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| Danish organisation | Earth Advocates Association (EAA) |
| Title of the intervention | Partnership Workshop: Building Conservation Alliances in Bolivia |
| Partner name(s) | Fundación para la Conservación del Bosque Chiquitano (FCBC).Asociación Boliviana para la Investigación y conservación de Amazonas (ACEAA) |
| Amount applied for | 52.480,00 DKK |
| Country(ies) | Bolivia |
| Period (# of months) | 2 months including preparation, follow up on workshop agreements and concluding reporting to CISU |

1. **Objective and relevance (the world around us)**

*What do you want to achieve through the intervention?*

The intervention aims at **“strengthening collaboration between Bolivian nature conservation organizations within science and monitoring as a basis for joint advocacy and preparation of national, regional, and local management plans in addition to building partner capacities within resource mobilizations.”** It is a first initial step towards building a strong nature conservation alliance in Bolivia based on project collaboration, campaigning, and knowledge sharing.

The framework for the intervention is a 3-day workshop with the participation of relevant professional staff from the Bolivian conservation NGO *Fundación para la Conservación del Bosque Chiquitano (FCBC)* located in the Santa Cruz department in the eastern Bolivia and the Bolivian conservation NGO *Asociación Boliviana para la Investigación y conservación de Amazonas (ACEAA)* located in the Pando-department in the Northwestern Bolivia as well as relevant Danish staff from EAA.

The workshop takes place in a difficult political context where especially green NGOs are exposed to political pressure from the central government. A response to this pressure is strong alliances, which can advocate with a heavier voice, create more visibility, and make the individual organization less vulnerable to political pressure. At the same time, collaboration on data collection and knowledge sharing is crucial as evidence-based advocacy in the political debate.

Therefore, the FCBC-ACEAA-EAA Alliance will spend three days defining areas of cooperation, develop joint projects, and plan joint advocacy initiatives with the purpose of:

* Identifying challenges and solutions in the field of social and environmental data collection, agree on how organizations' respective data can be merged and visualized, and define joint initiatives for advocacy.
* Exchanging knowledge ‘best practices’ within sustainable development. Both organizations work with sustainable forest conservation based on sustainable production of NTFRs.
* Building institutional capacity in the field of resource mobilization.

Static data is crucial in working with forest management and protection, an effective advocacy tool that can show the extent of forest burning and deforestation, but also an effective tool for planning new projects and in relation to dissemination and monitoring of project progress. Unfortunately, the Bolivian state does not carry out a comprehensive and systematic collection of data and Bolivia does not have a central statistics office, which collects all of society's statistical information for use in administration, as well as in research, teaching, etc. This leaves a gap which, among other things, NGOs help to fill in order to be able to act efficiently and professionally in, for example, the field of nature conservation.

**The coalition**

Since 2017 EAA has completed several projects funded through the Civil Society Fund in cooperation with both FCBC and ACEAA respectively and has built strong ties with and in-depth knowledge of both institutions and Bolivian political and cultural context. The efforts to further enhance the collaboration on sustainable nature conservation is building on these preexisting good relations. All three organizations share a common vision to preserve Bolivia's forests by supporting territorial governance, promoting social justice, and diversifying and improving income opportunities. The goal is to make communities living in and around forests; less vulnerable to climate change, able to demand territorial rights and capable of sustainably managing and actively protecting the natural resources and forest they depend on.

**FCBC is a leader in the conservation of tropical dry forest**, which is the type of forest that covers the Santa Cruz region in eastern Bolivia, and which acts as a transition zone to the Amazon. Bolivia holds the largest share of tropical dry forest in South America and although only about 20 percent of the biodiversity of the dry forest is known researchers have so far registered 1,200 different species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. In addition, the forest contributes to fighting global climate change through carbon storage and provides ecosystem services in the form of fresh water, wood, pollinators, food and medicine to hundreds of forests and rural communities. Thus, in 2019, the Chiquitano Forest was declared a conservation priority for South America by the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC-2020-Res-006). Nevertheless, the forest is under great pressure from forestry, agriculture, and settlements and it is estimated that 40 percent of the forest will have disappeared by 2040, unless civil society, the private sector and authorities of all levels together decide to preserve the Chiquitano forest.

