

Response to Working Group Comments on the Tropical Andes Long-Term Vision 66th Working Group Meeting

This document presents Working Group comments and CEPF Secretariat responses related to the Long-Term Vision (LTV) for the Tropical Andes Hotspot, which was presented and discussed at the 66th CEPF Working Group meeting held on 25 March 2021.

Working Group Comment	CEPF Secretariat Response
<p>1. Can the LTV specify more clearly who are the targeted CSOs for support in the LTV, in terms of whether they are community, local, national, or international CSOs and provide justification for the recommendation to channel support to the particular CSO sector for the LTV targets.</p>	<p>The profile has clarified the scope of CSOs to be targeted for strengthening and support from CEPF throughout the report and provided a justification accordingly. In addition, a new paragraph has been added in section 4.1 TOC for Graduation in response to this comment:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The theory of change refers to civil society and CSOs. The CSOs with whom CEPF works in the hotspot are diverse: national and international conservation NGOs, universities and research institutes, some small and medium businesses and associations involved in improvement of nature-based activities (coffee and chocolate production, livestock, agroecology and ecotourism), community-based organizations and indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, some of whom have territories. In the targets and lines of action for capacity-building, we have differentiated indigenous groups from other types of CSO. Individual CSOs may rise and fall and be replaced; however, the indigenous territories and their owners are here to stay. Nevertheless, the theory of change also recognizes the reality in terms of current capacity and issues of scale if mainly focusing on indigenous groups. We propose that, where appropriate, either national CSOs or second-tier organizations are the vehicles for support, i.e., those that are umbrella organisations or that facilitate networking and technical support to multiple indigenous organisations. The assumptions in the theory of change about CEPF support are as follows: national and international CSOs generally act as partners, implementers and donors in the territories or conservation areas whilst, where appropriate, indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant farmer or inter-cultural organizations are the residents, owners or ‘holders’ of conservation areas and knowledge, and are beneficiaries of the resources and projects. In some cases, they can also be the direct managers of the resources.</i></p>

2. It would be useful to see greater reference and targets related to the role of gender in the LTV.

The profiling team included provisions for strengthening gender considerations and support for gender equity and inclusion as a cross-cutting theme in the long-term vision, including into capacity building and leadership training, policy development, budgeting, monitoring, and strategic planning. CEPF has reviewed the LTV and made such references and targets more explicit, based on the Working Group’s suggestion. As such, specific language on gender appears in several targets under the following criteria:

2.2 Institutional capacity for CSO management

National and sub-national CSOs involved in conservation have sufficient capacity and institutional and operational structures to (i) raise funds for conservation, (ii) ensure efficient project management, (iii) develop and implement conservation strategies, and (iv) apply satisfactory gender policies internally and in their programs.

2.3 Capacity of community organizations

Organizations of indigenous, Afro-descendant and other communities, who are custodians of areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, possess sufficient capacity, organization and institutional and operational structures to (i) conserve and sustainably and equitably use the biodiversity of their territory, (ii) raise funds for these activities, (iii) efficiently administer funds and businesses, (iv) apply satisfactory gender policies, (v) publicly communicate their contribution to the common good, and (vi) effectively negotiate with authorities and other actors and establish alliances.

2.4 CSO partnerships and relationships with other entities.

Alliances and collaborative mechanisms exist between CSOs, including conservation focused and related CSOs, who are thus able to generate and share information, communicate their messages, strengthen their security, increase their credibility and advocacy capacity, and strengthen their ability to engage with other actors, such as communities, national and local governments, the private sector and donors. In this way, they increase their collective impact.

3. Given the important role of ecosystem services, particularly water services, as a gateway for supporting areas of high biodiversity value, it would be useful for the LTV to strengthen the linkage between ecosystem services, particularly water services, and biodiversity conservation in the LTV.

The CEPF Secretariat concurs with the Working Group comments on the importance of emphasizing the role of ecosystem services, which has been made an integral focus of the LTV. Of the 25 criteria for graduation from CEPF support, 10 include targets related to ecosystem services, including water services:

1.2 Important areas for ecosystem services or for ecological connectivity disseminated.

Areas important for ecosystem services or ecological connectivity have been identified, characterized (including threats) and disseminated, throughout the hotspot.

1.3 Plans incorporate Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) conservation priorities.

BES conservation priorities are incorporated into conservation, climate, land-use and development plans and strategies at various levels (landscape, other sub-national, national and regional), so as to ensure long-term sustainability of the BES.

1.4 BES conservation priorities respected in the implementation of plans.

Conservation and/or development plans, which have incorporated conservation priorities, are implemented in a manner that meets expected conservation outcomes.

