that undermine community cohesion, disrupt the social fabric, and alter rural livelihoods.^{[55]57}

Baseline

Cross border agreements:

The Trifinio Region: Situated between El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, it became a core site of the Trifinio-Fraternidad Biosphere Reserve under the UNESCO-MAB Programme in 2011 and is the first tri-national biosphere reserve in Central America. Like other regional border areas, Trifinio is characterized by higher poverty levels, marginalization, and isolation from national political centres due to its location. Yet, this region is rich in biodiversity, water resources, and culture, with a full range of optimal elevations for coffee agroforestry. The Trifinio Commission manages and promotes the regional conservation and sustainable use of natural and water resources.^{[56]58}

La Amistad: Located between Costa Rica and Panama, La Amistad is one of the oldest and largest transboundary protected areas. However, governance mechanisms have been ineffective at countering land-cover and land-use changes. The protected areas extend across borders, but their territories are managed separately within each country as international adjoining protected areas, despite being managed cooperatively by both Costa Rica and Panama. This cross-border collaboration aims to ensure the protection of the diverse ecosystems. Moreover, La Amistad Reserve holds cultural importance for the indigenous communities living within and around the park.^{[57]59}

Another example of cross-border agreement in the region includes Selva Maya Comprehensive Strategy and corresponding bodies (Strategic and Operations Coordination Groups which includes authorities of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico).

Regional initiatives:

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A series of systematic efforts set the regional baseline including: the SICA Regional Initiative AFOLU 2040; the 5 Great Forests Initiative focusing on the five Mesoamerican forests; the investments of the Forestry and Climate Change Fund; the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund; the UK's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund; the Selva Maya Natural Resources Protection; the GEF Small Grants Program; and the IKI Small Grants Program.

The SICA Regional Initiative AFOLU 2040^[58]⁶⁰ seeks to promote a comprehensive approach to landscape restoration, where forest areas will be rehabilitated and conserved, biological corridors will be established through the adoption of resilient agroforestry and pastoral systems, and agricultural areas will be transformed by adopting sustainable low-carbon practices, seeking to increase productivity and achieve land degradation neutrality. The strategy is developed along five components, with components 1. Conservation of Forests and Forest Ecosystems, and 2. Conservation of the region's main forest areas and their ecological connectivity, being pertinent to the IP objectives.

The 5 Great Forests Initiative^[59]⁶¹ aspires to transform agriculture and food systems and protect intact forested landscapes in Mesoamerica's Five Forests, to adapt to and mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, and improve livelihoods. The first phase of the initiative was implemented by WCS in Central America (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Costa Rica, and El Salvador). The initiative promotes the adoption of climate-resilient alternative livelihoods; the development of policies and incentive programs; reducing illegal trafficking; and promote improved protection, management, governance, and monitoring of forests.

The second phase of the initiative is supported by the EU and the European agencies (AECID, GIZ, ASDI, Expertise France). The initiative is also expanding its scope to include Mexico increasing the countries to eight. The initiative is organized in four components 1. data for decision making, 2. forest governance, 3. sustainable production and trade, and 4. environmental rights and forest conservation.

The Forestry and Climate Change Fund ^[60]⁶² invests in a diversified portfolio of forestry companies, community forestry entities and owners of small forests, to support the sustainable management of secondary and degraded forests, as well as in entities which support the development of forests value chains. The Fund develops partnerships and provides the financial and technical assistance to support projects on a local scale including the sub-tropical and tropical forests of Southern Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Nicaragua with potential to expand in other central American countries (Panama, Belize, Panama).

The Mesoamerican Territorial Fund ^[61]⁶³ has developed develop a financial mechanism for the promotion of governance and local (territorial) development in the forested regions of Mesoamerica. The Fund is supporting actions in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, and focuses on inclusive economic growth and small businesses. It provides direct financing linked to

performance in local forestry and agroforestry landscapes, placing emphasis on territorial rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The UK's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund^{[62]⁶⁴} in Mesoamerica operates in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and aspires to develop economic opportunities through investment in nature to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and reduce GHG emissions by providing alternative livelihoods and protecting biologically diverse forest landscapes. The delivery partner for Mesoamerica is WCS and the activities are implemented by WCS, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE), the Trinational Commission of Trifinio Plan (TNC), and the Honduran Forest Conservation Institute (ICF).

The Selva Maya Natural Resources Protection is supported through the German Cooperation (notably through the KfW - German development bank) and support regional conservation in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. The project is implemented by IUCN and has an objective of maintaining the ecosystem functions and cultural values that promote the welfare of people and provide environmental services of global importance. The project aspires to increase the effectiveness of Pas in Selva Maya, improve their connectivity, and strengthen the coordination between Belize, Guatemala and Mexico.

Nevertheless, the above initiatives and other initiatives funded under through GEF Small Grants Program and the IKI Small Grants Program lack coordination on a regional level. This lack of coordination hinders the development of synergies among them and the effectiveness on a Mesoamerican biome level and as manifested above the deforestation trends are not reversed. Primary forest conservation and sustainable use remain elusive on a regional (and national) level leading to continued loss of IFLs in Mesoamerica.

Key Stakeholders:

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The Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) and the Central American Agricultural Council, as regional institutions aimed at linking the agricultural and environmental sectors at a regional level, will be the stakeholders involved in the event of cross-sectoral policy and governance conditions to promote policy coherence among agricultural-environmental sectors. Additionally, IUCN will work in cooperation with WCS, FCCF, and TFA as key partners in order to promote innovative solutions that includes scientific information for decision making processes and convey public, private and civil society stakeholders to link environmental and agricultural agendas for a sustainable development, fulfilling their institutional missions through relevant technical processes and achieving project goals in alignment with decisions made by the national and regional political systems.

The RCP will collaborate with various Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources on national projects and with CONANP on the management of natural areas that require improved administration. This collaboration aims to promote forest restoration and protection actions in priority areas. Lastly, a key

stakeholder of the RCP is the Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico. Their role is crucial in implementing forest restoration and protection actions in priority areas with indigenous peoples, strengthening their participation in decision-making, and ensuring respect for their rights.

Key regional policies:

The RCP will focus on two key regional policies to promote the RCP and Mesoamerican CFB IP objectives; the Regional Environmental Framework Strategy (ERAM) and the Regional agri-environmental and health strategy (ERAS).

The ERAM Strategy 2021-2025 includes several strategic areas: environmental quality, oceans and biodiversity, integrated water resource management (IWRM), sustainable forests and landscapes, and climate change and integrated risk management. Within the forest strategic area, ERAM aims to enhance the well-being of Central American Integration System (SICA) inhabitants by improving management, governance, and business climate in territories with forest ecosystems, plantations, and agroforestry systems, both terrestrial and coastal, across local and cross-border contexts. This approach ensures the generation of environmental goods and services through participatory management models. However, even though ERAM includes a line of strategy dedicated to sustainable forests and landscapes (Line 4) currently lacks focus on primary forest conservation.

Similarly, the ERAS is a policy focusing on the agri-environmental objectives (2010-2024) by promoting a multifaceted approach to development linking agriculture, environment, and public health. The policy promotes, sustainable land management, considers climate change and climate variability promoting adaptation, aspires to safeguard biodiversity, encourages the development of businesses that promote environmentally friendly agricultural practices and promotes healthy living environment and lifestyles. Nevertheless, as ERAM, ERAS does not incorporate primary forest conservation objectives and targets.

The RCP therefore still need to address the following regional barriers that prevent resolving the global environmental problem:

Barriers

The proposed RCP interventions will have to confront the following barriers that limit addressing the degradation and loss of primary forests in Mesoamerica:

Barrier 1. The value of intact forest landscapes is not recognized, valued, and paid for by society.

Mesoamerican IFL – largely undisturbed primary forests –, despite their exceptional value in providing crucial ecosystem services and diverse means of livelihood for the communities that inhabit these areas, are often overlooked. Their value, from economic benefits to cultural significance, is not fully recognized. IPLCs, which are the main population of IFLs and key advocates of forest value– are not empowered and incorporated centrally in the decision-making process. Despite, their contributions to conservation rights over their territories are not always recognised and, in many cases, PAs were declared without taking into account that they already inhabited these territories. The environmental services these forests provide are not integrated into the national accounts of the countries, which hampers the creation of a shared understanding of the value of primary forests among key institutions (ministries of finance, agriculture, and environment) at the regional level. Furthermore, a deficiency in positive incentives hinders efforts to preserve these vital IFLs, causing the value of IFLs to be low on political and environmental agendas. This lack of political momentum leads to the absence of initiatives to tackle deforestation drivers at the regional level.

Barrier 2. Limited mechanisms for transboundary forest conservation.

There has been progress in implementing mechanisms for transboundary forest conservation (e.g. in Selva Maya). Nevertheless, key gaps remain including cross-border collaboration include: (i) different level of priorities; (ii) divergent organizational structure and mandates; (iii) distinct legal frameworks; (iv) dissimilar level of political support to formal transboundary collaboration; and (v) the degree of available resources and capacity to undertake collaborative actions. To amplify the benefits of forest conservation the RCP will strengthen the existing cross-border collaboration mechanisms for the Selva Maya, Moskitia, Indio Maíz – Tortuguero, La Amistad, Darien and Trifinio.

Barrier 3. Limited capacity and support for protected area management and the implementation of other effective area-based conservation measures.

The management of PA in the region is characterized with huge discrepancies in terms of capacity, resources, and enforcement capacity, weakening their contribution on a biome level, IPLCs in IFL have been contributing significantly to forest conservation, but often rights over their territories are not recognised and, in many cases, PAs were declared without taking into account that they already inhabited these territories. Moreover, the institutionalization and the operationalization of OECM is also at a different stage within the IP and non-IP countries in the region, affecting the effectiveness of this crucial tool in the conservation of the Mesoamerican forest biome. On the other hand, the countries in the regional are committed in the AFOLU 2040 strategy that aspires to conserve forest ecosystems (Component 1) and their ecological connectivity (Component 2). While there are initiatives for forest restoration, they did not manage to alter the deforestation rates in primary forests. The impact of these efforts will continue to be severely hindered unless there is a regional level improvement and harmonization in the capacity for PA management and the OECMs as a tool for forest and ecological connectivity conservation.

Barrier 4. Insufficient mainstreaming of primary forest conservation in regional policies and lack of sustainable livelihoods

The primary forest conservation is not mainstreamed in key regional policies e.g. the Framework Regional Environmental Strategy (ERAM) and the Regional Agri-environmental and Health Strategy (ERAS). Moreover, while the importance of youth for sustainable development is recognized, the integration of sustainable livelihood options that are deforestation free and contribute to the conservation of primary forests remains a significant gap. Mesoamerica lacks the policies and financial instruments to address integrated primary forest conservation. Moreover, the absence of deforestation-free livelihoods renders IPLCs them more susceptible to the underlying drivers leading to accelerated deforestation.

Barrier 5. Insufficient coordination among conservation and development initiatives.

There is a need for coordination between the conservation initiatives such as the Regional Initiative AFOLU 2040, The 5 Great Forests Initiative, the investments of the Forestry and Climate Change Fund, the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund, the UK's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund, the GEF Small Grants Program, and the IKI Small Grants Program. There is a need for regional-level coordination mechanism that can facilitate strategic synergies to advance intact forest conservation.

Future narratives and incremental cost reasoning

Based on the above, there are different scenarios that can be projected without the without GEF intervention (taking into consideration the significant uncertainty due to the geographical area and the volatile biophysical, socio-economic, and political background).

- Scenario A – Comprehensive transition of the region to sustainable pathways with protection and conservation of the regional forest mases and their connectivity. The pathway is achieved through enabling policies at the national level that reduce forest conversion and strong cooperation and collaboration on the regional level through the coordination institutions that combats effectively transboundary illegal activities that lead to deforestation. IPLCs and rural youth have access to alternative deforestation-free livelihoods and PA and OECM networks enable primary forest conservation on a regional level.
- Scenario B – Continued support and financing of primary forest conservation leads to a moderate sustainable transition that varies between countries depending on the access to financial resources and capacity. There is some success in addressing underlying drivers that corrode IPLC livelihoods, but it is inconsistent in the region. Due to variable needs, regional coordination is not promoted and

drivers such as illegal trafficking continue to undercut the effectiveness of country/landscape specific initiatives. No regional agenda for primary forest conservation is established.

- Scenario C – Current trends persist due to the ineffectiveness of uncoordinated efforts to significantly improve the livelihoods of communities and rural youth. Cattle ranching and illegal activities lead to further marginalization of IPLCs and reduce livelihood alternatives. Regional drivers such as trafficking reinforce the vicious cycle of deforestation with national and regional initiatives for forest conservation and deforestation not being able to address the losses. Primary forest conservation becomes a very low priority.

Taking into consideration the current trends in the area, scenario B is the most plausible, which will lead to continued loss and degradation of primary forests. In this scenario, Mesoamerican governments have limited capacities and knowledge on how to integrate conservation and natural resource management priorities within their sustainable development priorities and plans to address key environmental degradation drivers.

GEF financing, under Component 1, will allow the provision of evidence of the benefits of ecosystem services from forest conservation and restoration, considering climate change adaptation evidence and economic development, thus increasing political capital to incentivize forest conservation. Additionally, through the operational incorporation of primary forest conservation in key regional policies (ERAM, ERAS) it will promote policy coherence. GEF financing, under component 2, will contribute to the coordinated adoption of OECMs, improved capacity for the protected areas management and targeted restoration of forests through ad-hoc demand-based regional training to support national child projects needs and targeted support to address cross-border and regional level needs. To achieve improved conservation and connectivity at scale, GEF financing under component 3 will catalyse new and additional funding for conservation of forests in Mesoamerica, including innovative finance approaches working with private sector actors, and through engagement and outreach to international providers of climate and conservation finance. Lastly, under component 4 it will allow for the documentation of knowledge and good practices and their dissemination at a regional and global level through the regional knowledge platforms. Additionally, through the regional coordination platform and the thematic working groups will address gaps that currently exist in the regional cooperation fora, including strengthening the participation of IPLCs, women and youth and developing synergies between the fragmented initiatives in the region.

Project justification

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The GEF8 Mesoamerican Forest Integrated Program seeks to slow and reverse loss and degradation of critical remaining primary forests in the region. This will be achieved by the country projects of the six participating countries and be reinforced and strengthened to the regional scale by the RCP. The RCP has the objective to overall achievement of Program goals and benefits, ensuring a well-coordinated and adaptively managed program with harmonized monitoring, reporting and communications, and high-value exchanges and capacity-building events organized at multiple levels throughout implementation of the Program.

Engaging multiple stakeholders is crucial to ensuring the success of various initiatives:

- (i) The success of the country child projects within the Mesoamerica CFB IP hinges on maximizing the benefits of the programmatic approach.

- (ii) Extending this engagement to include relevant government organizations from the non-IP countries (Costa Rica, Belize) is vital for establishing a regional policy agenda focused on primary forest conservation, fostering transboundary collaboration, creating supportive policy and investment environments, promoting policy coherence at national levels, and scaling up best practices emerging from the IP.
- (iii) Collaborating with International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), international organizations, specialized technical and research institutions specializing in primary forests, and umbrella organizations representing Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LCs), women, and youth is essential for showcasing best practices, enhancing capacities, expanding outreach at national levels, and securing stakeholders' support for the IP.
- (iv) Involving the private sector is crucial for ensuring sustained financing for primary forest conservation through economically viable investments.
- (v) Collaborating with the other CFB IPs worldwide and related initiatives is key to maximizing synergies and promoting primary forest conservation on a global scale.

