



The World Bank

Forest connectivity, conservation and sustainable management in Colombian Amazon landscapes – Life Amazon (P500481)

Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 12-Jun-2024 | Report No: PID134



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project Beneficiary(ies) Colombia	Operation ID P500481	Operation Name Forest Connectivity, Conservation and Sustainable management in Colombian Amazon landscapes – Life Amazon	
Region LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	Estimated Appraisal Date 01-Oct-2024	Estimated Approval Date 28-Feb-2025	Practice Area (Lead) Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing (IPF)	Borrower(s) Fund for Life and Biodiversity - Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Implementing Agency Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	GEF Focal Area Multi-focal areas

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To improve connectivity, biodiversity conservation, and forest governance in selected Colombian Amazon landscapes.

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

Maximizing Finance for Development

Is this an MFD-Enabling Project (MFD-EP)?	No
Is this project Private Capital Enabling (PCE)?	No

SUMMARY

Total Operation Cost	24.28
Total Financing	24.28
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing



Trust Funds	24.28
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	24.28

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Substantial

Concept Review Decision

The review did authorize the preparation to continue

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

A. Country Context

- Colombia's solid macroeconomic institutional setting, grounded on a rules-based fiscal framework, a flexible exchange rate, and a modern inflation-targeting regime, has been the cornerstone of its macroeconomic stability.** Yet, the pace of economic growth has been slowing. Colombia has significant potential to enhance its contribution to GDP growth by increasing productivity and further diversifying and expanding its exports. Addressing infrastructure gaps, improving educational outcomes, and strengthening institutions are crucial steps to further boosting the country's economic development. The economy recovered well from the pandemic but is now cooling. In 2022, the economy showed signs of overheating, as inflation soared to a record level above 13 percent, and the current account deficit rose persistently. The authorities have addressed these imbalances, but still economic growth has decelerated substantially in 2023, along with limited investment.
- Colombia's vast rural regions, which make up 88% of the country's territory, hold enormous untapped potential for development but are facing a range of systemic challenges.** Regions like the Pacific, Amazon, Orinoquia, and Guajira have been afflicted by violence, a structural underinvestment in education, health and infrastructure, and limited law enforcement and government presence, resulting in poverty and extreme deprivation. Despite the efforts made to implement the peace agreement, the government still needs to strengthen its presence in rural Colombia and deploy resources to transform local economies through nature-based solutions. Of its population of 51.6 million, close to 9 percent self-identify as afro-descendants, and around 6 percent as indigenous, both groups predominantly living in areas with limited state presence and accounting for disproportionately high numbers of poor households and victims of conflict.
- Colombia is one of the world's richest countries in terms of biodiversity.** The country is one of the five mega-diverse nations in the world, ranks third in terms of biodiversity and is home to almost 15 percent of all known terrestrial species, including the largest number of species of birds, amphibians, and butterflies in the world. Protected Areas (PAs) and Indigenous Territories (IT) represent 34 percent of the national territory. Despite of its natural capital and its diversity of ecosystems, Colombia ranks 10th globally in terms of economic risk posed by climate related hazards, with



84 percent of the population and 86 percent of its assets in areas exposed to climate change risks, such as floodings, landslides and droughts¹. Some of the most pressing challenges that influence inclusive and sustainable growth in Colombia are: i) insufficient forest and land management in post-conflict areas, ii) insufficient environmental regulation of extractive activities and land use planning; and iii) inadequate disaster risk management and adaptation to natural disasters and climate change.