2.1 Collective capacity of CSOs involved in conservation. The CSO community is sufficiently broad and deep-rooted to respond to key conservation challenges and collectively possesses the technical competencies needed for conservation. Scope covers diverse specialist disciplines, including biology, ecosystem management (incl. watersheds), applied technology (GIS, remote sensing etc.), law, public policy, governance, indigenous rights and cultures, community development, economics, knowledge management, communication/social media, climate change, environmental impact assessment, green business and environmental markets.

3.2 Incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem services targets into national and sub-national financial planning. Finance ministries, development ministries and decentralized local governments have adopted biodiversity and ecosystem service priorities and use them as criteria for resource allocation.

	<p>3.5 Long-term mechanisms. Financing mechanisms exist that produce continuous long-term returns and are large and diverse enough to make a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation financing in the long term (at least the next 10 years). These are additional mechanisms to government subsidies (3.1). Examples are trust funds, water funds, revenues from the sale of carbon credits, other payments for ecosystem services, green taxes (polluter pays), local government charges for ecosystem service use (user pays), sustainable value chains (coffee, chocolate etc.), offsets.</p> <p>4.1 Favourable legal and fiscal framework: The framework of laws, regulations, public policies, (dis)incentives for landowners or businesses, absence of perverse subsidies, and other instruments (both national and sub-national) favours conservation of BES. In addition, civil society monitors the transparency of compliance.</p> <p>4.5 Corporate Leadership and Innovation Leading companies in various sectors generate their own innovations with a positive impact on BES, and drive improvements in environmental standards in their respective sectors.</p> <p>5.1 BES status and threats monitored. National and regional systems, involving government and civil society networks, are in place to monitor the status and trends of BES and threats to BES.</p> <p>5.2 Preparedness for Climate Change impacts on BES. Detailed projections of how climate change will impact BES across the hotspot through to at least 2070 are available and used to develop and implement national and sub-national adaptation plans, that prioritize resilience based on ecosystems (i.e., natural infrastructure rather than engineering solutions) and conservation of BES.</p>
<p>4. Given increased attention to climate change and associated funding, the LTV should seek strong linkages between biodiversity conservation and its funding with country-level climate strategies and outreach to the NDCs as a way of financing conservation efforts.</p>	<p>Similar to a strong focus on ecosystem services, the LTV also integrates climate change as a cross-cutting theme. References to national climate action plans and national adaptation plans, which now include specific reference to the NDCs, can be found in criteria 3.3. and 5.2 and in Condition 3: Sufficient, Sustainable Financing, as presented below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects through which CSOs assist the government to deliver on its NDC climate commitments or to implement internationally funded climate adaptation programs, in ways that conserve

	<p>biodiversity (Criterion 3.3).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund the time of RIT staff and top CSO leaders to maintain regular dialogue with investment banks, chambers of commerce, private sector leaders and key government agencies on climate financing and the potential value of conservation CSOs as partners in achieving mitigation targets (including NDCs) and increasing ecosystem resilience.
<p>5. Similarly, what can be CEPF’s national-level impacts on policy on biodiversity and climate. How can CEPF help to scale this up to national levels?</p>	<p>The LTV makes several recommendations to influence policy at national and regional levels. Targets for Phase III have been edited to make more explicit the integration of climate policy, as well as biodiversity policy, both at a sub-national and national levels, including:</p> <p>1.3 Plans incorporate BES conservation priorities. BES conservation priorities are incorporated into conservation, climate, land-use and development plans and strategies at various levels (landscape, other sub-national, national and regional), so as to ensure long-term sustainability of the BES.</p> <p>4.1 Favourable legal and fiscal framework: The framework of laws, regulations, public policies, (dis)incentives for landowners or businesses, absence of perverse subsidies, and other instruments (both national and sub-national) favours conservation of BES. In addition, civil society monitors the transparency of compliance.</p> <p>5.1 BES status and threats monitored. National and regional systems, involving government and civil society networks, are in place to monitor the status and trends of BES and threats to BES.</p> <p>5.2 Preparedness for Climate Change impacts on BES. Detailed projections of how climate change will impact BES across the hotspot through to at least 2070 are available and used to develop and implement national and sub-national adaptation plans, that prioritize resilience based on ecosystems (i.e., natural infrastructure rather than engineering solutions) and conservation of BES.</p>