The project is aligned with the GEF-8 objectives and will contribute to bringing about transformational change by removing barriers to achieve multiple Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs). The project will enable the regional programmatic approach to coordinate and amplify the effectiveness of national and fragmented regional efforts.

[1] FAO (2018) defines a “primary forest” as a naturally regenerated forest of native tree species, where there are no visible indications of human activities and the ecological processes are not significantly disturbed. The Convention on Biological Diversity defines a “primary forest” as a forest that has never been logged and has developed following natural disturbances and under natural processes, regardless of its age. Intact forests refer to large forest areas that are free from significant anthropogenic influence (Watson et al., 2018). However, there is no agreed international definition (Mackey et al., 2021), and several analogue terms are used like primary forests and intact forest landscapes, among others. Potapov et al., (2008) defined “intact forest landscapes” (IFL) as an unbroken expanse of natural ecosystems within areas of current forest extent, without signs of significant human activity, and having an area of at least 500 km². In the present document the terms “intact forest”, “primary forest” and “intact forest landscape” are used interchangeably.

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[3] Peter Potapov et al., ‘Mapping the World’s Intact Forest Landscapes by Remote Sensing’, *Ecology and Society* 13, no. 2 (2008), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26267984>.

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[12] Scullion et al., 'Conserving the Last Great Forests'; Potapov et al., 'Mapping the World's Intact Forest Landscapes by Remote Sensing'; Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, 'Northern Region of the Mesoamerica Biodiversity Hotspot'.

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B. CHILD PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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

The GEF8 Mesoamerican Forest Integrated Program seeks to slow and reverse loss and degradation of critical remaining primary forests in the region, through a set of targeted interventions that address the main threats of deforestation and forest degradation in the six child projects. The RCP aims to improve and consolidate the conservation of Mesoamerica's primary forests through strengthened governance, protection, and restoration, while developing synergies and coordinating actions at the regional level to mobilize stable long-term funding and improve capacity-building activities. The Theory of change aims to achieve transformative change through the following levers of transformation:

- **Governance and policy coherence:** through inter-institutional coordination with various public and private sectors, strengthening capacity for integrated land use planning – Component 1.
- **Financial leverage:** Mobilize new and additional funding for conservation of CFBs through innovative finance including blended finance, PES, carbon and biodiversity offsets – Component 3.
- **Innovation and learning:** Incorporate the perception of target groups and technical indicators in the conservation of critical ecosystems into strategic planning – Component 4, Outputs 1.2.1 and 2.1.1.
- **Multi-Stakeholder dialogues:** Support high-level dialogues to both align and enhance existing programs and develop new initiatives and partnerships to enable and incentivize forest conservation; Facilitate high-level roundtables with private sector leaders to support and enable conservation and deforestation free commitments and action to boost market access and recognition of nature positive activities – Component 4, Outcome 1.3 and Output 3.1.1.

To help overcome the identified barriers, the project will follow the structure of the Mesoamerican Forest Programme and is articulated around four interrelated components focusing on: developing enabling conditions to support the conservation of primary forests (component 1), protecting and restoring primary forests (component 2), ensuring sustained long-term financing and incentivising forest-friendly efforts (component 3), and establishing a region-wide coordination mechanism to enhance complementarity and synergies between the range of ongoing initiatives and facilitate knowledge development and sharing (component 4). All this in line with an inclusive approach that includes special conditions to facilitate the access of women and youth to national and municipal programme offerings.

At the regional level, there will be a knowledge management platform that will facilitate sharing experiences between countries, prioritizing topics, and identifying and proposing actions that will enable the region to advance toward managing these critical ecosystems within the framework of its four components identified in the proposal. At the country level, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama will each have a national project, where actions will be carried out in the territory within the framework of each component and the identified national landscapes. The actions of the national projects will be implemented in each country landscape, and through component 4 (knowledge management) and the Regional Program, interactions will be promoted between the different States and national actors to increase and strengthen collaboration between countries. This collaboration aims to improve the management of these ecosystems through existing governance strategies and platforms tailored for each case.

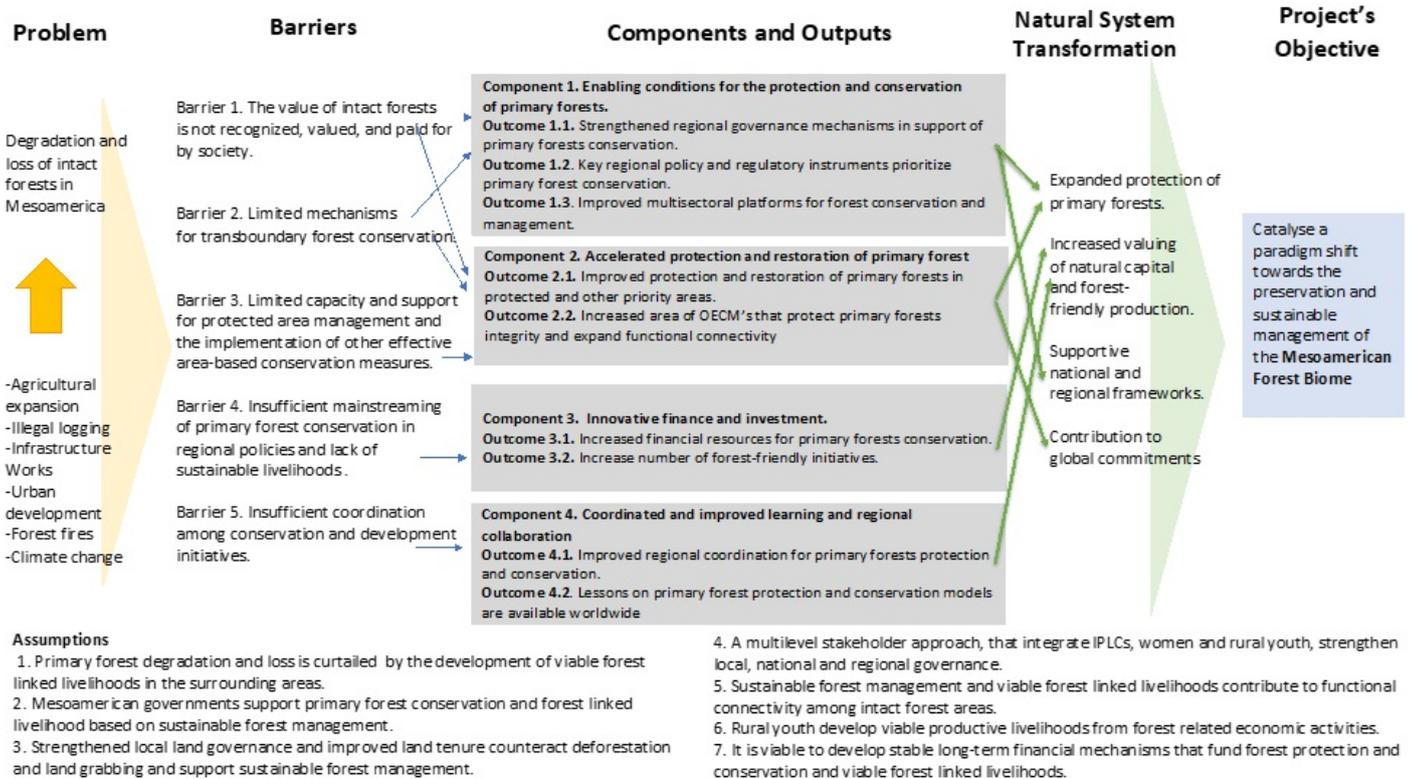


Figure 2, Theory of Change

In line with the Program's Theory of Change, the regional coordination project will ensure that the national child projects will lead to a coordinated effort to address the identified barriers. The regional project interventions will focus on strengthening multi-level governance and policy coherence actively; improve forest landscape management on a regional level; facilitate deforestation free livelihoods by mobilizing new and additional funding for forest conservation; and enhancing regional cooperation, knowledge sharing and awareness raising. They will do so by engaging regional and national level stakeholders, incorporating the private sector, and leveraging funds, and taking advantage of policy opportunity windows for gender, youth and IPLC mainstreaming.

Under the Mesoamerica perspective the regional coordination project will bring together the efforts in Mexico (Mexican Selva Maya, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatan), Guatemala (Petén, Trifinio Biosphere Reserve), Honduras (Moskitia), El Salvador (Trifinio Fraternidad Biosphere Reserve), Nicaragua (Bosawas Biosphere Reserve (BBR) and the Indio Maiz Biological Reserve (IMBR, Panama (Darién Forest region).

In particular, the Regional Integrated Project will address the barriers through five strategic actions:

1. **Knowledge-sharing, awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns** (Components 1 and 4) will mainstream the notion of the CFB ecosystem services value at regional level addressing **Barrier 1**.
2. **Multi-level and cross sectorial dialogue at regional level** (Component 1) will enhance transboundary management of primary forests through enhanced policy coherence, to overcome **Barrier 2** and **Barrier 3**.
3. **Regional capacity building** for PA managers and stakeholder support through **inclusive models of NbS and OECMs** (Component 2) will address **Barrier 3**.
4. Support the development of **innovative business models and financing instruments** (Component 3) for forest conservation and management at regional scale and catalyse financial leverage to address **Barrier 4**
5. **Regional coordination platforms** (Component 1 and 4) will emerge and be hosted by pertinent political partners (ministries of environment and agriculture, CCAD and CAC at regional level) to facilitate collaboration to addressing **Barrier 5**.

The project is structured in four interlinked components as detailed below:

Component 1. Enabling conditions for the protection and conservation of primary forests.

Component 1 will support high-level multi-sectoral dialogues and exchanges to facilitate the development of enabling policies and rational land use planning that recognizes the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Component 1 will contribute to strengthening regional and national policy frameworks and expanding the protection of primary forests and promote policy coherence for forest conservation through an intersectoral approach.

Outcome 1.1. Strengthened regional governance mechanisms in support of primary forests conservation.

The Output 1.1.1. Awareness-raising and advocacy plan on primary forest conservation and conservation targeted at policymakers, sectoral entities, and private sector.

The Output will develop and implement a common advocacy plan across the Mesoamerican region in line with the guidelines of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) guidance and advisory documents. The Output will develop campaigns that will consolidate the efforts on the programme level targeting key multi-level stakeholders (national and regional governments, civil society, regional stakeholders, IPLC and private sector), following a clear and coordinated messaging framework. The advocacy plan will identify and set the regional strategic objectives, identify the advocacy targets, identify advocacy pathways, including coalition forming, and clearly identify advocacy and awareness targets to promote a coordinated an inter sectoral agenda (E.G environmental -agricultural) in order to favour regional policy coherence with an emphasis in forest conservation. The regional plan will provide guidelines and tools to consolidate the programme efforts to common regional goals, focusing efforts on common advocacy pathways and targets.

The plan will build on the stakeholder analyses of the PPG phase at the regional and national level to identify key stakeholders and coalitions that can lead to transformative shift for the long-term conservation of the Mesoamerican CFB. Key stakeholders will include but not limited to policymakers, decision-makers, civil society organizations, IPLCs, women and youth, and the private sector. The plan will ensure that advocacy is coordinated, consistent and culturally appropriate through indicatively, common policy agendas to be promoted, common high-level advocacy events and will take inputs of output 1.2.1 that will provide key information for decision making tools and policies for forest conservation. For the implementation of this output IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as CCAD and CAC to promote policy coherence efforts and improve inter sectoral coordination for forest conservation of environmental and agricultural sector.

Output 1.1.2 Strengthened agreements for cross-border protected areas collaboration.

Mesoamerica provides substantial opportunities for collaboration between cross-border protected areas under the IP. The output will facilitate bilateral and/or multilateral discussions between countries to promote agreements on common transboundary PA management objectives and objectives operationalization. The RCP will also promote the implementation of such PA management agreements between the different countries to face key forest loss and degradation. The RCP will facilitate bilateral meetings between countries to develop or strengthen collaboration through building networks and framework agreements. Countries will be supported to develop roadmaps, actions plan, or MoUs for collaboration. Indicatively, the RCP could support the assessment of illegal transboundary activities related to forest products and/or commodities that are linked with deforestation including livestock based on the demand of the country child projects.

Output 1.1.3 A regional agreement to operationalize the Rural youth strategy of the SICA region 2022 – 2030 into the primary forest landscapes.

The output is recognizing the centrality of integrating youth in sustainable rural development and in particular the need to align youth developmental objectives with the conservation of primary forest landscapes. Therefore, the RCP will support the strengthening of the existing rural youth organizations in the region such as the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and expand the scope of SICA existing youth networks^{[1]⁶⁵} to particularly address the conservation of primary forests.

The Rural Youth Strategy and network encourage rural youth to participate in decision-making processes, giving them a voice in community activities and recognizing their significant role in the development of the

agricultural sector as agents of territorial transformation. They are significant tools for promoting youth leadership in developing sustainable livelihoods, facilitating access to capacity-building activities that contribute to their adaptation to climate change, and enabling active participation in regional discussions on these topics. Nevertheless, they do not include primary forests conservation within their scope.

The RCP will support the prioritization of measures of the Rural Youth Strategy and the development of a work plan that will specifically address the needs of the rural youth for primary forest landscapes conservation. The RCP will also support the SICA youth network to include primary forests conservation by strengthening associative capacities, networks, and advocacy among rural youth to effectively engage in regional public policy dialogues on primary forest conservation. A key partner for this output will be CAC.

Outcome 1.2. Key regional policy and regulatory instruments prioritize primary forest conservation.

The programme will support the strengthening of key regional policy and regulatory instruments. The RCP will support evidence-based policies through regional level analysis of data, and with the mainstreaming of CFB conservation considerations in key regional strategies.

Output 1.2.1 Information to support fact-based decision making on forest conservation interventions for policy coherence and inter sectoral coordination (e.g., natural capital accounting, biodiversity, and social assessments).

The RCP will support the compilation of evidence generated from national child projects on information gaps such as the contribution of critical forest biomes to i) the protection of ecosystems in danger of collapse (GBF target 1), ii) the generation of ecosystem services (natural capital accounting, potentially with advice - in coordination with IDB) and well-being (employment) and the iii) role of indigenous territories and protected areas in the protection of biodiversity and positioning it in international fora (GBF COP). The project will support the comprehensive compilation of the national level evidence and their integration in a regional level to promote policy coherence and inter sectoral coordination and decision making based on scientific evidence. The analysis could support the regional ecosystem natural capital accounting to promote innovative financial instrument for forest conservation and evidence-based decision-making (especially the contribution of IFL to the regional environmental economic accounting - ecosystem, AFOLU and water see accounts^{[2]⁶⁶}), halting human-induced extinction of threatened species, sustaining livelihoods (e.g., creation of decent employment, provision of food) and the role of indigenous territories in the conservation of biodiversity, by building on countries results from national child project, and complement it as need be at biome level. Key information and instrument could be used as inputs to develop awareness raising and advocacy plan for output 1.1.1 as

well as key element of output 1.2.2 to include key conservation tools for forest conservation in the framework of ERAM and ERAS.