**ACEAA is the leader in the conservation of tropical rainforests** and has been working with sustainable development in the region since 2012. The Pando Department is almost entirely covered in tropical Amazon Forest which, along with the rest of the Amazon, is home to a quarter of the planet's animal and plant species and one of the world's largest stocks of carbon. This makes the region crucial to stabilizing the entire planet's climate. Unlike the large areas of tropical dry forest on the border with Brazil and the large wetlands called the 'Pantanal', the tropical rainforest is difficult to access. Nevertheless, the hunt for the forest's natural resources has accelerated deforestation. Logging is driven by the interests of many industries, which are all too often put above the environment, climate, and wildlife. This applies to agriculture, industrial logging for timber, mining, oil extraction, infrastructure projects and monstrous dam constructions to generate hydropower on the rivers.

It is in this context of urgency the FCBC-ACEAA-EAA Alliance will strengthen its cooperation to protect Bolivia's forests for the benefit of people, the climate and biodiversity.

**Why is the intervention important?**

 *Describe the context of the intervention:*

* + *Describe the conditions that apply in the area where the intervention will take place, and which are expected to influence the intervention (e.g. social, economic or political conditions, or other projects or activities in the area that can supplement the intervention).*

As elucidated above forest conservation is a multi-strategy for mitigating climate change,

counteracting the global biodiversity crisis and fighting poverty as thousands of families depend on forest resources, its ecosystem services and to sustain a favorable microclimate. However, to succeed in conserving and protecting forests strong alliances are crucial in a Bolivian context, where the political climate is not favorable for local NGOs working for nature conservation.

The work is characterized by threats, control, and uncertainty, which is expressed, among other things, through annual, mandatory audits by authorities who review organizational strategies and projects and extend or revoke the organizations' NGO licenses depending on whether their activities are political and run counter to the state's development plans. Especially green NGOs are under constant pressure from the central government and must be careful to criticize and confront central power.

At the same time, the controversial presidential election in 2019 exhibited that the Bolivian democracy has its challenges and current Government continues to undermine part of population's trust in authorities. In parallel to this semi-well-functioning political framework, great interests are at stake in relation to creating development in Bolivia's northern and eastern forest areas - either by logging, settlements[[1]](#footnote-1) or agriculture encroachment. This brings green NGOs on a coalition course with political and economic interests.

Conservation alliances are therefore more than ever crucial to continue preserving Bolivia’s forests in a sustainable manner and based on science and dialogue with national and local authorities. By collaborating on continuous data generation and analysis, ACEAA and FCBC will stand stronger in their efforts to influence territorial planning and environmental policies and make the individual organization less vulnerable to political pressure. It is in this context that a strong civil society comes into the picture led by strong CSOs who in cooperation can create a common opposition to current policies in the field of development and jointly seek influence over those in power.

* *Describe how this intervention can contribute to supporting collaboration, public engagement and civil organising and how this in time will contribute to social justice (realisation of people’s rights, reducing inequality and fighting poverty, participation in decision-making processes, equal access to resources, and just institutions).*

The aim of the intervention to strengthen cooperation between two of Bolivia's leading nature conservation organizations and the organizations' capacity to secure international and national funding is precisely to increase their capacity for, and opportunity to, influence national, regional and local development plans in collaboration with local CSOs, associations and community authorities and secure project funding for development projects that focus specifically on sustainable forest conservation, which will ultimately improve the living conditions of the many communities in the departments of Pando and Santa Cruz, whose livelihood depends on the forests.

* *What climate- and environmental conditions do the partnership and/or the intervention need to respond to? And how have the partners responded to it? This could be in relation to the conditions of the target groups, the number of flights or the activities of the intervention, and how these affect the environment or climate in the area.*