<p>6. The LTV should include provision for CEPF to devote more attention to increasing public awareness about the problem of illegal mining in the hotspot.</p>	<p>The attention given to increasing public awareness of problems related to illegal mining has been strengthened, particularly under Conditions 4 and 5, which focus on strengthening local EIA capacity of civil society groups and on strengthening communication and public awareness programmes, including with respect to the impacts of extractive industry. This includes the following additional text:</p> <p><i>There is still a huge challenge surrounding the impacts of illegal mining which act outside of the regulatory framework. CEPF has supported a regional networking initiative to share best practice in the creation and communication strategies of national civil society platforms that raise awareness of the scale and urgency of the problem. It is important to continue supporting public awareness campaigns at national and regional level, especially given the increase in illegal mining as a result of the pandemic.</i></p> <p>Condition 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support CSOs, including community groups, to engage in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and monitoring of compliance, including the reporting of illegal mining while minimizing risks to those involved. <p>Condition 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that support alliances with wider citizen environmental movements to increase public demand for BES conservation, to raise awareness about illegal mining and demand readiness in face of growing threats (criterion 5.5) • Implement communications programs to broaden public appreciation for BES as the basis for sustainable development and support for conservation CSOs, including collaborative initiatives to build public connectedness to nature and public awareness campaigns about threats such as illegal mining.
<p>7. Given the high level of threats to environmental and indigenous defenders in the hotspot, particularly in Colombia, it would be important to include measures to support environmental and indigenous defenders in the LTV and their improved access to justice.</p>	<p>In several sections of the Context, greater emphasis is made to threats and violence to community and indigenous leaders. Similarly, Criteria 4.3 has been fine-tuned to directly address this comment:</p> <p>Criterion 4.3 Law enforcement and security. The authorities responsible for security and for surveillance and enforcement in conservation areas have the commitment and capacity to enforce the law and guarantee the safety of CSOs and of communities who seek to protect their natural resources. Specific performance measures have also been strengthened accordingly.</p>

<p>8. The LTV sets out very ambitious targets, which in light of the pressures exacerbated by the impacts of COVID, may appear unrealistically ambitious. It would seem prudent to (i) include a statement recognizing that the impacts of COVID have set back conservation capacities and advances in the region significantly and significantly impact achievement of the targets; and (ii) recognize in target setting the time lag what will be required in the hotspot to return to the baseline of pre-pandemic times. In other words, it could make sense to scale back the targets to make them more realistic in light of the significant back sliding associated with COVID, the recovery, and continued uncertainties as to when the region will get past the pandemic.</p>	<p>Based on the Working Group’s comments, contextual information regarding the impacts of COVID has been added and the targets have been reviewed in light of the impacts of COVID. Additional context has been added to Annex 2 on the Theory of Change (TOC) for Graduation of the Tropical Andes Hotspot, to provide additional context as follows:</p> <p><i>According to the TOC, progress on some criteria, especially relating to CSO capacity and financing, is a pre-requisite for progress on other criteria. This is reflected in investment priorities and hence in the corresponding timelines. However, the world is enduring severe disruption because of Covid-19, on top of which the region is experiencing its own social and political turbulence. Major disruption is a problem for all organizations, but it can also be an opportunity, especially for those who have the resilience to cope, the resources to act and the credibility to lead. Notwithstanding the many positive examples from across civil society, most CSOs have lacked the necessary resilience and struggled for resources, with the result that they have lost ground relative to the pre-pandemic baseline. Some of the proposed timelines towards the early milestones may therefore seem ambitious. On the other hand, there are unquestionably opportunities related to green recovery from the pandemic. Further opportunities will flow from the increasing global investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Last but not least, it is certain that there will be further periods of turbulence in the coming two decades, as the impacts of climate change multiply, so that the CSOs – with CEPF’s support - need to make every effort to increase their institutional resilience and resources as fast as possible.</i></p>
<p>9. The definition of clear targets for the next two phases is really great. It is super helpful to see something to quantifiable and clear, and this also offers simple metrics for looking at progress. It would be good to share how these were arrived it or how the data and information about the prior results helped inform the development (if that was the case) for these targets. And also, to compare the</p>	<p>Further explanation has been provided in footnote 22 on how monitoring progress toward graduation at a national level facilitates combining the national scores into an overall score for the hotspot to facilitate high-level aggregation of performance data. Compilation of the baselines for Phase III and monitoring of performance will be undertaken as part of overall portfolio monitoring during Phase III:</p> <p><i>We have designed spreadsheets to allow tracking of each country’s progress towards graduation at a national level and also to facilitate combining the national scores into an overall score for the hotspot. This is not an exact science! The purpose is simply to give a high-level aggregate indicator of progress. If CEPF intends to use the Graduation Table as a basis for tracking then we can provide the spreadsheets.</i></p>