Moreover, and according to countries priorities and regional interest, the RCP will provide ad-hoc training based on child project needs on the utilization of specific tools towards i) natural capital and forest accounting, capitalizing on IDB knowledge^{[3]⁶⁷} and tools, ii) use of the species threat abatement and restoration (STAR) methodology to report on contribution of primary forest to target 4 (species), iii) impact assessment of specific AFOLU policies. This would strengthen capacities at the regional level and ensure a standard approach. For the implementation of this output IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders with technical knowledge on the field like indicatively WCS and TFA.

Output 1.2.2 Key regional instruments integrate strategic actions for primary forest protection and conservation (ERAM and ERAS).

The regional coordination project will integrate the protection and conservation of primary forests into i) the Regional Environmental Framework Strategy (ERAM) and the ii) Regional agri-environmental and health strategy (ERAS), addressing a significant gap as mentioned in the baseline.

To address this gap, the project will strengthen ERAM by integrating specific guidelines and actions for primary forest protection within its strategic line for forest and sustainable landscape. It will leverage outcomes from multi-sectoral platforms (outcome 1.3) to inform and strengthen policy measures for primary forest conservation. Additionally, the RCP will support the update of ERAM's strategies to align with recent frameworks such as AFOLU to advance policy coherence between agricultural and environmental sectors, emphasizing the conservation of primary forests. The initiative will also promote awareness and capacity-building among stakeholders to underscore the significance of primary forests within ERAM's scope.

Similarly, ERAS, despite its specific agri-environmental objectives (2010-2024), falls short in addressing primary forest conservation. The RCP project aims to enhance ERAS by integrating guidelines and actions specifically designed to protect and conserve primary forests, while also considering the One Health approach principles. The One Health approach emphasizes the interconnectedness between human health, animal health, and environmental health, all of which are influenced by the integrity of ecosystems like primary forests. This includes updating ERAS to incorporate measures for the protection, conservation, and restoration of primary forests, aligning with recently updated strategies such as AFOLU. As in the case of ERAM, operationally incorporating primary forest conservation to the ERAS will significantly contribute to enhance policy coherence with the agricultural policy addressing barrier 4.

The updated policies will therefore allow forest primary conservation promoting a pathway at regional level for increasing alignment between sectoral and national policies. ILPC, women and youth considerations will also be incorporated with the support of the respective Technical Working Groups (see Component 4). Moreover, the RCP will support a key regional instrument linked to these strategies that will be determined jointly with the political partners, taking into consideration the needs of the countries and the main outputs of the multisector-dialogue platforms. For the implementation of this output IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders including CCAD and CAC.

Outcome 1.3. Improved multisectoral platforms for forest conservation and management.

The program will support the processes to establish or strengthen multisectoral platforms in the region and will convene regional meetings to facilitate intersectoral and multilevel positive dialogues. The information generated in outcomes 1.2.1, 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 will feed the platforms and dialogue processes.

Output 1.3.1. Regional multisectoral meetings of stakeholder groups and sectors to agree actions and goals for primary forest conservation.

At the regional level, the program will organize multi-level multi-sector dialogue processes with the participation of decision and policy makers, and pertinent forest and non-forest key stakeholders from different sectors such as agriculture and environment to discuss and analyse the key drivers of primary forest degradation and loss and to encourage from agreements to convene efforts to address these drivers. The RCP will consult the Technical Committee on Forests under CCAD and the elaborate a roadmap that includes the key issues of the Regional Environmental Framework Strategy (ERAM) in the chapter on Forests that need to be addressed at the national level in a multi-sectoral way to feed back into the regional process. This process will be included in the AFOLU 2040 Initiative and build on the structure and participants of the established national and regional AFOLU roundtables (government, civil society, private sector). In the case of specific dialogues through thematic events and *ad hoc* working groups, relevant actors from the local governance structures of the Child Projects will participate. The RCP will facilitate strengthening of the regional roundtable and other sectors in close coordination with the regional coordination bodies ensuring alignment with output 3.1.2 and outcome 3.2. For the implementation of this output IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders including CCAD and CAC.

Output 1.3.2. Affirmative actions to integrate IPLCs, women and rural youth into decision-making processes.

The RCP support will be based on countries' demand and provide coordination and experience sharing with the national projects to facilitate the integration of IPLCs, women and rural youth into decision-making processes. The RCP will support the elaboration of a protocol to regulate and formalize the participation of the private sector, civil society, Indigenous peoples and forest communities in CCAD existing Technical

Committee on Forests. The regional project will support the consultation and validation process within the Technical Committee on Forests. The proposal will be submitted to the Council of Environment Ministers, who will decide on its approval. This will enable stronger participation of these groups on the regional decision-making process. Moreover, the Technical Committee on Forests will work closely with the Territorial Working Group under the Regional Coordination Project in order to identify and promote lessons learned and good practices concerning decision-making and effective framework and their enforcement to adequately recognize and protect indigenous land rights at regional level. The RCP will promote such practices through the annual workshops to support the national child projects ensuring that IPLC rights and power on land at the national and local levels are enhanced. For the implementation of this output IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively CCAD and CAC.

Component 2. Accelerated protection and restoration of primary forests.

This component will be responsible for ensuring that the protection primary forests are supported by Knowledge Management and learning at a regional biome level, allowing for collaboration and coordination at the regional level, while ensuring that child project achievements in terms of the protection and restoration outcomes at national levels are contributing to the general IP goals. The RCP will not directly support restoration activities in primary forests – which will be implemented through the national child projects. That said, through the ad-hoc support to national child projects under out Outcomes 2.1, the RCP will contribute to improved fact-based decision-making processes for the identification of restoration areas. Component 2 will contribute to expanding the protection of primary forests and to global commitments.

Outcome 2.1. Improved protection and restoration of primary forests in protected and other priority areas.

The program will generate key information to support fact-based decision-making at regional level. Evidence-based decision-making will guide the interventions in protected areas, OECMs and forest restoration, and will be a key input for the outcomes under components 1 and 3.

Output 2.1.1. Regional assessment of the risk of collapse and extent of the Mesoamerican critical forest biomes

The RCP will develop a regional assessment of the risk of collapse and extension of critical Mesoamerican Forest biomes based on inputs from national projects and countries that do not participate in the IP (Costa Rica, Belize) based on their interest to generate a similar assessment. This assessment will allow to assess in a standardized manner the impact of threats, the drivers of forest degradation, and the level of deforestation to better understand their specific and cumulative impacts. Moreover, it will assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures and more importantly the role that IPLC can play in addressing threats and drivers, taking

into consideration that deforestation drivers also undermine the livelihoods of IPLCs. With the input from the national child projects and the non-IP countries the RCP could develop a “biome level” red list assessment. The assessment will focus on two specific ecosystems of the tropical-sub-tropical forest biome: tropical subtropical lowland rainforest, and tropical/subtropical montane rainforest, as these ecosystems overlap with IFL^[4]⁶⁸.

The regional coordination project will build upon previous regional assessment reports and data and updated national data on accurate primary forest area maps and Red List of Ecosystems conservation status ensuring the adherence and alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) monitoring framework. The regional child project will be responsible for reviewing the country results and ensure the proper coordination between the national teams. The RCP will also be responsible to make the results widely available and integrated into the long-term awareness-raising and advocacy plan (output 1.1.1) and the Mesoamerican knowledge platform (output 4.2.1). The results will also inform child project efforts for forest restoration planning: the RCP will provide orientation to child projects on how IUCN Red List of Ecosystems and ecosystem restoration can be jointly deployed to reduce risk of ecosystem collapse.^[5]⁶⁹ For the implementation of this output IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders with technical knowledge on the field like indicatively WCS, and EU-members cooperation agencies.

Output 2.1.2. Information on the contribution of protected areas and indigenous peoples to conserve primary forests and advance the global biodiversity framework to support fact-based decision making.

The regional child project will undertake specific studies to document the role of protected areas and indigenous peoples in Mesoamerican primary forest conservation. It will undertake specific studies to document the role of protected areas and indigenous peoples in Mesoamerican primary forest conservation based on national project results and complementing as required in countries such as Costa Rica and Belize. The analysis will include the contributions of PA and IPLC to achieve Targets 3 (area conservation) and 4 (halt human induced extinction) of the Kunming- Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The activity will be in line with GBF corresponding targets especially with the use of STAR to report on target 4 (O 1.2.1) as it can be linked to the red list index and the same standards are used in both tools (Red List of Species). The results of the analyses will be made widely available and integrated into the long-term awareness-raising and advocacy plan (O 1.1.1) and the Mesoamerican knowledge platform (O 4.2.1) and will also contribute to the strengthening of IPLCs participation in the decision-making process (O 1.3.2). The information will be used to support regional positioning in global negotiations and international development agenda. The output will be implemented by IUCN.

Outcome 2.2. Increased area of OECMs that protect primary forests integrity and expand functional connectivity.

Through Outcome 2.2, Mesoamerica CFB IP and the RCP will work to increase the areas of OECMs, while the RCP will also specifically work to promote transboundary OECMs and effectively utilize this tool on a biome level. In particular the RCP will provide regional trainings, webinars and specific tools to facilitate establishment and improved management of OECMs addressing the different competencies, institutional frameworks between the countries and the national child project needs. At the same time, it will promote the development of transboundary protocols to implement OECMs in ecosystems shared between countries based on countries demands and support the elaboration of binational / regional roadmaps for supporting transboundary OECM based on gap analysis between national frameworks for OECMs. The RCP will also compile identified lessons learned and best practices from the national level to be communicated through component 4, thus contributing to the dissemination of knowledge management and learning.

Output 2.2.1. Collaboration agreements and support for OECMs within the framework of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

The RCP will support the assessment of the opportunity windows to develop agreements for establishing transboundary OECMs, including the integration of a bilateral or multilateral OECM framework in the 'CBM-2020 Master Plan Sustainable territorial management in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor'. As a first step, the RCP provide regional trainings, webinars and specific tools to facilitate establishment and improved management of OECM at biome level in a consistent manner. Secondly, the RCP will support the development of harmonized protocols to recognize national OECMs and identify potential OECMs that increase forest conservation, which will be part of a roadmap to include OECMs as an effective conservation measure at biome level. Depending on country demand, the RCP will support elaboration of binational / regional roadmaps for supporting transboundary OECM based on gap analysis between national frameworks for OECM. The regional project will coordinate the dialogue by bringing together the national and regional stakeholders and supporting them with technical knowledge on the alignment of management practices and tools. For the implementation of this activity IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively CCAD and CAC.

Component 3. Innovative finance and investment.

The program will develop innovative financing instruments and catalyse an increased flow of funding (Outcome 3.1) and incentivize nature-friendly productive activities (outcome 3.2). Component 3 will contribute to increased valuing of natural capital and forest-friendly production.

Outcome 3.1. Increased financial resources for primary forest conservation.

The program will develop a series of actions to increase financial resources at regional level. The RCP will support the development of a regional coalition of interested parties to sustain long-term financing for the conservation of primary forests in Mesoamerica.

Output 3.1.1. High-level dialogue to mobilize financial resources through bilateral, multilateral, private and philanthropy channels to sustain long-term critical forest biomes conservation.

The RCP will support regional stakeholders to organize funding campaigns to support the identified instruments and investment opportunities of Output 3.2.1. These events will include representatives from pertinent IPLC, women and rural youth organizations. On a demand basis, RCP could provide regional capacity building, knowledge exchange and trainings on innovative financing. For the implementation of this activity IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively TFA and IADB.

Output 3.1.2. Regional coalition to mobilize funding to accelerate the conservation of primary forests and the development of viable forests linked livelihoods.

The RCP will bring together the coordination work of the national projects to build a regional coalition to sustain long-term financing. The regional project will develop the institutional and operational arrangements with the support of CCAD and IADB, who will play a vital role in developing and sustaining this coalition. Other expected participants include buyers and producers of selected supply chains (palm oil, beef), investors (e.g., Pegasus Capital Advisers, Mirova, Arbaro Fund, FCCF), regional coordination bodies (e.g., the Central American Council for Tourism, CAC), other technical partners (TNC's NaturVest, GGGI, members of Coalition for Private Investment in Conservation) and IPLC, women and rural youth organizations. The project will also support the initial coalition meeting following the institutional and operational arrangements. For the implementation of this activity IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively TFA and IADB.

Outcome 3.2. Increased number of forest-friendly initiatives.

Output 3.2.1. Innovative business models for forest-friendly goods and services enhanced.

The RCP will consolidate and disseminate regional-level ongoing initiatives based on national mapping exercise, existing Mesoamerican and international experience, and barriers (e.g., access to credit) and opportunities (e.g., emerging markets) for the development of local forest-positive businesses. Moreover, it will provide on demand support and training on the design and impacts of business models and access to

financing at regional level. Based on the input of the national child projects, the RCP will ensure that capacity needs are identified and addressed linking local and national needs with regional opportunities. Successful, innovative business models and financial mechanisms will be showcased in the region and globally through the outputs of component 4. It will also support the elaboration of an investment portfolio for regional cooperation management. The RCP will consolidate country level and regional level information to prioritize the most relevant investment opportunities and provide the conditions for the management and negotiation of regional projects and investments. For the implementation of this activity IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively FCCF.

Output 3.2.2. High impact events and advocacy to accelerate the demand for products from sustainably managed secondary forests and deforestation-free commodities from Mesoamerica.

The RCP will support the implementation of annual high impact events, The events will be supported by the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) the World Economic Forum Centre for Nature and Finance, TFA members (Solidaridad, GGGI, WWF, TNC), CAC, and CCAD, actors from key supply chains (e.g., livestock, palm oil/RSOP, pulp) and regulatory bodies (ministries of agriculture and trade). The annual high impact events will focus on emerging deforestation-free regulations (US FOREST act and EU deforestation-free regulation) and foster compatibility between national deforestation-free schemes for relevant products to address trade of deforestation-related commodities and transboundary trade (e.g., cattle). The RCP depending on the child project demand could organize capacity building events on e.g., deforestation free regulation. The project will also support the development of common advocacy documents as a product of the high impact events to support the adoption of deforestation-free value chains and products. The advocacy documents will be promoted through output 1.1.1. For the implementation of this activity IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively TFA.

Component 4. Coordinated and improved learning and regional collaboration.

The component will facilitate regional coordination (outcome 4.1) and document and share lessons and knowledge (outcome 4.2). Component 4 will contribute to increased valuing of natural capital and forest-friendly production through improved understanding and capacity.

Outcome 4.1. Improved regional coordination for primary forest protection and conservation.

The regional coordination project will i) establish a regional coordination platform and (ii) will prepare and implement a long-term communication and awareness plan.

Output 4.1.1. Regional coordination platform for primary forest protection and conservation.

The RCP will support the identification and mapping of the most relevant partners and stakeholders involved in the conservation of the Mesoamerica Forest biome, including local and national governments, women

organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations, youth organizations, private sector, civil society, international cooperation organisms, among others. Once established, these groups and organizations may potentially participate in the Regional Platform.

The RCP will support the establishment of a regional coordination platform under SICA regional bodies, specifically the to support joint programming and synergies between the large spectrum of stakeholders and initiatives involved in the conservation of the Mesoamerica Forest biome. The establishment of a regional coordination platform under SICA will ensure the participation of all central American countries including Costa Rica and Belize, while the formal integration of Mexico (not a SICA member) will be based on the pertinent mechanisms and instruments based on the agreement signed in 2004.