4. **Sustainable production and conservation of the country's natural capital is a key component of Colombia's development agenda.** The National Development Plan (NDP) 2022-2026 "Colombia. Potencia de Vida" has five overarching goals, including the development of land use planning mechanisms around water, and achieving a productive transformation that is in line with climate action. Through the NDP, the government aims to reach the restoration and rehabilitation of 1.7 million hectares of degraded ecosystems, reduce deforestation by 20%, and reach 2.14 million tons of CO₂ mitigated by the transportation sector. To achieve such goals, the country will need to transit from a climate vulnerable to a more climate resilient economy, including transition to a net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions economy.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

B. Sectoral and Institutional Context

5. **The Colombian Amazon represents 6.5 percent of the biome's rainforest and 42 percent of the country's land mass.** The region's physical and biotic components explain its high levels of biodiversity, as they result from evolutionary, biogeographical, and ecological processes that involve areas of the Guiana Shield (Caquetá state), the Amazonian basin (Caquetá, Putumayo, and Amazonas States) and the Andean foothills (Putumayo and Caquetá States). Home to approximately 1.2 million people, including several Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and campesino communities, the Amazon region holds immense cultural heritage, with languages and traditions existing long before the colonization processes. 85% of the Colombian Amazon is under legal status for environmental conservation, including 178 indigenous reserves, 12 National Natural Parks (PNN), forest reserves, among other conservation figures. According to data from the Amazon Institute for Scientific Research Sinchi (Sinchi), there may be about more than 3798 species of fauna and about 17531 species of flora.

6. **Deforestation in Colombia and particularly in the Amazon¹ continues to be a major challenge that threatens globally important biodiversity and the ecological landscape connectivity between the Andean, Amazon and Orinoquian biomes crucial to hydrological regulation and climate stability.** The Colombian Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology, and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) estimates that between 2001 and 2022, Colombia lost over 2.45 million hectares of forest, of which 58% occurred in the Amazon. The country, including in Amazon², witnessed a decrease in deforestation in 2022 and 2023; however, this is not an indication of a change in a challenging trend as recent reports suggest an increase of 40 percent in the first quarter of 2024, in comparison to same period in 2023. Forest fragmentation and degradation also affect the Amazon's ecosystems and people's wellbeing. According to IDEAM the main drivers of forest deforestation and degradation are land grabbing, establishment of unsustainable extensive cattle ranching practices, the expansion of unplanned transportation infrastructure, and illegal activities.

¹ According to a study from IDEAM and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Minambiente), the Amazon region contributed an average of 45.67 percent to the total forest degradation in Colombia (Ramírez-Delgado, J.P.; Galindo, G.A.; Yepes, A.P.; Cabrera, E. 2018. *Estimación de la degradación de bosques de Colombia a través de un análisis de fragmentación*)

² Approx. 35 percent decrease in the Amazon region in 2023 compared to 2022.



On the last driver, environmental crimes, such illegal gold mining, crops for illicit uses, wildlife trafficking and land-grabbing, are increasing in the region³.

7. **The country's Integral Deforestation Containment Plan (IDCP) aims to transform 28 active deforestation nuclei into forest and biodiversity development nuclei, with a focus on the Amazon.** The IDCP is a multi-sectoral strategy to stop deforestation at zero by 2030, promoting forest management and restoration, improving the well-being of local communities, and fostering the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services; contributing to peacebuilding processes in the region, where deforestation is closely associated with illicit economies. The ambitious national level strategy includes interventions in 22 deforestation hotspots in the Amazon focusing on converting these hotspots into development nuclei for the community-led forestry economy and biodiversity (NDFyB due to its name in Spanish)⁴. In parallel to the IDCP, the Colombian government has deployed the National Restoration Plan (NRP) that aims to restore countrywide around 783,000 hectares of degraded landscapes through alliances with the Ministry of Agriculture, local governments, NGOs, and local communities. Towards ensuring a sustainable flow of funding for key conservation areas the government operates the Herencia Colombia financial mechanism⁵ with key conservation goals for the PA system including the project's areas of intervention. Finally, the government's commitment towards conservation and sustainable development led to the creation of the Fund for Life and Biodiversity (*Fondo para la Vida y la Biodiversidad*), which will channel strategic public and private funding to achieve national level goals.