The conservation status in Bolivia is deteriorating when it comes to forest conservation. Habitat conversion due to agricultural expansion, land encroachment for livestock and colonization are the major threats to Bolivian forests. Habitat degradation comes next in the form of uncontrolled logging and the forest conversion rate is almost 100 hectares per day. Until 2019 the total loss of natural vegetation cover in the department of Santa Cruz alone was approximately ​​6.2 million hectares, placing the Chiquitano Dry Forest in the unfortunate category as one of the most threatened forests in South America. With this trend, projections estimate a total loss of 7.1 million hectares (43%) by 2040 (*Maillard et al, 2020*).
In addition, uncontrolled forest fires threaten both the biodiversity and people living in the Chiquitano Dry Forest and the adjacent ecoregions including the Amazon. Small, controlled fires have long been a seasonal occurrence in Bolivia. They are routinely used as a tool to maintain pastures, burn off spent crops, clear brush, and forest, fertilize soil, and burn trash. But the fires in 2020 - like those in 2019 - have been anything but routine and have prompted the Bolivian government to declare a state of emergency two years in a row and there is no indication that the fires will decrease in strength in 2021 or in the future - on the contrary. In 2019, four million hectares of forest and savannah were lost to the flames and in 2020 NASA Earth Observatory could document escaped fires burning unchecked in several ecosystems, including the Pantanal wetlands in the eastern part of the country; the dry Chiquitano forest in the southeast; and the Beni savanna and Amazon rainforest areas in the north.

The fires are largely the result of intentional burning to convert forest to farmland by typically migrants from the highlands and have in Bolivia increased in strength and scope after the Supreme Decree 3974 was

issued by the former Bolivian president in July 2019. Following the Supreme Decree, the amount of controlled burning allowed by farmers increased five-fold, from five hectares per year to 20. Same month the president signed the Supreme Decree 26075 expanding land demarcated for livestock production and the agribusiness sector to include Permanent Forest Production Lands in the regions of Beni and Santa Cruz. These changes in regulations have together with increasingly higher temperatures and lower than average precipitation due to changes in the regional climate contributed to the vast extent of the fires seen in recent years (*Romero-Muñoz, A., M. Jansen, A. M. Nuñez, M. Toledo, R. Vides Almonacid & T. Kuemmerle. 2019. Fires scorching Bolivia´s Chiquitano forest. Science vol 366, issue 6469 pp. 1082)*.

 Over the longer term, deforestation of tropical forests can have a broader impact, affecting global climate and biodiversity. These changes are however more challenging to observe and forecast from local effects, since they take place over a longer time scale and can be difficult to measure. The most immediate impact of deforestation occurs at the local level with the loss of ecological services provided by tropical forests and related ecosystems. Such habitats afford humans valuable services such as erosion prevention, flood control, water filtration, fisheries protection, and pollination—functions that are particularly important to the region's poorest people, who rely on natural resources for their everyday survival, just as forest loss reduces the availability of renewable resources like timber, medicinal plants, nuts and fruit, and game.

The FCBC-ACEAA-EAA-partnership is already committed to preventing and mitigating the effects of deforestation and will with this project take steps to join forces in the fight for nature conservation to increase the impact of our individual efforts.

1. **The partnership/collaborators (our starting point)**

*Describe any previous acquaintance or cooperation between the partners, and how these experiences have fed into the development of the proposed intervention.*

Since 2017 the FCBC/EAA partnership has been implementing several CISU financed projects with the purpose of improving living conditions for marginalized primarily indigenous groups in the Department of Santa Cruz through locally rooted eco-tourism, support to sustainable territorial management and building organizational capacity. FCBC/EAA has further led a humanitarian effort in 2019 to help families affected by the wildfires in the Chiquitano Region. The intervention was focused on the distribution of clean water and seeds and the prevention of new wild forest fires through the establishment and training of community-based emergency brigades in firefighting. In 2022 the FCBC/EAA partnership will initiate a new CISU-funded corridor project to protect and sustainably manage communal forests of the indigenous territory TIOC-central Bajo Paraguá as stepping stones between protected areas in Northern Chiquitania.

The ACEAA/EAA partnership has since 2020 been implementing a CISU financed project with the purpose of conserving community forests through support to territorial management, awareness raising, and development of micro businesses based on sustainable extraction of naturally occurring jungle berries and nuts. The support to management of community forest based on the extraction of acai berries has provisionally led to the establishment of a protected area of ​​30,000 ha, which includes five indigenous communities. It is an absolutely crucial result that the Partnership had only dared to hope for but did not expect would happen after just one year. The status of the area as protected means that mining and logging is illegal, which is of great importance to biodiversity and the people who live in the forest and is a good indicator of what the EAA-ACEAA-FCBC partnership can achieve through strategic and carefully coordinated efforts.