The regional coordination platform through the technical committee will organize technical working groups (TWG) for alignment. All IP members, as well as representatives from Costa Rica and Belize, will participate on a voluntary basis in TWGs of their interest. All relevant information about TWGs shall be available at the Mesoamerica knowledge platform. Each TWG shall define its own meeting and working mechanisms considering their capacity and with RCP Technical Secretary support. TWGs will be identified and established during the first year of project implementation, considering a participatory approach involving the different actors participating in the Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome. These working groups will include, amongst others (a) protection and conservation of primary forest, (b) development of viable forests linked livelihoods that reduce pressure on primary forests, and (c) contribution to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, (d) a regional territorial roundtable constituted by grassroots organisations and indigenous and community organisations (please see Institutional Arrangement and Coordination section for additional information). For the implementation of this activity IUCN will cooperate with key regional stakeholders such as indicatively CCAD and CAC.

Output 4.1.2. Regional long-term communication plan to mobilize support for the conservation of primary forests and critical forest biomes.

The RCP will prepare a long-term communication plan. The communication plan will follow the guidelines of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) guidance and advisory documents. The plan will align specific channels to audiences taking into consideration the message that needs to be conveyed, the channel used, and the audience characteristics. The plan will set communication targets on a regional level and define an integrated campaign identity which will be evidence- driven, will channel the information generated in the program and will highlight the contributions to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The plan will also set the framework and provide guidelines for the national communication plans.

The plan will ensure that communication across all channels is consistent throughout the coordinated programme countries and that they are clear and to a high standard. The activity will ensure that there is a functioning relationship for the coordination of communication actions across the program. Indicatively, the

RCP will develop communication material guidelines and/or templates with shared branding across the IP, communications materials tailored to multiple audiences and communication channels such as including social media, videos, webinars, brochures etc. The RCP will also manage the regional level media partnerships and relations and will work in alignment with the objectives of Output 1.1.1. The output will be coordinated by IUCN with the engagement of all key regional stakeholders.

Outcome 4.2. Lessons on primary forest protection and conservation models are available worldwide.

The regional coordination project will (i) contribute to the development of a knowledge platform on the Mesoamerica Forest, including sound coordination and learning exchange with the other Forest IP biomes, in particular the Amazon IP biome, (ii) ensure that programme lessons are documented and disseminated, (iii) assure a cross- project learning and (iv) organize coherent planning and reporting among the child projects.

Output 4.2.1. Mesoamerican knowledge platform on critical forest biomes (e.g., biodiversity and social information, models of forest management, regulations).

The regional coordination project will systematically identify, document, and disseminate lessons and case studies from the child projects. In the inception phase of the project a knowledge management plan will be prepared based on the guidance of the STAP. The lessons learned and case studies will be identified, documented, and assessed through the relevant outputs. Under output 4.2.2 the regional coordination project will ensure the proper dissemination through the Mesoamerican knowledge platform (output 4.2.1) and global knowledge platforms such as the Panorama Conversation Areas Community or other global channels. Particular attention will be given to the lessons from the initiatives led by indigenous peoples, women and rural youth.

Through this activity the project will promote Regional Learning and Knowledge Management both within the Mesoamerica IP (country child projects) and the other CFB – regional IP. It will also develop a Scientific/technical advisory group to support the technical coordination and needs of the programme (please see the Institutional Arrangement and Coordination section for more information).

In addition, the project will support the digital infrastructure to support knowledge management. The RCP will support through CMICEF the consolidation of information on forest conservation and management. The information will include, among others case studies, courses, and good practices that will be identified both from the activities implemented by the IP, but also from other projects/programs. The CMICEF platform will establish a coordination protocol with the environmental observatory to ensure synergies, avoid replication, and ensure data and processes compatibility. Moreover, the RCP will support the redesign of the regional environmental observatory i.e. the CCAD Observatorio Ambiental to address the needs for the specific

services and knowledge fields including but not limited to statistical data, geographic data, strategic documents and legislation, technical documents, and supportive documentation for specialized tools and/or standards. The structure and functionality of the observatory will be based on a diagnostic analysis to address the needs of the observatory users, maximize utility, and ensure access to information through semi-automated processes. To ensure the high quality and relevance of the information provided by the observatory the regional project will also support the development of protocols for the acquisition, process, and publishing of information. This will include the development of the coordination arrangements, but also a data management plan. The platform will also ensure that will be able to function as a coordination and monitoring instrument for all the forest investments in the Mesoamerica Region. The output will be implemented by IUCN with the participation of CCAD and the support of the CMICEF.

Output 4.2.2. Program lessons and forest management and governance models documented and disseminated at regional and global levels.

The RCP will support the compilation of information and the identification of key aspects that will be shared. The RCP will utilize project meetings, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and other communication channels for the dissemination of lessons learned with the project countries and between the other CFP regional IPs and at the global level, through the high-level advocacy events (Output 1.1.1), the knowledge exchange and south-south cooperation exchanges (Output 4.2.3), the IUCN and other stakeholders communications channels, and positioning of lessons learnt and knowledge generated under the Mesoamerica Forest IP in global events (CBD COP, Climate COP, IUCN World Conservation Congress, the World Forestry Congress etc). The RCP will coordinate with global networks and partners and support participation of representatives from the national projects.

Output 4.2.3. South-south cooperation / knowledge exchange with the other critical forests biomes.

The RCP will organize exchange visits and meetings to foster knowledge exchange and learning with the other regional programs in the Amazon, Congo, Indo-Malaya, West Africa, and Guinea. This Annual meeting to be held by the GEF-8 Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Programs to support the coordination and knowledge exchange between them. Each project will organise one meeting, hosting delegations from the other IPs. Priority will be given to peer exchange among groups and organizations of indigenous peoples, women and rural youth. The output will be implemented by IUCN that will ensure the participation of key stakeholder in the exchanges. National child projects will also be encouraged to participate with their own funds to the exchanges ensuring that all projects will be able to represent the IP at a global level.

Output 4.2.4. Demand-driven gender-responsive annual regional knowledge exchange workshops.

The RCP will organize demand-driven, gender-responsive knowledge exchange workshops on a regional level. The workshops will include focused sessions on key project areas including policies, implementation of improved forest management and OMECs, innovative business models, indigenous peoples' participation etc. The RCP will ensure that the annual exchange is demand-driven gender-responsive addressing the needs of the national child project and of youth, women, and IPLCs, ensuring knowledge exchange in regional level.

The RCP will ensure that participation in the workshops is gendered balanced with the cooperation of the national; child projects. The output will be implemented by IUCN with active participation of key knowledge stakeholders - especially WCS, TFA - providing support in the exchange projects in their respective areas of expertise.

Output 4.2.5. Harmonized program annual planning, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation.

The RCP through this output will ensure that a regional level monitoring and evaluation will be possible supporting the development of a harmonized framework for a M&E system at an IP level – while the M&E component of the project will focus specifically on the RCP. The framework will ensure that all interactions and linked activities with the national CPs will be captured and monitored, including national capacity building. The M&E framework will include processes, workplan, definitions, Means of Verification etc. and provide initial and ongoing support to the national projects for the comprehensive collection, incorporation, and analysis of M&E data. The regional gender expert will also ensure with the cooperation of the M&E teams on a regional and national levels that gender considerations is mainstreamed in the respective frameworks and that gender disaggregated data are monitored properly. Additionally, the M&E system in place will ensure that is aligned with GEF requirements and that will facilitate the exchange of experiences, lessons learned, and good practices. The output will be implemented by IUCN.

Stakeholders

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during Project Preparation as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes have been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B) and that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed before CEO endorsement. In 21 and 22 November 2023 in the city of San Salvador, the inception workshop was held, where the concept note of the regional project, its components and activities were presented, with the aim of identifying information gaps, recommendations and comments on each component, in order to formulate the project proposal. During January to March 2024, multiple virtual interviews were scheduled with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Forest and Climate Change Fund (FCCF). The interviews were conducted under a semi-structured scheme which aimed to clearly establish a comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan that will guide interactions with key stakeholders throughout the project life cycle. On April 9th, a half-day virtual validation workshop was held to receive comments from all stakeholders included in the inception workshop and other cofinancing organizations, with an attendance of 50 individuals. The CEO Endorsement request was shared for a one-week online consultation to ensure stakeholders had sufficient time to provide feedback after the workshop.

Relevant stakeholders will benefit from the project implementation as indicated below:

Table 5, Relevant stakeholders

Actor	Role of the Actor	Outputs involve	Effect/Affect of the project on the stakeholder
CCAD	Implementing Organisation	1.1.1-1.2.2-1.3.2-2.2.1-4.1.1	Improve cross-sectoral policy and governance conditions at the regional level.
CAC	Implementing Organisation	1.1.1-1.1.3-1.2.2-1.3.2-2.2.1-4.1.1	<p>Create enabling conditions to attract investment in NR.</p> <p>Diplomatic incidents in cross-border areas.</p> <p>Technical disputes due to contradiction of national regulations vs. regional guidelines.</p>
IUCN	Implementing Organisation	1.2.2-2.1.1-2.2.1-3.1.1-3.1.2-3.2.1-3.2.2-4.1.1	Fulfil the institutional mission through relevant technical processes.
WCS	Implementing Organisation	1.2.1-2.1.1 – 4.2.4	Consolidate its operation through a regional portfolio.
FCCF	Implementing Organisation	3.2.1	
TFA	Implementing Organisation	1.2.1-3.1.1-3.1.2-3.2.2	Reputational impact and impact on the fulfilment of project goals, due to decisions of the national and regional political system.
<p>The Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB)</p> <p>Central America Indigenous Council (CICA)</p>	Key stakeholder	3.1.1-3.1.2	<p>Forest restoration and protection actions are implemented in priority areas with indigenous peoples.</p> <p>The programme and the regional coordination project strengthen indigenous peoples' participation in decision-making and respect for their rights.</p>

Monitoring and Evaluation

The RCP will be responsible for the regional IP-level M&E coordination under 4.2.5. The RCP M&E costs will be supporting the RCP-level efforts. Moreover, the RCP will be responsible for the Mid-Term Review and Terminal Evaluation of the project following GEF guidelines.

Knowledge Management

The Mesoamerica Intergovernmental Platform (IP) has adopted a Knowledge Management (KM) strategy aligned with the 2023 GEF Knowledge and Learning strategy. This commitment aims to enhance knowledge and learning across GEF IPs, focusing on conserving primary forests and promoting Intact Forest Landscapes within the climate and biodiversity agendas.

A key aspect of this strategy is the establishment of a regional KM framework that integrates the country-level project strategies. This framework enables the coordination at the regional and country-level strategies and aligns them with the IP's goals and objectives. To facilitate this, KMAL specialist will be incorporated at both regional and national levels, with a focus on supporting knowledge and learning initiatives.

Central to the KM efforts within the IP is the creation of the Mesoamerica Integrated Knowledge and Learning platform. This platform will serve as a repository for information, best practices, and lessons learned from the IP's various components, particularly Component 4, which emphasizes knowledge management, capacity development, and communication. Digital tools will be utilized to enhance the platform, offering features such as geospatial tools, advanced search functions, and user-friendly dashboards.

To foster knowledge exchange, regular events and meetings will be organized between country and regional stakeholders, promoting the formation of relevant communities of practice. The platform will also establish links with national, regional, and global forestry portals.

Collaborative KM processes will be encouraged among national and regional stakeholders to ensure interoperability with previous GEF IP platforms. Additionally, knowledge products within the platform will reference outcomes from past GEF projects, particularly those influencing strategic policy and investment decisions related to primary forest management.

Hosting the platform with the CCAD Observatorio Ambiental will provide legitimacy and facilitate digital collaboration with countries beyond the Mesoamerica region. Country-specific KM specialists will play a crucial role in ensuring that national perspectives are incorporated into knowledge sharing events, ideally held on an annual basis.

Table 6, Knowledge Management workplan

Output*	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Component 1: Enabling conditions for the protection and conservation of primary forests						
1.1: Strengthened local, national, and regional governance mechanisms in support of primary forests conservation.	X	X	X	X	X	X
1.2: Key national and regional policy and regulatory instruments prioritize primary forest conservation.		X	X	X	X	X
1.3: Improved multisectoral platforms for forest conservation and management.		X	X	X	X	X
Component 2: Protected Areas						
2.1 Improved protection and restoration of primary forests in protected and other priority areas.		X	X	X	X	X
2.2: Increased area of OECMs that protect primary forests integrity and expand functional connectivity.			X	X	X	X
Component 3: Innovative finance and investment						
Outcome 3.1. Increased financial resources for primary forest conservation.		X	X	X	X	X
3.2: Increase in the number of forest-friendly initiatives		X	X	X	X	X
Component 4: Coordinated and improved learning and regional collaboration.						
Outcome 4.1. Improved regional coordination for primary forest protection and conservation	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.2: Lessons on primary forest protection and conservation models are available worldwide	X	X	X	X	X	X

*A detailed workplan is presented in Annex F

[1] https://www.sica.int/noticias/crean-red-juventudes-de-paises-miembros-del-sica-frente-al-cambio-climatico_1_122701.html

[2] See UN System of environmental Economic Accounting <https://seea.un.org/>

[3] The IDB has worked on the Ecosystem Valuation of Mesoamerica e.g. though the valuation of the [Ecosystem Services of the Mesoamerican Reefs](#).

[4] The focus is aligned with the IUCN global ecosystem typology 2.0 and in line with geographical priorities set out in GEF programmatic directions. Please also see <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-037-En.pdf>

[5] Valderrabanos et al. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2021.19.en>

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)

The Mesoamerica program will be composed of seven child projects: six national projects and a regional coordination project. The child national projects will be implemented in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.

The leadership of the overall Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program and the Regional Coordination project will be under IUCN who will be the GEF Implementing Agency (IA) for the Project. IUCN is the designated lead, and will ensure overall programmatic coordination, coherence, and accountability to GEF Secretariat, IUCN will implement the program in line with the Programmatic Approach modality of the GEF Project Cycle Policy and Guidelines.

At the **regional level**, the program will have a Program Steering Committee (PSC), a regional knowledge management platform, and a Program Management Unit (PMU).

The Project Steering Committee: PSC will include the GEF Operational Focal Points (GEF OFP) of the participating countries, executing agencies representatives of the national child projects, CCAD and CAC as key stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project. In addition, other relevant stakeholders from the regional KM platform and other entities, will be convened to provide input and guidance on priorities and specific thematic areas as needed during the implementation of the IP. (e.g. plan Trifinio, indigenous organizations, community-based organizations from the territorial roundtable such as AMPB, CICA, among others.)

The PSC will be the highest-level decision-making body of the program. The key functions of the PSC will be: (i) to provide program level strategic advice and guidance, (ii) to assess the progress and performance of the program, (iii) to review and comment the workplans of the national projects to ensure sound alignment with the regional program, and (iv) to be the steering committee of the Regional Coordination Project. The PSC will have an annual meeting that will focus especially on Knowledge Management with invitees from the relevant platform.

The PSC will approve Annual Work Plans and Budgets, draft Project Implementation Report prior to submission to GEF Agency representatives of IUCN as well as quarterly progress updates and will provide strategic guidance to the Project Management Team and to all executing partners. The PSC will meet virtually on a quarterly basis, and will meet face to face once per year, which will be hosted by country project countries on a rotational basis. The quarterly virtual PSC meeting will be the main basis for agreeing on the demand driven knowledge management, capacity-building and technical support activities to be designed and delivered by the RCP and selected partners in each subsequent project period.