8. **The National Environmental System (SINA) is composed of the public institutions in charge of the country's environmental policy.** It is led by Minambiente and includes PNN, research institutions like IDEAM and Sinchi, regional environmental authorities, among others. Minambiente leads the implementation of the NRP and the IDCP and hosts the Fund for Life and Biodiversity. In the Amazon key SINA institutions also include Sinchi and the local environmental authorities of the Amazon: Corporation for the Sustainable Development of Southern Amazonia (Corpoamazonia) and the Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Northern and Eastern Amazon (CDA). The Sinchi leads scientific research in the Amazon and generates essential knowledge, information and data on biological, cultural, ecological, and social characteristics and trends, needed for decision-making. The IDEAM plays a fundamental role in the monitoring of deforestation and provision of early warning alerts of deforestation. The National Council for the Fight Against Deforestation (CONALDEF), consisting of multiple ministries and national security agencies with the mission to address and combat environmental crimes, is a key entity within the institutional context relevant for the project.

Relationship to CPF

9. **The Project will be fully consistent with the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Colombia (FY24-27 – Report No. 187535-CO).** The project is aligned with the CPF's higher level outcomes: 1. Advance the sustainable and inclusive transformation of the economy, including its objectives to Strengthen institutional capacity in national and subnational governments and Improve productivity and innovation; and 2. – Strengthen resilience to climate change

³ According to (Cheston, et al., 2023), "The majority of deforestation events occur within 2.3 km of a road. In addition, the vast majority of deforestation (90%) occurs outside of National Natural Parks (PNN) and Indigenous Territories despite the fact that they govern 59% of the land area."

⁴ The project will intervene in several of 22 hotspots in the Amazon, prioritized by the National Government based on the following criteria: (i) forest area, (ii) historical deforestation patterns/risks, (iii) presence of IPLC, (iv) ecological connectivity, and (v) threats of unplanned road infrastructure. The strategy aims to transform such hotspots into nuclei of forest development and biodiversity.

⁵ Herencia Colombia follows the Program for Permanence approach, and its design was supported by a GEF6 project also with the WB as implementing agency.



and promote low carbon transitions, contributing to the objectives Mobilize and Deploy Climate Finance. The project will also contribute to the recommendations included in the 2023 Country Climate and Development Report to achieve climate and development objectives simultaneously, mainly through the promotion of sustainable and Productive Landscapes for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation.

10. **As part of the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program, led by the World Bank, the proposed project contributes to the goal, shared with other seven amazon countries, to improve regional collaboration and national investments towards integrated landscape conservation and sustainable management in targeted areas, including primary forests, in the Amazon region.** The project is also in line with the World Bank Amazonia Viva Program and particularly its pillars towards a Green and Prosperous Amazon, and the Global Challenge program on Forests for Development, Climate and Biodiversity.

11. **Paris Alignment. The project is consistent with the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). In the latest NDC submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the country committed to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030.** The Project is Paris-aligned on both mitigation and adaptation, as it: (a) actively contributes to avoiding further carbon emissions by reducing deforestation and forest degradation, increasing restoration and ecological connectivity and, (b) has negligible GHG emissions. Furthermore, Colombia confirmed the commitment to achieving neutral net emissions by 2050. Under mitigation, Colombia's NDC mentions the following goals: increase of 18,000 hectares in the process of restoration, rehabilitation and/or ecological recovery in PAs and its areas of influence, inclusion of climate change considerations in management and environmental control of projects, 135 Watershed Development and Management Plans including climate variability and change considerations, forest fires risk management, risk awareness, risk reduction and disaster management, among others. The project contributes to several of these goals through strengthening environmental policies at national and subnational levels, conserving forested areas, and consolidating sustainable value chains based on a standing forest and free-flowing rivers.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

12. To improve connectivity, biodiversity conservation, and forest governance in selected Colombian Amazon landscapes.

Key Results (From PCN)