<p>future targets with some kind of baseline- where do we stand now for these various indicators? Great work and amazing to see such large targets achieved including HA, partners, CSO support among other areas [referring to CEPF’s current results from phase II]. It shows that a steady, well managed portfolio of projects that also builds CSO capacity can scale up and out conservation results.</p>	
<p>10. Given that the LTV references a soon to be rebound in growth of extractives on the one hand and a likely slowly rebound of tourism on the other, what does this do to our conservation results/targets achieved thus far? Do we slide backward due to both increased extractives pressure and fewer people in the forests/outdoors and as such otherwise acting as deterrents to forest degradation and loss?</p>	<p>The LTV provides significant contextual analysis of COVID and impacts on the extractive industries and conservation, including on ecotourism. Regarding the comment on backsliding on conservation results and targets, the authors have confirmed that there were no firm data on hand at the time of preparing the LTV to show such backsliding of results, although extensive interviews demonstrated the gains from conservation were at serious risk due to the impacts of COVID. Without firm data, the authors refrained from formalizing the backsliding into the targets. The CEPF Secretariat and its Andean partners will monitor possible areas of backsliding in the course of implementing Phase III and, if needed, adjust the targets in the LTV accordingly. The LTV is a living document that requires periodic adjustment based on future opportunities and shocks to the hotspot.</p>
<p>11. The information about growing risk/threats to those on the ground advancing conservation was surprising to me more generally as I did not know about this. However, it seems that there are increased risks under COVID as well as due to the downscaling of budgets for environment related work which has to</p>	<p>The response to comment 10 also responds to this comment.</p>

<p>be impacting enforcement and other work to ensure forest/resource protection. Similar to my question above -can we sustain what we have achieved over the years under this pressure, and how much of the LTV took into account a buffer to allow for some lacklustre or limited resilience that we might see in coming years after COVID? I suggest some kind of time buffer to allow for lags in returns to prior enforcement/protection efforts.</p>	
<p>12. Given the strong support and dependency of CSOs on CEPF support (report states that this is the majority of CSO funding), what is the likelihood/what are the strongest prospects for filling that gap once CEPF funding is no longer available? It seems like even though the countries are middle- and higher-income level, there will still be significant gaps in PA management, so we need to have secure on-going funding identified as soon as possible to replace CEPF funding. Are some of the hotspot country govts perhaps willing and able to pick some of this up? If not, are there other viable options given the tendency of reducing grant funding more generally?</p>	<p>The strong support of CEPF to local CSOs and several KBAs is an important focus of the contextual analysis. This subject provides the basis for criteria and targets seeking to strengthen the capacity of local CSOs to enable them to fulfil requirements of other donors and to diversify funding sources. The analysis finds that there is a need for CEPF funding to continue while helping partners and the RIT develop longer-term funding strategies and capacities. Several criteria reflect this approach to promoting financial sustainability:</p> <p>2.2 Institutional capacity for CSO management. National and sub-national CSOs involved in conservation have sufficient capacity and institutional and operational structures to (i) raise funds for conservation, (ii) ensure efficient project management, (iii) develop and implement conservation strategies, and (iv) apply satisfactory gender policies internally and in their programs.</p> <p>2.3 Capacity of community organizations. Organizations of indigenous, Afro-descendant and other communities, who are custodians of areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, possess sufficient capacity, organization and institutional and operational structures to (i) conserve and sustainably and equitably use the biodiversity of their territory, (ii) raise funds for these activities, (iii) efficiently administer funds and businesses, (iv) apply satisfactory gender policies, (v) publicly communicate their contribution to the common good, and (vi) effectively negotiate with authorities and other actors and establish alliances.</p>

2.5 Broad credibility. Leading CSOs in the conservation sector have gained credibility with diverse stakeholders because of characteristics valued by those stakeholders, such as: technical robustness and impartiality of information; transparency; integrity and values; endorsement by widely respected institutions and individuals.

3.1 Public sector funding. Public sector agencies, at national and sub-national levels, responsible for conservation in the hotspot have an ongoing allocation of public funds and/or revenue-generating capacity sufficient to operate effectively and use them efficiently.

3.2 Incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem services targets into national and sub-national financial planning. Finance ministries, development ministries and decentralized local governments have adopted biodiversity and ecosystem service priorities and use them as criteria for resource allocation.

3.3 International conservation funds. International climate change and biodiversity funds (without CEPF), philanthropic funds and impact investment funds, directed to the hotspot, are sufficient to address global conservation priorities and flow efficiently to the field, including to CSOs that are extensively involved in implementation.

3.4 Financial health of CSOs. CSOs dedicated to conservation obtain sufficient funds, from diversified sources, to remain (collectively) highly relevant actors for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and to be resilient in the face of economic or political shocks or other threats.

3.5 Long-term mechanisms. Financing mechanisms exist that produce continuous long-term returns and are large and diverse enough to make a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation financing in the long term (at least the next 10 years).

5.4 Financial capacity for adaptive management. CSOs and biodiversity authorities have access to emergency funds to prevent, prepare for or respond to imminent emergencies that pose a major threat to biodiversity.