Regional Knowledge Management Coordination Platform: promotes collaboration and learning among neighbouring countries to tackle common threats, improve local, national, and regional level implementation, and upscale innovative approaches and best practices, strengthen access to information, best practices and lesson learned, promote capacity building through knowledge exchange, communicate and raise awareness, strengthen coordination among projects, partners and donors.

IUCN will chair the Program Knowledge Management Platform. It will facilitate interaction, resources leveraging and knowledge exchange with relevant public and private initiatives and entities. IUCN will promote collaborative annual planning of the GEF CFB program to ensure complementarity of selected actions and investments from other donors from the region with regional projects. In addition, other relevant stakeholders will provide strategic input and guidance on specific thematic areas as needed during the implementation of the IP. Thematic areas will include, amongst others, research and capacity building, private investments, environmental justice, gender and youth engagement, technologies and innovation, migratory issues, outreach, and communications^{[1]⁷⁰}.

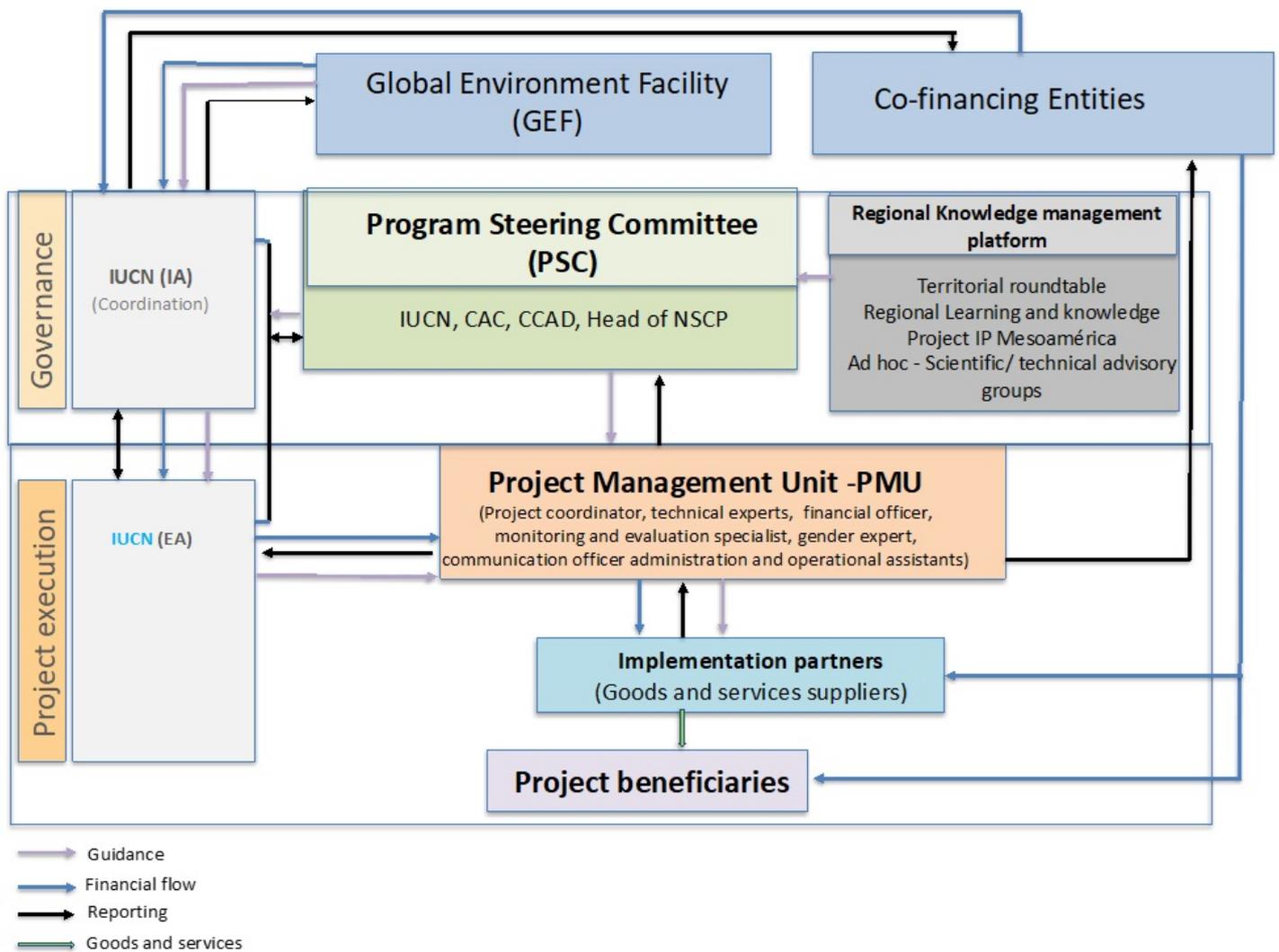
- **Regional Learning and knowledge under the Project IP Mesoamerica** will focus on communication, knowledge management among child projects of the Mesoamerican IP and other CFB IPs-Amazon, Indo Malayan, Congo, Guinean Forests.
- **Regional Territorial Roundtable:** A territorial roundtable will be formed with grassroots organisations and indigenous and community organisations with a regional focus (such as CICA, AMPB, representatives from the child project), which will inform the project through (i) identifying local needs linked to the results of the programme and promote its approach, (ii) generating and promoting local knowledge to be discussed in the framework of the regional KM platform, the steering committee and panels of experts associated with Mesoamerican critical forests (iii) exchanging experiences of actions financed by the 6 national projects, as well as (iv) promoting a common agenda for the conservation of critical forest biomes in the region with a local, national and regional approach. **This territorial roundtable addressed a regional gap for the participation of indigenous peoples, civil society and territorial actors who are primary dwellers and custodians of primary forests. The roundtable will provide a space to identify needs and advocacy points; communicate good practices, lessons learned and activities that promote forest conservation; and collect inputs to be delivered to the regional and national actors.** The recommendations of this roundtable will be sent to the Scientific/ technical advisory group:
- **Scientific/ technical advisory group:** The groups will function as the coordinator for joint programming of products between regional projects of different donors; knowledge management of regional information and cutting-edge data and information; integration of potential scientific panel if needed for key issues related to CFB conservation; standards for conservation, best practices for sustainable use of natural resources, safeguards and improve livelihoods for local communities. Ad hoc groups will be developed according to necessities including potential regional groups per components, key issues, scientific panels with key aspects to develop information for decision-making among others.

IUCN will operate the Project Management Unit. The PMU will execute the Regional Coordination Project and will report to the PSC. The key functions of the PMU will be: (i) to supervise the implementation of the six national child projects, (ii) to execute the Regional Coordination Project, (iii) to facilitate overall regional-level coordination to ensure alignment and synergy among the national projects, (iv) to provide guidance and support to the national child projects to ensure prompt, coordinated and coherent program implementation, (v) to monitor and assess the implementation of the child projects and the Mesoamerica

program, and (vi) to facilitate knowledge management and communication among the child projects and project partners (KM Platform).

The figure below please summarize the flow of funds, accountabilities for project management and financial reporting.

[1] The identified stakeholders for each of these thematic areas are presented in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.



IUCN as an EA will coordinate with key regional stakeholders for the implementation of the RCP outputs

Figure 3, INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS DIAGRAM

The Mesoamerica program will be composed of seven child projects: six national projects and a regional coordination project. The child national projects will be implemented in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.

The leadership of the overall Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program and the Regional Coordination project will be under IUCN who will be the GEF Implementing Agency (IA) for the Project. IUCN is the designated lead, and will ensure overall programmatic coordination, coherence, and accountability to GEF Secretariat, IUCN will implement the program in line with the Programmatic Approach modality of the GEF Project Cycle Policy and Guidelines.

[1] The identified stakeholders for each of these thematic areas are presented in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

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

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

IUCN as an EA will coordinate with key regional stakeholders for the implementation of the RCP outputs

CCAD and CAC play crucial roles as partners, and their coordination with relevant SICA bodies is vital for the success of the RCP. Through effective engagement, the project gains an opportunity to advocate for broader implementation of its approaches, increased uptake of its outputs, and enhanced sustainability of impacts beyond the project's duration. The RCP will proactively foster collaboration to enhance implementation synergies and further integrate forestry conservation within and beyond CCAD and CAC frameworks.

Other crucial regional stakeholders tentatively include the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which operates robust national programs in participating countries and maintains a presence in many target landscapes; the Tropical Forest Alliance, which collaborates with businesses, governments, and NGOs to develop deforestation-free supply chains for commodities such as coffee, beef, and palm oil; the IADV, known for its significant contributions to ecosystem valuation in the region; and CICA, the Indigenous Council of Central America, which champions the rights and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples in Central America, along with the AMPB (Alianza Mesoamericana de Pueblos y Bosques), which focuses on safeguarding Mesoamerican forests and upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

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)

Cooperation with ongoing initiatives:

The RCP will collaborate extensively with the second phase of the EU-funded Great Forests Initiative, seeking to create synergies at both regional and bilateral or trilateral levels. Additionally, close cooperation will be

established with CCAD, UNEP, and the Five Great Forest Initiative under GCF. Engagement with key private sector stakeholders will be facilitated through the Investment Forum and initiatives focusing on sustainable value chains for commodities like cassava and rubber, which have a significant impact on primary forests. Engagement with the private sector will primarily involve interactions with various apex bodies and platforms, such as the sustainable rubber platform.

Additionally, many partners provide significant co-financing to the RCP, with specific details available in Annex H. The actual provision of co-financing by partners at regional and country levels will be collectively reviewed and integrated at the IP level via the RCP's monitoring system.

Countries not directly involved in the IP might establish their own initiatives that align closely with the IP. These initiatives can be recognized as 'associated projects,' allowing them to share experiences, best practices, and lessons learned with the IP. They may also take part in certain RCP-hosted events, typically at their own cost.

Where feasible, IUCN will create cost-sharing agreements with various relevant projects within their portfolios.

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 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		700		
Male		1,300		
Total	0	2,000	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 11: Includes all direct beneficiaries estimated in the areas of interest in the Child project concepts.

The Regional Coordination and Technical Support Project (RCP) does not directly contribute to the GEF Core Indicator, as its role is to reinforce the impacts of country projects. The only contribution of the RCP is on Core Indicator 11 which includes the participants in the capacity building technical support provided.

The RCP will promote equal gender participation to ensure that at least 35% of the beneficiaries are women.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Substantial	Rural livelihoods and forests of Mesoamerica will be strongly hit by climate change. Mitigation strategies: Ensure alignment of program actions with national and regional climate change strategies and action plans, and utilisation of the regional coordination platform and workshops to support adaptive management and multi-stakeholder engagement within the embedding resilience, adaptation, and transformation framework.
Environmental and Social	Low	The RCP does not have on-the-ground operations that could be affected or have generated a negative impact due to its operation on the environment. In terms of social factors, the project involves a number of activities with low to moderate social risk, ensuring proper participation and representation of IPLCs Mitigation strategy: The project will prepare and implement gender and stakeholder engagement action plans.
Political and Governance	Moderate	Mitigation strategies: Maintain fluid communication with pertinent authorities at the regional, national, subnational and local levels. When there are changes in the authorities, inform progress and provide information.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Low	At both national and regional level (SICA+ Mexico), the political and strategic frameworks are generally supportive of the Program objectives. Policy coherence will be enhanced and maintained at regional level by working closely with CCAD- CAC and government authorities Mitigation strategies: Maintain fluid communication with key stakeholders to foster policy coherence. Present factual information to support sound analysis and decision-making.
Technological	Low	The project was developed with the input provided from key stakeholder and incorporates information from the national child projects. Mitigation strategies: Maintain a participatory approach during the implementation following provisions of the relevant plans
Financial and Business Model	Low	The financial and business model risk of the project is low. The RCP will implement activities under component 3 and mainly Output 3.2.1, bur financial and business are borne by the implementers and not the RCP.
EXECUTION		
Capacity	Moderate	At the regional level the Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability is available. There is a risk concerning the coordination with

		the national child projects. Mitigation strategies: Build alliances with partners that can support the development of pertinent capacities.
Fiduciary	Low	IUCN as GEF Agency has strong financial management and financial control systems Mitigation strategies: no additional action needed
Stakeholder	Substantial	On the regional level the stakeholder engagement risk is moderate, while on the national child projects is substantial. A key aspect is the appropriateness of the IPLC plans and the grievance redress mechanism. Mitigation strategies: Implement stakeholder engagement and IPLC plans. Ensure fluid
Other		
Overall Risk Rating	Low	The overall risk rating of the project, synthesized from the thematic risk categories above, is low.

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)

The Mesoamerica CFB IP is in complete alignment with the GEF-8 Programming Directions (GEF/R.08/29/Rev.01), regional goals, and national priorities as elaborated in the PFD. The specific alignment of country projects is outlined in detail within their respective project documents, while a condensed overview is presented below for the RCP:

GEF-8 Strategy alignment

The RCP aims to achieve the overall objectives of the Program, ensuring it is well-coordinated, adaptively managed, and features harmonized monitoring, reporting, and communications. It will include high-value exchanges and capacity-building events at various levels during the Program's implementation. This goal aligns perfectly with all four objectives of the GEF-8 Theory of Change, particularly focusing on “Incentives and improved policy options that promote innovations and behaviour change for sustainability and resilience in target systems” and “Natural capital, nature-based solutions, and ecosystem services that underpin the transformation of target systems” (GEF/R.08/28, pp. 15).

The objectives of both the IP and the RCP will be achieved through four key components, which collectively address the four levers for systems transformation outlined in the GEF-8 strategy: governance and policies, financial leverage, innovation and learning, and multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Furthermore, the IP and RCP tackle cross-cutting themes from the GEF-8 Theory of Change, including gender-responsive approaches, resilience, private sector engagement, behaviour change, and environmental security. The IP will specifically enhance the rights, participation, and benefits of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), women, and youth, integrating these focuses throughout the Program, beyond the basic requirements of safeguard systems. Private sector engagement is prominently featured in Component 3 and plays a role in the coordination outputs of Component 4.

Alignment with the GEF-8 Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program (IP)

The program is aligned with the Objectives, Key Interventions, and Selection Criteria of the GEF-8 Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program (IP). In particular, the program will contribute in i) strengthening the management of existing forests, including those in protected areas and protected area systems (national and sub-national); ii) promoting Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and various Nature-based Solutions to achieve conservation outside the protected areas, iii) develop integrated land-use planning to prevent large-scale deforestation; iv) supporting conservation-friendly livelihoods at the local level; v) strengthening multi-scale and multi-stakeholder governance and law enforcement; vi) promoting regional cooperation; vii) improving resource mobilization and contribute to the implementation of the international development agenda viii) supporting analysis to enhance the role of forest conservation.

GEF-8 Focal area and MEA alignment

The RCP and all country projects of the CFB IP focus on the GEF Focal Areas biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change and two child projects with international waters. The IP does not directly contribute to the other focal areas and therefore they are not reflected as targeted Focal Areas.