D. Concept Description

1. Description

Project Rationale

13. **The proposed project will support the Government of Colombia (GoC), through an integrated landscape approach in the Amazon region, to achieve conservation of high biodiversity areas, and reduced deforestation, improving the livelihoods of its inhabitants and focusing on interventions in areas that allow for improved ecological connectivity.** Deforestation, degradation, and over-exploitation of natural resources has led to fragmentation of natural ecosystems and loss of their capacity to provide ecosystem services, which has impacted biodiversity and local



communities' livelihoods. As a result, proposed interventions will be targeted and prioritized with the focus on maintaining and improving ecological connectivity between areas within the Amazon. These activities and particularly those in the limits of the Amazon biome will also benefit flows of species and ecosystem services with the Andes and the Orinoco biomes. The proposed project will address barriers that restrict the ability to tackle drivers of these environmental problems. These barriers include insufficient technical assistance, research, and community capacity towards sustainable land and water management practices and bioeconomy value chains, as well as access to markets (local, national, regional) for sustainable value chains under fair benefit-sharing mechanisms. See theory of change in Annex 1 for more details.

14. The project will improve management of high biodiversity areas and support the development of a natural resource based sustainable economy, while enhancing governance and policies for conservation, restoration, and sustainable production. Overall pathways of transformation to achieve project goals center around the following: i) reinforce the enabling environment by strengthening governance, landscape planning, and incentives for conservation and sustainable development; ii) promote conservation under different protection regimes, including other effective area-based conservation measure (OECMs)⁶, and seeking to consolidate a representative area of the Amazon effectively conserved, managed and connected with other areas; iii) scale up sustainable production and restoration through a sustainable and inclusive nature-based economy, transforming deforestation hotspots into inclusive NFDyB, maintaining and restoring ecological corridors, and considering local knowledge, and scientific innovation; and iv) promote capacity building for local communities and generate knowledge exchange dynamics and collaborative alliances at both national and regional level. Project interventions will be complementary to other projects and initiatives in other deforestation hotspots with public funding as well as international cooperation efforts from Legacy Landscapes Fund (LLF), HeCo, and Vision Amazonia.

Components

15. Component 1 – Conservation of high biodiversity areas under different protection regimes (US\$5.8 million): The project will support actions to increase management effectiveness, connectivity and governance of strategic areas under different protection regimes. Actions include: (i) implementation of management plans for conservation and natural resource use, biodiversity monitoring, community tourism, and prevention, vigilance, and control mechanisms in protected areas; (ii) design and implementation of management plans for indigenous territories including strengthening of governance systems for Indigenous Peoples, food security activities, and recovery of cultural traditions; (iii) restoration inside Pas and ITs⁷; and, (iv) formal international recognition of areas as OECMs and/or design of management plans for these. OECMs may contribute to filling gaps towards connectivity. Similar activities included in this component have been strategic for past GEF interventions including the expansion of the largest tropical protected area in the world, Chiribiquete, the creation of regional protected areas, and the improved management effectiveness of areas increasing their resilience, functionality and involving local communities under comanagement schemes. The Project will operate in a representative set of PAs, traditional territories of indigenous and local communities, wetland sites of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, and conservation areas registered or subject to be registered as OECMs. These areas, approximately 9.6 million hectares, include high biodiversity levels of national and

⁶ "A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values". (CBD/ COP/DEC/14/8)

⁷ Restoration activities are both in component 1 and 2, considering the difference in approaches according to the tenure category, and institutions involved. The division also serves to ensure clear implementation arrangements.



global importance and carbon sequestration potential, but also play a significant role in maintaining the connectivity of ecosystems both at national and transboundary scale. Annex 2 includes the detailed areas of intervention.