Both EAA and FCBC and EAA and ACEAA have jointly drafted and signed Partnership Agreements - which sets out the framework and visions for the collaboration. The Partnership Agreement aims to formalize the collaboration and form the framework for a long-term strategic alliance, where the parties mutually complement their organizational competencies based on a shared interest in protecting the biodiversity of the forests of Bolivia and its ecosystems, while promoting sustainable development particularly among indigenous people (*the partnership agreements in Spanish can be shared on request*). The previous cooperation has strengthened the partnership between EAA on one side and FCBC and ACEAA on the other, just as the cooperation has provided EAA with valuable experience and even greater local knowledge and understanding of the cultural and political dynamic in the areas of intervention. FCBC and ACEAA has through CISU-financed projects and other projects build thorough knowledge on sustainable forest conservation and an extensive network of local and regional government representatives and stakeholders from civil society and private sector.

It is these experiences that must now be channeled into a more formal collaboration across regions.

*Describe the partners and other actors’ contributions, roles, and responsibilities. Justify substantial payroll costs, and if payroll costs are included for the Danish organisation, describe the tasks and why Danish personnel are best positioned to undertake these tasks.*

EAA is as per contract formally responsible for the intervention to CISU and will take the lead in planning the workshop, undertake capacity building within institutional fundraising and is responsible for financial and narrative reporting to CISU. EAA will continue its support to the partners' institutional fundraising after the workshop, just as both partners set aside time to realize fundraising and learnings from the workshop. In addition, it is the partners' responsibility to set aside resources to collaborate on data collection and science as well as coordinate advocacy initiatives. At the workshop, we define and agree on the framework for collaboration as well as prepare formal collaboration plans in addition to training in institutional fundraising and development of joint projects. On a more general level, the workshop also has a team-building function.

The workshop is carried out in connection with a supervision visit to keep Danish travel expenses down, while the local partners themselves bear expenses for salaries in connection with the workshop and the subsequent implementation of plans and agreements entered at the workshop. This also applies to EAA.

1. **Target groups, objectives, and expected results (our intervention)**

 *Who will benefit from the intervention? How many people will benefit in total? How will they participate in the intervention?*

From EAA a team of three people will participate. From ACEAA and FCBC teams of five people will participate with different capacities and responsibilities within their respective organizations within policy, fundraising, communication, science, and project management. In the long run, it is the expectation that a stronger cooperation between the two organizations and greater capacity in the field of fundraising will benefit our joint efforts in forest conservation and thereby help the people for whom the forest is their livelihood.

*Describe how the intervention will be implemented: what activities will be carried out? With whom? And when?*

The actual workshop will be held in Bolivia and will stretch over 3 full days where partner staff will identify challenges and solutions in the field of social and environmental data collection and agree on how organizations' respective data can be merged and visualized as a strategic supporting input to the organizational communication, define and coordinate joint initiatives for advocacy, exchange knowledge and ‘best practices’ within sustainable development (both organizations work with sustainable forest conservation based on sustainable production of NTFRs) and build institutional capacity in the field of resource mobilization in addition to initiate development of concrete joint projects. A total of 13 people will participate.

This is the first time the two local organizations have met in a strategic forum to discuss and plan joint efforts. Therefore, the meeting also has a team building perspective. EAA is responsible for the subsequent follow-up of agreements. The workshop is scheduled for the first week of March 2022.

1. The land distribution in the low land regions is geographically divided into municipally owned areas, areas owned by the state (e.g., national parks) and big areas privately owned by ranchers and agriculture companies (> 500 ha), smaller individual properties (< 500 ha) and areas owned by communities. However, a new social category has also emerged in recent years - the so-called ‘*colonos interculturales*’ - migrants from primarily the highlands and the interior of the country - who legally or illegally settles in the lov land regions looking for land to cultivate and an opportunity to escape from poverty and unemployment that is prevalent in the highlands. Many of the settlers are of Aymara and Quechua origin. Their demands for land are the basis of many conflicts and clashes between the indigenous and peasant inhabitants and the settlers. The relocation was intensified under the former President Evo Morales, who encouraged the "colonization" of the low land regions by people from the highlands (La Paz, Oruro, and Potosi) as a deliberate strategy to alleviate poverty problems in the highlands and to expand the government's electorate to the lowlands especially to the department of Santa Cruz where the desire and demand for autonomy is most prevalent. It goes against both regional and municipal autonomy, but the government takes into account, among other things, its own group of voters which weighs heavier than the rules for regional and municipal autonomy making the re-colonization a politically sensitive issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)