The RCP and the IP will contribute directly to GEF-8 BD Objectives:

- **BD Objective 1: To improve conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of natural ecosystems**
 - Financial Sustainability, Effective Management, and Ecosystem Coverage of Protected Area Systems: The RCP will contribute to i) effective protection of ecologically viable and climate-resilient representative samples of the country's ecosystems and adequate coverage of threatened species at a sufficient scale to ensure their long term persistence through component 2 by strengthening the capacity of the national child project to implement improved management, OECMs, and targeted restoration to support primary forests; ii)

sufficient and predictable financial resources available, including external funding, to support protected area management costs at the site and system-level, though component 3 enabling leverage of funds on the regional level, as well as providing support to the child project for innovative financing; iii) sustained individual and institutional capacity to manage protected areas such that they achieve their conservation objectives through component 2 as mentioned above and component 4 through knowledge management and regional coordination.

- Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and in particular sustainable use of wild and native species from terrestrial and freshwater through Component 2 (increased effectiveness of PA management) and component 3 with the promotion of deforestation-free value chains.
 - Biodiversity mainstreaming in priority sectors providing ad-hoc on-demand support for spatial and land -use planning (component 2) and natural capital assessment and accounting (Component 3).
- **BD Objective 3: to increase mobilization of domestic resources for biodiversity through capacity building and regional mobilisation to leverage funds on a regional level (Component 3)**

Land degradation:

The RCP and the IP will contribute to the LD focal area under Component 2, specifically to the

GEF-8 LD Objectives:

2: Reverse land degradation through landscape restoration through forest and agroecosystem restoration including ad-hoc support for implementation of restoration suitability assessment.

Climate Change:

The RCP and the IP will contribute to the CC focal area under Component 2, specifically to the GEF-8 CC Objective:

- 1.4. Promote Nature-based Solutions with high mitigation potential through enhanced protection of intact forest ecosystems with high mitigation potential that are aligned with country climate strategies as stated in the NDC as well as the SICA AFOLU 2040 initiative.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

The RCP will support that the participating countries advance towards the following targets:

- Goal 5, targets 5.1 and 5.5. The programme will implement affirmative actions to facilitate the engagement of women in forest conservation actions and decision-making and into viable forest-linked productive activities.

- Goal 13, target 13.2. The programme will advocate for and mainstream the importance of forest conservation for climate change mitigation.
- Goal 15, target 15.2 and 15.5. The core of the programme is to protect primary forest, restore forest areas to rebuild functional connectivity and to implement

The RCP contributes to Nature and Systems Transformation and is alignment with the MEA Guidance (CBD: Post 2020 GBF, COP14/30 decisions on primary forests, UNFCCC: Paris Agreement, Katowice Forest for Climate Declaration, REDD+ framework, net zero decarbonization by 2050, UNCCD: LDN, including response hierarchy of avoiding, protecting and reversing land degradation). It is also contributing to Global Commitments (UNFF UN Strategic Plan for Forests, including six Global Forest Goals, High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People), the Sustainable Development Goals, and Levers for Raising Ambition (e.g. Bonn Challenge, New York Declaration on Forests).

UNCBD

The RCP will result in major biodiversity benefits, including reductions in the rates of loss and degradation of globally primary moist tropical forest ecosystems; enhancement of the habitat and connectivity value of the ecosystems and their surrounding production landscapes; as well as enhanced biodiversity.

In particular, the RCP will directly contribute to the following indicators:

- GBF Target 1: Plan and Manage all Areas To Reduce Biodiversity Loss - Conservation status for Mesoamerican Forest biomes using the Red List of Ecosystems
- GBF Target 3: Conserve 30% of Land, Waters and Seas- Coverage of protected areas and OECMs
- GBF target 4: Halt Species Extinction, Protect Genetic Diversity, and Manage Human-Wildlife Conflict- Realized contributions of IPLCs, OECMs and PAs in addressing the loss of IFL to reduced risk of extinction of threatened species.

UNFCCC

The programme is in line with the UNFCCC and in particular with the Paris Agreement (article 5.1).

UNCCD

The RCP will contribute to the following key Land Degradation Neutrality targets for the national child projects^[1]⁷¹.

El Salvador

- By 2030, restore area of 2,500 ha of critical ecosystems
- By 2030, conserve, maintain and increase by 5% the forest area compared to 2018 data
- By 2030, restore 5,000 ha, located in affected areas of natural protected areas, buffer zones and other key ecosystems, to rehabilitate the structure and functionality of the intervened forest ecosystems

Guatemala

- By 2032 at least 29% of the country's territory is covered by natural forests and forest cover has been increased by 3% through ecological restoration on lands that have the capacity to be used for forest protection and conservation
- Reduce net annual deforestation in core zones of protected areas to zero

Honduras

- Component: Prevention and reduction of land degradation.
 - M2. By 2030 the country's forest cover has increased by 6% (370,000 ha). According to the baseline of the NDT Program - Honduras, there is a decrease in the forest structure of 5.57% (3,688.44 Km²), likewise wetlands have been reduced by 10.04% (208.50 Km²) of their total area.
 - M5. Carry out resilient landscape management processes in protected areas.

Nicaragua

- Target 1: By 2030, increase national forest cover by 21.47%.

Panama

- By 2030 increase forest cover by 26%.
- By 2025, reduce the conversion of 18,000 ha of forest to stubble and shrubs and / or agricultural land.

Alignment with regional priorities

The program aligns with the key strategies on the regional level including i) The Framework Regional Environmental Strategy (2021-2025); ii) Regional Strategy on Climate Change, iii) Regional agro-environmental and health strategy (2009 -2024); iv) Regional Strategic Program for the Management of Forest Ecosystems; v) Plan Trifinio, vi) Rural youth strategy of the SICA region 2022 – 2030; and vii) Regional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity of the PRIEG/SICA Central American Integration System (2014-2025).

[1] Please note that these are the targets for which the IP and the RCP have the greatest contribution. The RCP and the Mesoamerica CFB IP also contribute to a lesser extent to other to targets.

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; **Yes**

Member of Advisory Body; Contractor;

Co-financier; **Yes**

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

Executor or co-executor;

Other (Please explain) **Yes**

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
	Low		

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).

The Regional Coordination and Technical Support Project (RCP) does not directly contribute to the GEF Core Indicator, as its role is to reinforce the impacts of country projects. The only contribution of the RCP is on Core Indicator 11 which includes the participants in the capacity building technical support provided.

The RCP will promote equal gender participation to ensure that at least 35% of the beneficiaries are women.

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 (\$)
IUCN	GET	Regional	Biodiversity	BD IP Global Platforms	Grant	808,331.00	72,750.00	881,081.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	Land Degradation	LD IP Global Platforms	Grant	766,643.00	68,998.00	835,641.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	Climate Change	CC IP Global Platforms	Grant	5,719,934.00	514,794.00	6,234,728.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW IP Global Platforms	Grant	303,257.00	27,293.00	330,550.00
Total GEF Resources (\$)						7,598,165.00	683,835.00	8,282,000.00

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Was a Project Preparation Grant requested? true

PPG Amount (\$) 200000

PPG Agency Fee (\$) 18000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
IUCN	GET	Regional	Biodiversity	BD IP Global Platforms	21,276.00	1,915.00	23,191.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	Land Degradation	LD IP Global Platforms	20,180.00	1,816.00	21,996.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	Climate Change	CC IP Global Platforms	150,562.00	13,550.00	164,112.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW IP Global Platforms	7,982.00	719.00	8,701.00
Total PPG Amount (\$)					200,000.00	18,000.00	218,000.00

Please provide Justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
Total GEF Resources					0.00

Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
CFB MesoAmerica IP	GET	7,598,165.00	40516390
Total Project Cost		7,598,165.00	40,516,390.00

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(\$)
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Donor Agency	WCS/ UK's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF)	Grant	Investment mobilized	1200000
Donor Agency	IUCN/ KFW	Grant	Investment mobilized	7531682
Donor Agency	Green Climate Fund, CCAD, Five Great Forest Initiative	Grant	Investment mobilized	4000000
Donor Agency	EU	Grant	Investment mobilized	27462735
Donor Agency	UNESCO	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	321973
Total Co-financing				40,516,390.00

Please describe the investment mobilized portion of the co-financing

WCS/ UK's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF), IUCN/KFW, CCAD/GCF and European Union Great Forest are considered investment mobilized due to there are projects located in similar targeted areas and similar GEF CFB program's components.

Please note that financing from EU in euros was calculated in USD through OANDA to an exchange rate of may 13th 2024. (1 EUR- 1.076 USD) (EUR: 25.500.000 /USD 27,462,735)

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENT

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Coordinator	Date	Project Contact Person	Telephone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	5/20/2024	Tea Garcia		tea.garcia-hidrobo@iucn.org
Project Coordinator	5/20/2024	Nadia Mujica		nadia.mujica@iucn.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)

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.

Please see CEO Endorsement pag. 60.

Project Objective	Core Indicators	Baseline	Target(s)	Source of verification	Assumptions/Risks
	Core indicator 11: People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex	0	Final Female 700 Male 1,300 Total 2,000 Mid-term Female 350 Male 650 Total 1,000	Annual, Mid-term and Final evaluation reports.	Assumptions: The target includes all direct beneficiaries estimated in the areas of interest in the RCP

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Final target	Source of verification	Assumptions / Risks
Component 1 - Enabling conditions for the protection and conservation of primary forests						
Outcome 1.1: Strengthened regional governance mechanisms in support of primary forests conservation.	Indicator 1: Number of strengthened regional governance structures.	0	1	2	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Minutes of the meetings from the Technical Committee on Forests SICA Council of Ministries approval of the proposals	<u>Assumptions:</u> Target include 1 regional guide for strengthening justice sector capacity and 1 regional roadmap for decentralisation of forestry powers to local governments <u>Risk:</u> SICA Council of Ministries will not approve the proposals during the time of project implementation.
	Indicator 2: Number of regional instruments that use nature positive criteria for their design and implementation	0	1	2	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. SE-CCAD reports and minutes of meetings. SE-CAC reports and minutes of meetings. Approval from Council of Ministers.	<u>Assumption:</u> Target include 1 report on transboundary analysis, 1 document constituting the Rural Youth Network. <u>Risk:</u> the instruments will not be approved by the Council of Ministers during the time of project implementation.
Outputs to achieve outcome 1.1	<p>Output 1.1.1: Awareness and advocacy plan for the protection and conservation of primary forests aimed at policy makers, sectoral entities and the private sector.</p> <p>Output 1.1.2: Strengthened agreements for cross-border protected areas collaboration.</p> <p>Output 1.1.3: A regional agreement to operationalize the rural youth strategy of the SICA region 2022 - 2030 in primary forest landscapes.</p>					
Outcome 1.2: Key regional policy and regulatory instruments	Indicator 3: Number of regional instruments that integrate primary forest conservation	0	1	2	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports.	<u>Assumption:</u> Target include updated ERAM and ERAS.

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Final target	Source of verification	Assumptions / Risks
prioritize primary forest conservation.	Indicator 4: Number of updated policies and regulations that support primary forest protection and conservation	0	0	1	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Updated policies	<u>Assumption:</u> The regional project will support comprehensive compilation of national level evidence and their integration at the regional level, which will lead to updated policies.
Outputs to achieve outcome 1.2	Output 1.2.1: Information to support fact-based decision making on forest conservation interventions. Output 1.2.2 Key regional instruments integrate strategic actions for the protection and conservation of primary forests (ERAM and ERAS).					
Outcome 1.3: Improved multisectoral platforms for forest conservation and management.	Indicator 6: Number of multi-sector agreements that support primary forest conservation established or reinforced	0	0	1	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Technical Committee on Forests' reports and minutes from meetings	<u>Assumption:</u> The RCP support to the regional AFOLU initiative will lead additional agreements to expand the scope of the AFOLU initiative, especially on critical forest biome conservation - -
	Indicator 7: Number of public and private political commitment statements dealing with conservation of primary forests	0	2	5	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports.	<u>Assumption:</u> The project sustains and promotes key regional stakeholders' political commitments
	Indicator 8: Number of IPLC, women and rural youth organisations involved into decision making processes at regional, national and/or local level (at least one of each type)	0	0	3	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Minutes of the meetings from the Technical Committee on Forests SICA Council of Ministries approval of the proposals	<u>Assumption:</u> The regional project will involve stakeholders in decision making through online consultations. IPLC, women and rural youth organisations will be willing to participate and provide feedback on agreements and policies discussed in the forest technical roundtable and AFOLU roundtable. <u>Risk:</u> The Council of Environmental Ministers will not approve the protocol for inclusion of the new actors within the project implementation timeframe. New actors' representatives will not be interested/will not have financial resources or technical capacity to participate at the regional level decision making process.

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Final target	Source of verification	Assumptions / Risks
Outputs to achieve Outcome 1.3	<p>Output 1.3.1: Regional multi-sector meetings of interest groups and sectors to agree on actions and objectives for the conservation of primary forests.</p> <p>Output 1.3.2: Affirmative actions to integrate indigenous peoples and local communities, women and rural youth in decision-making processes.</p>					
Component 2 – Accelerated protection and restoration of primary forests						
Outcome 2. 1: Improved protection and restoration of primary forests in protected and other priority areas.	RCP Indicator 1: Assessment that support evidence-based decision making for the protection of primary forests	0	1	2	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports.	<u>Assumption:</u> The regional project will build upon the national projects' results and previous regional assessments reports to develop an updated regional assessment of the risk of collapse and extension of critical Mesoamerican Forest biomes.
	Indicator 2.1.3. Area (ha) of protected areas under agreed collaborative cross-border management.	0	56,056 ha	56,056 ha	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports.	<u>Assumption:</u> The regional project will build upon the national projects' activities and facilitate agreements on cross-border collaborative management.
Outputs to achieve Outcome 2.1	<p>Output 2.1.1: Regional assessment of the risk of collapse and extension of critical Mesoamerican Forest biomes.</p> <p>Output 2.1.2: Information on the contribution of protected areas and indigenous peoples to the conservation of primary forests and the advancement of the global biodiversity framework to support fact-based decision making.</p>					
Outcome 2.2: Increased area of OECMs that protect primary forests integrity and expand functional connectivity.	RCP Indicator 2: Collaboration agreements for transboundary OECM	0	0	1	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Transboundary OECM collaboration agreement	<u>Assumption:</u> Key national and regional stakeholders will be interested in collaborating to set up a transboundary OECM agreement.
Outputs to achieve Outcome 2.	Output 2.2.1: Collaboration agreements for transboundary OECM within the framework of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.					
Component 3: Innovative finance and investment						
Outcome 3.1: Increase in financial resources for the conservation of primary forests.	Indicator 15: Number of MoU signed with new public and private financial partners that contribute to protect and conserve primary forests and to develop local livelihoods that is available.	0	1	2	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports.	<u>Assumption:</u> Public and private financial partners will be interested in contributing to the protection and conservation of primary forests.