16. **Component 2 – Sustainable production and restoration (US\$9.3 million):** The project will promote a sustainable economy based on timber, nontimber, and aquatic goods and services. A key activity for this component, and in line with the plan to halt deforestation, is the scaling up of forest management via sustainable value chains. Design and implementation of plans towards value chains for selected products will be informed both by the traditional knowledge that communities already possess, and science-based technology to add value and coming from the partner organizations like Sinchi. The project will provide economic incentives for forestry and bioeconomy value chains (timber and non-timber forest products and services, like ecotourism) and will include the following activities: (i) strengthen and/or establish social agreements between communities and government entities towards the development of forestry and biodiversity economies; (ii) establish forestry and biodiversity management plans; (iii) implement community forestry plans along the value chain (production, transformation, and commercialization) supported by traditional knowledge and science-based technology; (iv) provision of technical assistance services for bioeconomy development, including the establishment of commercial agreements and partnerships with private sector companies to guarantee demand, and in line with the government's Green Business program; (v) targeted capacity building activities for communities and local organizations related to forest management, including entrepreneurship, market development, transformation to add value, research and innovation; (vi) restore degraded areas in key connectivity corridors, promoting food security and sustainable alternative livelihoods with a gender focus; (vii) strengthen the restoration value chain, including nursery networks that will last beyond project duration. The component will intervene in productive landscapes where tenure allows for agroforestry and other sustainable practices, some of which are part of the government selected NDFyB, that present higher levels of deforestation, and that are strategically located to contribute to landscape connectivity. Annex 2 includes the detailed areas of intervention.

17. **Component 3 - Governance and policies for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable development of the project intervention areas. (US\$4.6 million):** The project will deliver activities to enhance government capacity towards land and water use planning at different scales with the goal to promote conservation and sustainable development within a connectivity approach. These include: (i) support to the implementation of policies and regulations for sustainable territorial planning and development; (ii) multi sectoral (agriculture, mining and energy, transport infrastructure and tourism) and multi-level (national, subnational, and local) dialogue to inform land and water use planning based on environmental, social and sustainability criteria; (iii) training and capacity building of strategic stakeholders (sectoral entities, environmental authorities, territorial entities, unions, and the community in general) for sustainable development planning along sub basins; (iv) support an integrated system for forest, carbon and biodiversity monitoring, that includes georeferenced national data and analysis (via IDEAM's national forest and carbon monitoring system), tracking of compliance of community level agreements towards sustainable production and restoration (via Moscal system), and community biodiversity monitoring efforts. The project will scale up previous interventions that have succeeded incorporating environmental criteria into other sector's planning (like guidelines for wildlife corridors), as well as guiding state-level climate change interventions.

18. **Component 4 – Project management, monitoring, knowledge, and communications (US\$4.6 million):** This component includes the following activities: (i) project coordination, including fiduciary management and auditing; (ii) project monitoring, evaluation, and learning; (iii) communication strategy; (iv) compliance with environmental and social standards; (v) knowledge management and regional dialogue. The project will improve the capacity of key stakeholders through participation in national and regional knowledge-sharing events, design of joint solutions for issues of regional interest; and culturally appropriate mechanisms to mainstream protection of traditional knowledge systems.



Legal Operational Policies

	Triggered?	
	Last approved	Current
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Area OP 7.60	No	

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

CONTACT POINT

World Bank

Ana Maria Gonzalez Velosa
Senior Environmental Specialist

Borrower/Client/Recipient

Fund for Life and Biodiversity - Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development

Cesar Eduardo Camargo Ramirez
Administrative and Financial Deputy Secretary
cecamargor@minambiente.gov.co

Implementing Agencies

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development

Maria Teresa Becerra
Head - International affairs office at Ministry of Environment of Colombia
mtbecerra@minambiente.gov.co
Adriana Rivera
Director - Forest, Biodiversity and Ecosystem services Directorate
ariverab@minambiente.gov.co

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT



The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-1000
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects>

APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Ana Maria Gonzalez Velosa
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Approved By

Practice Manager/Manager:	Genevieve Connors	28-May-2024
Country Director:	Mark Roland Thomas	12-Jun-2024