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Final target	Source of verification	Assumptions / Risks
Outputs to achieve Outcome 3.1	<p>Output 3.1.1: High-level dialogue meetings to mobilize financial resources through bilateral, multilateral, private and philanthropic channels to sustain the long-term conservation of critical forest biomes.</p> <p>Output 3.1.2: Regional coalition to mobilize funds to accelerate the conservation of primary forests and the development of viable forest-related livelihoods.</p>					
Outcome 3.2: Increase in the number of forest-friendly initiatives	RCP Indicator 3: High impact events and advocacy to accelerate the demand for products	0	3	5	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Events attendance lists and reports.	Assumption: Key stakeholders will participate in the high-impact events.
Outputs to achieve Outcome 3.2	<p>Output 3.2.1: Innovative business models to develop forest-friendly goods and services.</p> <p>Output 3.2.2: High-impact and promotional events to accelerate demand for products from sustainably managed secondary forests and deforestation-free raw materials from Mesoamerica.</p>					
Component 4 - Coordinated and improved learning and regional collaboration						
Outcome 4.1: Improved regional coordination for the protection and conservation of the primary forests	Indicator 19: Number of private sectors, indigenous peoples' organizations, and civil society organizations representatives participating in regional coordination platforms.	0	0	3	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Minutes of the meetings from the Technical Committee on Forests SICA Council of Ministries approval of the proposals	<p><u>Assumption:</u> The regional project will support SE-CCAD in the elaboration of a protocol to regulate and formalise the participation of the private sector, civil society, indigenous peoples, and forest communities in the Technical Committee on Forests. One organization of each group will participate in the Technical Committee on Forests.</p> <p><u>Risk:</u> The Council of Environmental Ministers will not approve the protocol for inclusion of the new actors within the project implementation timeframe.</p> <p>New actors' representatives will not be interested/will not have financial resources or technical capacity to participate at the regional level decision making process.</p>
Outputs to achieve Outcome 4.1	<p>Output 4.1.1: Regional coordination platform for the protection and conservation of primary forests.</p> <p>Output 4.1.2: Long-term regional communication plan to mobilize support for the conservation of primary forests and critical forest biomes</p>					

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Final target	Source of verification	Assumptions / Risks
	Indicator 18: Number of south-south / lessons exchange events with other initiatives of the GEF Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes Integrated Program.	0	1 exchange visit	2 exchange visits	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Reports from exchange visits. List of participants of events held during exchange visits.	<u>Assumption:</u> The regional coordination project will coordinate visits to foster knowledge exchange with other forest programs in the Amazon, Congo, Indo-Malaysia, West Africa and Guinea. <u>Risk:</u> Coordination with other GEF Integrated Program is weak and hinders the organization of exchange visits.
Outcome 4.2: Lessons on primary forest protection and conservation models are available worldwide	Indicator 21: Number of lessons learned documents (of which 50% focusing on initiatives supporting women)	0	6	12	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports.	<u>Assumption:</u> The target is based on the 12 semi-annual data/document packages to be disseminated
	Indicator 23: Number of regional lessons sharing events with 50% women participants	0	3 annual workshops	6 annual workshops	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Workshop reports List of participants and reports from workshops.	<u>Assumption:</u> Key stakeholders will be participating in the knowledge sharing.
	Indicator 24. Level of capacities, technical cooperation and technology transfer within and between participating countries (measured by tailor-made KAP survey among participants)	TBD	TBD	TBD	Annual, Mid-term and Terminal evaluation reports. Workshop reports	<u>Assumption:</u> Key stakeholders will be participating in the knowledge sharing.
Outputs to achieve Outcome 4.2	<p>Output 4.2.1: Mesoamerican knowledge platform on critical forest biomes (for example, biodiversity and social information, forest management models, regulations).</p> <p>Output 4.2.2: Lessons learned from the programme, forest management and governance models and integration of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and rural youth in decision-making processes documented and disseminated at regional and global levels.</p> <p>Output 4.2.3: South-South cooperation/knowledge exchange with other critical forest biomes.</p> <p>Output 4.2.4: Demand-driven gender-responsive annual regional knowledge exchange workshops.</p> <p>Output 4.2.5: Harmonized annual program planning, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.</p>					

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
Consultancies	157,000.00	152,000.00	5,000.00
Logistics and operational support	8,000.00	7,357.32	642.68
Travel	15,000.00	15,000.00	0.00
Workshops	20,000.00	20,000.00	0.00
Total	200,000.00	194,357.32	5,642.68

ANNEX E: PROJECT MAP AND COORDINATES

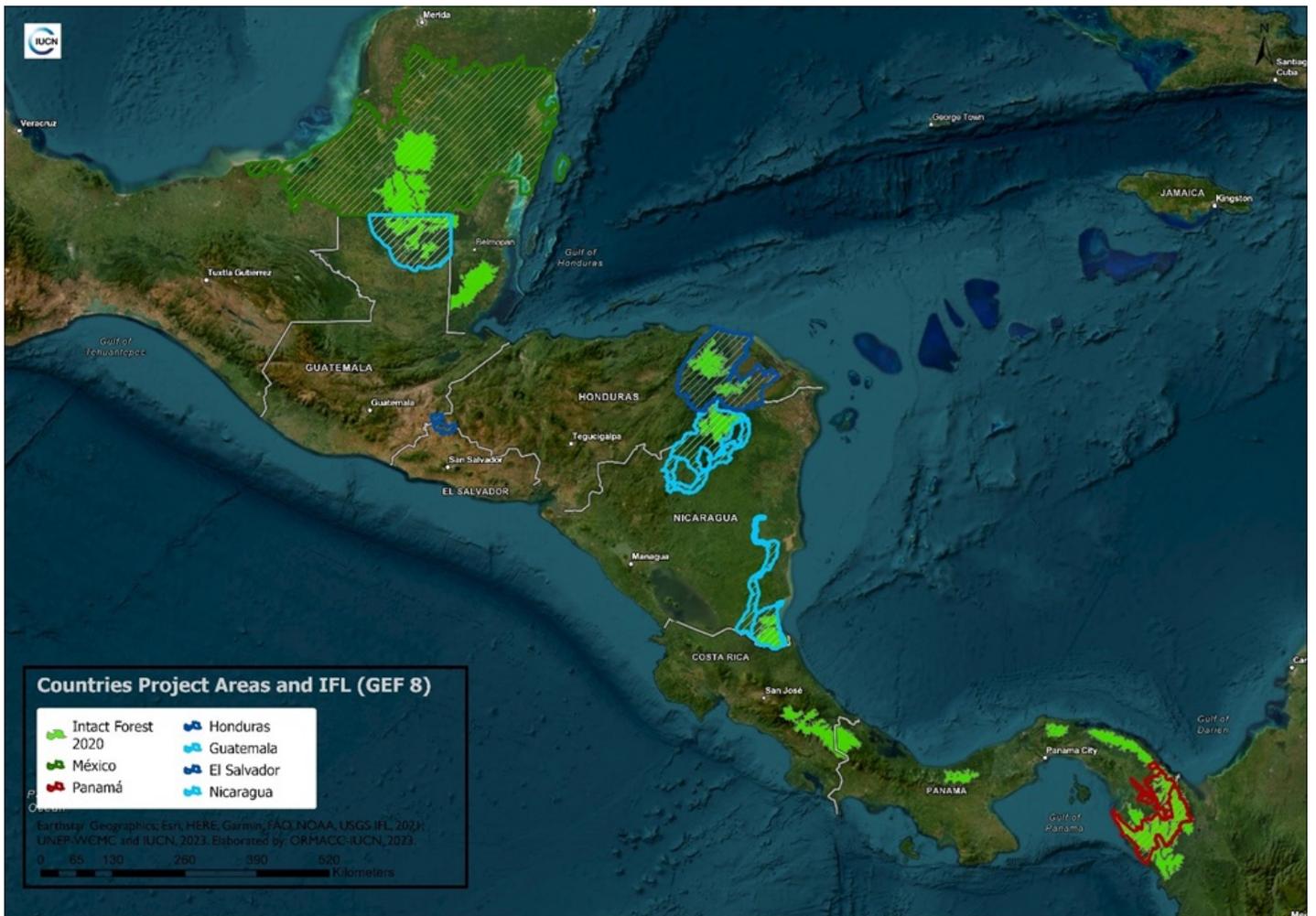
Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place

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

Though the RCP does not directly work on the ground, it coordinates the implementation of all country projects of the Mesoamerica CFB IP, which in turn have target landscapes. An overview map of all target landscapes of the six country projects under the Mesoamerica CFB IP is presented below.

The Geo location information reported at PFD stage may change during the elaboration of the fully developed national CPs. Therefore, the location of the supported project activities at country level will be gathered and confirmed by the Regional Coordination Project once the child projects are endorsed.

Program intervention areas and Intact Forest Landscapes.



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

Stakeholder Engagement Plan_Regional

GAAP_Regional

ANNEX H- Climate Change impacts Regional Program CFB

MGAS-GEF-8- Proyecto Regional- v1

P REGIONAL- ESM screening signed V1

ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE

Please upload the budget table here.

Appendix A: Indicative Project Budget Template

Expenditure Category	Detailed Description	Component (Used.)											Total (Used.)	Responsible Entity (Executing Entity receiving funds from the GEF Agency) [1]		
		Component 1			Component 2		Component 3		Component 4		Sub-Total	M & E			PM C	
		Outcome 1.1	Outcome 1.2	Outcome 1.3	Outcome 2.1	Outcome 2.2	Outcome 3.1	Outcome 3.2	Outcome 4.1	Outcome 4.2						
Consultant	Consultancy for the preparation of cross border collaboration agreement	58 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58 000			58 000	IUCN
Consultant	Consultancy to support the strengthening of the Regional Rural Youth Network	34 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34 000			34 000	IUCN
Consultant	Consultant to develop a comprehensive analysis of the contribution of Mesoamerica's critical forest biomes to species extinction risks (GBF T4) and to bring the loss of ecosystem of high biodiversity importance close to zero by 2030 (GBF Target 1)	-	54 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54 000			54 000	IUCN
Consultant	Consultancy for updating key regional instruments	-	40 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 000			40 000	IUCN
Consultant	Consultancy for the identification	-	-	22 500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22 500			22 500	IUCN

	of key regional stakeholders										500				
Consultant	Elaboration of a protocol to regulate and formalize the participation of the private sector, civil society, indigenous peoples and forest communities in the Technical Committee on Forests.	-	-	27000	-	-	-	-	-	-	27000		27000	IUCN	
Consultant	Regional assessment of the risk of collapse and extent of the Mesoamerican critical forest biomes. (2.1.1)	-	-	-	40000	-	-	-	-	-	40000		40000	IUCN	
Consultant	Report on the policy opportunity windows on the multi-stakeholder dialogue on the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor 2.2.1	-	-	-	-	58000	-	-	-	-	58000		58000	IUCN	
Consultant	Report on the policy opportunity windows on the multi-stakeholder dialogue on the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18000	-	18000		18000	IUCN	
Consultant	Support the strengthening of regional environmental observatory knowledge platform on Mesoamerican critical forest biomes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18000	18000		18000	IUCN	
Consultant	Policy advocacy and coordination experts (Experts will support key stakeholder institutions)	125000	150000	180000	-	100000	50000	50000	100000	100000	855000		855000	IUCN	

	CCAD and CAC. The budget line includes services for all the outputs that the two institutions will engage in)															
Consultant	Policy advocacy on private sector engagement	25 000		60 000								85 000			85 000	IUCN
Consultant	Natural capital accounting expert	-	85 829	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	85 829			85 829	IUCN
Consultant	Innovative business models to develop forest-friendly goods and services.	-	-	-	-	-	-	150 000	-	-	-	150 000			150 000	IUCN
Consultant	Financing mobilization and financing instruments on demand technical support and capacity building	-	-	-	-	-	120 000	185 000	-	-	-	305 000			305 000	IUCN
Consultant	Ad hoc on demand technical support on deforestation-free commodities and value chains	-	-	-	-	-	90 000	150 000	-	-	-	240 000			240 000	IUCN
Consultant	Conservation financing technical Expert						101 434	101 434	101 434	101 434		405 735	-		405 735	IUCN
Consultant	OECM and Protected Areas Expert				51 872	51 872						103 743	-		103 743	IUCN
Consultant	Ad hoc support (ARCGIS, Forestry, Restoration, Biodiversity, Value Chain and sustainable landscape experts)				124 198	124 198						248 395			248 395	IUCN
Contractual Services	Advocacy and awareness plan	45 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45 000			45 000	IUCN

Compan y																
Contr actual Services – Compan y	Communic ation Plan and activities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	119 000	-	11 9 00 0		119 000	IUCN	
Contr actual Services – Compan y	Digital Platform	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	90 000		90 00 0		90 000	IUCN	
Contr actual Services – Compan y	Evaluations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		10 0 00 0		100 000	IUCN	
Contr actual Services – Compan y	Baseline Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		3 50 0		3 500	IUCN	
Contr actual Services – Compan y	Audits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			24 000	24 000	IUCN	
Equip ment	Equipment (Laptops, computer peripherals, printers etc.)	8 889	8 889	8 889	8 889	8 889	8 889	8 889	8 889	8 889		80 00 0		80 000	IUCN	
Office Supplies	Office supplies												19 046	19 046	IUCN	
Other	Miscellaneous	3 379	3 379	3 379	3 379	3 379	3 379	3 379	3 379	3 379		30 41 2		30 412	IUCN	
Staff costs	Finance and Administrative Assistance													73 000	73 000	IUCN
Staff costs	Communic ation & KM Specialist	46 033				46 033				92 065	92 065	27 6 19 5		276 195	IUCN	
Consu ltant	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist									228 061	100 664	32 8 72 5	11 9 94 5	448 670	IUCN	
Consu ltant	Gender, Indigenous Peoples and Social Inclusion Specialist			50 794		50 794	50 794			50 794	50 794	25 3 97 1		253 971	IUCN	

Staff costs	Chief technical advisor	41 025	41 025	41 025	41 025	41 025	41 025	41 025	41 025	41 025	36 922 9		245 771	615 000	IUCN
Consultant	Technical assistant	18 813	18 813	18 813	18 813	18 813	18 813	18 813	18 813	18 814	16 931 6			169 316	IUCN
Contractual Services – Company	Ad-hoc on demand experts (Community-Based Forest Management, forest fires, biodiversity interventions impact assessment)	86 979	86 979	86 979	86 979	86 979	86 979	86 979	86 979	86 979	78 281 3			782 813	IUCN
Contractual Services – Company	Monitoring and evaluation Platform									43 200	43 200			43 200	IUCN
Trainings, Workshops, Meetings	Annual workshops	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	235 000	235 000	47 000 0			470 000	IUCN
Trainings, Workshops, Meetings	Thematic trainings	54 000	-	54 000	112 500	54 000	54 000	54 000	-	-	38 250 0			382 500	IUCN
Trainings, Workshops, Meetings	Youth support	72 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72 000 0			72 000	IUCN
Trainings, Workshops, Meetings	Meetings	6 480	-	6 480	6 480	6 480	6 480	6 480	6 480	6 480	51 840			51 840	IUCN
Trainings, Workshops, Meetings	Inception Workshop	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 500		4 500	IUCN
Travel	(Lump sum) International travel	32 000	32 000	32 000	32 000	32 000	32 000	32 000	32 000	32 000	28 800 0			288 000	IUCN
Travel	(Lump sum) National travel	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	18 000 0			18 000	IUCN
Travel	Transboundary collaboration	20 000			20 000						40 000 0			40 000	IUCN

Travel	Inception Workshop									50 000	50 000			50 000	IUCN
Travel	(Lump sum) Travel for training/workshops and meetings			40 000		40 000		40 000	40 000	40 000	20 000			200 000	IUCN
Grand Total		678 598	522 914	633 860	548 135	724 461	665 793	929 999	1 183 919	1 120 724	7 008 403	22 794 5	361 817	7 598 165	
		9%	7%	8%	7%	10%	9%	12%	16%	15%	92 %	3%	5,00 0%	7 598 165	
		24%			17%			21%			30%				
		1 835 372					1 272 596			1 595 792			2 304 643		

[1] In exceptional cases where GEF Agency receives funds for execution, Terms of Reference for specific activities are reviewed by GEF Secretariat

Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here

The portal does not allow to include excel files. please find enclosed CEO endorsement request. You can find excel archive inside in page 68.

Please also see attached IUCN Project Document in this section.

Please find enclose TORs for the project team.

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.

GEF STAP comments	Responses
It is recommended that a detailed stakeholder register of at least all the regional and national level actors is developed as part of the regional co-ordination project and maintained by the implementing agency.	The detailed stakeholder analysis was developed as part of the project design, and the results were condensed in the annex, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, identifying the key regional stakeholders.
It is important to properly identify and define the program elements where innovative approaches are going to be tested in order to design the regional and national child projects to ensure	This point was addressed by the RCP by including specific outputs related to how innovative financing instruments will be implemented at a regional level. These outputs focus on catalyzing the increased flow of funding (Output 3.1.2),

<p>rigorous testing of ideas, identifying of pathways for scaling, and learning and sharing from innovations.</p>	<p>identifying, and enhancing the ongoing business models that have been developed for forest-friendly initiatives (Output 3.2.1).</p>
<p>The Implementing agency should ensure that the KM plans are further articulated and developed during the design and roll-out of child projects. STAP would also recommend that a KM strategy for the whole IP is developed and that its design and implementation are included among the proposed outputs for the Regional Co-ordination (child) Project.</p>	<p>This point is addressed first on a National level by developing specific Knowledge Management (KM) for each child project, this centred on the specify context and objectives for each project. These KM plans delve further into the dissemination of best practices and lessons learned, as well as the strategies that could be employed to disseminate that content.</p> <p>Moreover, the RCP includes, under component 4 (Coordinated and Improved Learning and Regional Collaboration), a series of outputs that encompass the KM strategy for the entire IP. For example, under output 4.2.1, the RCP will systematically identify, document, and disseminate lessons and case studies from the child projects. Under output 4.2.2, the regional coordination project will ensure proper dissemination through the Mesoamerican knowledge and global knowledge platforms, such as the Panorama Conservation Areas Community and other global channels. Output 4.2.3 will organize exchange visits and meetings to foster knowledge exchange and learning with other forest programs in the Amazon, Congo, Indo-Malaya, West Africa, and Guinea. Output 4.2.4 will organize demand-driven, gender-responsive knowledge exchange workshops on a regional level.</p>

<p>Regional (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama). Mesoamerica Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program (GEFID: 11273). Agencies: FAO, IUCN; GEF Project Financing: \$58,147,493; Co-financing: \$438,166,265.</p>	
<p>✓ Canada Comments</p>	
<p>Biodiversity</p>	
<p>• Mesoamerica has more that 20,000 species of vascular plants, bird species, reptiles, fishes, and reptiles, of which more than 3650 are endemic. Thousands of these are also threatened or endangered. The region also hosts many of the billions of North American migratory birds fly through Mesoamerica or stop for the winter. However, Mesoamerica is often neglected for financing given the attention to the Amazon. A strong recognition of the importance of the Mesoamerican region as a biodiversity hotspot should be acknowledged, and</p>	<p>The recognition of Mesoamerica as a biodiversity hotspot is acknowledged in the Mesoamerica Integrated Programme. The programme incorporates key activities to contribute to GBF Target 1”Plan and Manage all Areas To Reduce Biodiversity Loss - Conservation status for Mesoamerican Forest biomes using the Red List of Ecosystems”, “GBF Target 3: Conserve 30% of Land, Waters and Seas- Coverage of protected areas and OECMs”, and “GBF target 4: Halt Species Extinction, Protect Genetic Diversity, and Manage Human-Wildlife Conflict- Realized contributions of IPLCs, OECMs and PAs in</p>

<p>followed by adequate levels of financing when opportunities present themselves such as in this case.</p>	<p>addressing the loss of Intact Forest Landscapes to reduced risk of extinction of threatened species”</p>
<p>Climate</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should also be noted the Mesoamerica region is one of the most vulnerable areas in the world to climate, with hurricanes and huge losses occurring every year. Climate change also has an impact on the forests of the region, as populations from the highly affected dry corridor of Central America move towards forested areas and expanding the agricultural frontier, thus contributing to deforestation. Support to the project will help address the multiple issues affecting forests, as well as, socio-economic issues such migration to the North from Central American countries, as people will have better livelihood alternatives in their own countries. 	<p>The importance of climate change in the region has been recognised in the Mesoamerica CFB IP. The CEO endorsement (please see Climate Change sub-section in p.17). The section address the vulnerability of the regions to climate induced disasters, as well as the direct and indirect impacts to forests. Also, promote NbS for forest conservation and improve people resilience are considered into the child project. Also, in component 3, innovative and finance engagement potential deforestation free value chains could improve also people’s livelihood in the region.</p>
<p>Indigenous Peoples</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in the region shows that indigenous and local peoples have to be part and parcel of the project planning. The proposed project should have an engagement/consultation strategy with local and indigenous peoples in order to be able to implement it. Development of the strategy should include input from Indigenous peoples. 	<p>The Mesoamerica CFB IP considers IPLC as an integral part for its successful implementation and the development of feasible transformative pathways. As mentioned in the RCP CEO Endorsement the programme considers that improved deforestation free and climate resilient livelihoods for IPLCs is key to achieve transformation. To achieve this the IP has engaged IPLCs on a regional and country level to ensure their meaningful contribution. Country child projects put IPLCs at the epicentre of the implementation (e.g. the Honduras child project) and where necessary developed Indigenous Peoples Plans. On the RCP level, a specific Working Group under the knowledge platform (Output 4.2.1) will ensure that IPLCs will have a direct voice in the implementation. Moreover, the RCP strengthens IPLC participation in regional decision-making bodies (Output 1.3.2.)</p>
<p>Other</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finally, in accordance with GOAL A of the GBF “The integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050”, and target 2 of the GBF: “Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity 	<p>The Mesoamerica CFB IP does not include a Costa Rican Child project, though Costa Rica and the other Mesoamerican countries will participate in the RCP activities.</p> <p>The RCP ensured the participation of CCAD and CAC, two key institutions for regional coordination. In particular, by strengthening regional level policies the project ensures policy cohesion between countries and sectors. Moreover,</p>

<p>and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity”, and TARGET 12, “Significantly increase the area and quality and connectivity” the project should include Costa Rica. Approximately two thirds of Parque Nacional la Amistad, one of the areas targeted by the project, lies within Costa Rica. This gives ample reason for the country’s inclusion in the project.</p>	<p>regional level activities will ensure the participation of all countries in the region, especially for “Outcome 4.2. Lessons on primary forest protection and conservation models are available worldwide” and Outputs 1.2.1 and 2.1.1. RCP will promote the linkages with countries that are not yet part of the program through other IP with similarities in landscapes or thematic.</p>
<p>Deforestation/Small-Scale Farming/Soil (MSF):</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend including a new indicator that shows the net impact of the Programs in halting and reversing ecosystem loss, in particular deforestation, in particular for the Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program and the Net-Zero Nature Positive Accelerator Program. 	<p>The Mesoamerican CFB IP developed project specific results frameworks and through Output 4.2.5 will ensure that a regional level M&E framework is in place to monitor the project impacts. The CFP will monitor the project impact in terms of reduced deforestation. Please note, that reduced deforestation is part and parcel of the GHG emission avoidance estimations as they are part of the with and without project scenarios assumptions. In addition, the application of the IUCN red list of Ecosystem at biome level (RCP Indicator 1. Outcome 2.1) will account for changes in extent and conditions of Mesoamerican forest at regional level, which will indirectly provide evidences on the IP impact in halting deforestation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current core indicators can show only the positive impacts of the Programs (e.g. CI3, CI4, CI5 ad CI6) but fail to consider any negative change such as deforestation leakage (I.e. improved protection/conservation in one area leading to more deforestation in other or new areas), which may be directly or indirectly related to policy reforms, a whole-of-government strategy, integrated approaches or others that the GEF Programs try to achieve. 	<p>Thank you for the comment. As mentioned above the project will monitor deforestation as part of its national and regional level M&E framework. That said, please note that the Mesoamerica CFB is obliged to follow GEF guidelines and report on the relevant GEF indicators and sub-indicators. In addition, the application of the IUCN red list of Ecosystem at biome level (RCP Indicator 1. Outcome 2.1) will account for changes in extent and conditions of Mesoamerican forest at regional level, which will indirectly provide evidences on the IP impact in halting deforestation, including potential leakages.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEF should consider including a new core indicator for the two Programs, or at least a project level-indicator for the projects that aim to halt and reverse deforestation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a net change in forest area (considering both forest gain and loss) in the target landscapes, or o a change in area affected by deforestation in the target landscapes 	<p>As mentioned above the project will monitor deforestation as part of its national and regional level M&E framework. National child projects under the IP will be encouraged and receive advisory from the Regional Coordination Project to monitor deforestation and forest degradation in a scientifically-robust manner (e.i. using globally recognised and consistent data sets such as those produced by the Joint Research Center and Global Forest Watch), since this will be required to apply the IUCN Red List of Ecosystem at biome level.</p>

<p>Supporting smallholder farmers through the Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program (CFB IP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to underscore that supporting smallholder farmers is critical for halting deforestation and inclusive transition toward deforestation-free supply chains. And, this Program must ensure that smallholder farmers in deforestation-risk commodity chains receive as much attention as other local community groups receive through this IP. In particular for the private sector engagement, we recommend the projects under this IP reinforce technical, financial and legal support for smallholder farmers within deforestation-risk commodity chains in order to help them adopt innovative, low-cost biodiversity-friendly practices and secure their legal rights (ToC 3). 	<p>The Mesoamerican CFB IP recognizes the importance of smallholder farmers for halting deforestation and inclusive transition toward deforestation-free supply chains.</p> <p>As mentioned, Component 3 of the project includes specific actions to support the development of deforestation-free and climate resilient livelihoods for small-holder farmers and IPLC. Child projects aligned this particular component with available policies and financing to promote deforestation-free livelihoods. Please also note, that the RCP acknowledging the importance of small-holder farmers, will support the inclusion and operationalisation of objectives for intact forest landscapes in the Regional Strategy for Agriculture and Health (ERAS) (Output 1.2.2)</p>
<p>✓ Germany</p>	
<p><u>Comments Germany approves the following PIF in the work program but asks that the following comments are taken into account:</u></p> <p>Germany welcomes this proposal, which will contribute to the conservation and restoration of forest landscapes in six countries in Mesoamerica. At the same time, Germany has the following comments that it suggests being addressed in the next phase of finalizing the program proposal.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><u>Suggestions for improvements to be made during the drafting of the final program proposal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goals are highly aggregated, and some remain rather abstract. Therefore, Germany recommends that all indicators include concrete measurement criteria (e.g., which parameters will determine whether land is “under restoration” in component 3). 	<p>Thank you for your comment. Please note that a specific results framework is developed for each one of the projects of Mesoamerica CFB IP and that areas to be restored have been identified during the Project Formulation process. The overall areas and the maps can be found in the projects’ proposal packages. Please also note that Output 4.2.5 will support the development of a regional level monitoring and evaluation system ensuring compatibility between and within projects, and the GEF, GBV indicators definitions and MoV.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germany highly appreciates that the program proposal sets very ambitious goals for forest conservation and restoration in a highly complex and conflictive political environment. However, we feel that the threat of mining and land speculation for protected areas as well as the complex and 	<p>The Mesoamerican CFB IP is acknowledging the highly complex and conflictive political environment, especially taking into consideration how illegal activities are a driver that erodes IPLCs rights and livelihoods leading to accelerated deforestation rates. The RCP and the child projects have incorporated specific activities to strengthen</p>

<p>conflictive political environment need to be stronger considered in the analysis. The proposal needs to include how political decision-makers will be encouraged and empowered to assume the responsibility for law enforcement regarding environmental and human rights legislation (in particular regarding protected areas and IPLCs).</p>	<p>the participation of IPLCs in decision making, safeguard the rights of IPLCs, and improve law enforcement.</p> <p>IPLCs participation is strengthened in Components 1 and 4 of the RCP, while child projects incorporated environmental and human rights legislation enforcement in their activities. Characteristically, the Honduras Child project has included activities for the reclamation of illegally appropriated communal land and strengthening IPLCs land tenure and management rights.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We also appreciate that the proposal refers to the Team Europe Initiative 'Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica'. In addition, we encourage to coordinate with the REDD Landscape III Program, funded by Germany, which operates under the umbrella of the aforementioned initiative. 	<p>Thank you for the suggestions. The RCP has been coordinating with the umbrella 'Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica' through a series of meetings during the project formulation phase. The meetings were fruitful, and the projects will cooperate in terms of achieving their common goals on a regional level (please also see the provided co-financing letter). The Mesoamerica CFB IP and the RCP opted for a higher-level approach to ensure regional level coordination.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply chains and voluntary commitments by the private sector are only briefly mentioned. Germany suggests including the promotion of regulatory conditions for transparency and traceability along strategic supply chains (in particular against the background of the evolving EU legislation on deforestation-free supply chains). 	<p>Please note that the Mesoamerica CFB IP addresses regulatory conditions for transparency and traceability along strategic supply chains under Component 3. The RCP will follow a demand-based approach to ensure that country specific needs are addressed, especially taking into consideration that countries are not at the same level of preparedness.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lastly, Germany welcomes that indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) are recognized as important allies for forest conservation in Mesoamerica. However, the following IPLC-related aspects need to be considered in the solution strategies: IPLC territorial governance structures, threats of forced displacement, land grabbing as well as infiltration by organized crime and political actors. 	<p>As mentioned above the Mesoamerica CFB IP considers IPLC right crucial for a sustainable transformative pathway. To achieve this the IP works on regional and country level approaches. On a regional level the RCP strengthens the participation of IPLCs in the decision making process within the existing regional coordination institutions (Component 1), specifically addresses IPLCs needs for sustainable deforestation-free and climate resilient livelihoods (component 3) and will support a territorial working group within the regional knowledge platform to further promote IPLC rights and governance in the regional policy agenda.</p> <p>On a child project level, specific activities address such considerations. Indicatively, the Honduras Child Project strengthens IPLC governance, reclamation of illegally appropriated IPLC communal land, strengthening of IPLC lifeplans etc.</p>

✓ United States Comments

• We appreciate the draft Work Programmes' focus on our planet's most critical forest ecosystems which must be conserved to meet global climate and biodiversity goals. Given that the largest driver of tropical deforestation is land clearance for commodity production we would expect GEF projects to clearly define that problem and orient their work programs towards addressing it. We would appreciate greater emphasis on sustainable forest management that recognizes the need for alternative livelihoods to conserve global forest ecosystems. We would strongly advocate for GEF projects to clearly orient their projects around helping countries decouple commodity production from deforestation.

The Mesoamerica CFB IP recognizes that land clearance for commodity production is a key driver of tropical deforestation. As described in the baseline in the Mesoamerican region this is manifested as a complicated nexus of interactions including illegal activities that are eroding IPLCs rights and livelihoods. The Mesoamerica CFB IP particularly includes component 3 to provide alternative livelihoods that decouple commodity production from deforestation, both in terms of supporting deforestation-free value chains and transparency and traceability of commodities.