Implementing Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) Site Conservation and Preventing Global Extinctions

Part I: Project Information

GEF ID
10581

Project Type
MSP

Type of Trust Fund
GET

CBIT/NGI
- ☐ CBIT
- ☐ NGI

Project Title
Implementing Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) Site Conservation and Preventing Global Extinctions

Countries
Global, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Madagascar

Agency(ies)
UNEP

Other Executing Partner(s) **Executing Partner Type**

Other Executing Partner(s)	Executing Partner Type
Ministry of Environment (Chile), Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Colombia), Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Dominican Republic), Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Forests (Madagascar), AZE Partnership and Secretariat (American Bird Conservancy - ABC), Birdlife International	Others

GEF Focal Area

Biodiversity

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Biodiversity, Biomes, Wetlands, Desert, Tropical Rain Forests, Tropical Dry Forests, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Community Based Natural Resource Mngt, Mainstreaming, Certification -National Standards, Ceritification - International Standards, Species, Threatened Species, Stakeholders, Communications, Awareness Raising, Behavior change, Public Campaigns, Type of Engagement, Information Dissemination, Partnership, Participation, Consultation, Local Communities, Civil Society, Community Based Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Academia, Private Sector, Large corporations, Capital providers, Gender Equality, Gender results areas, Capacity Development, Participation and leadership, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Knowledge Generation, Knowledge Exchange, Learning, Adaptive management, Influencing models, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Transform policy and regulatory environments

Rio Markers

Climate Change Mitigation

Climate Change Mitigation 0

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation 0

Duration

48 In Months

Agency Fee($)

184,412

Submission Date

3/27/2020

A. Indicative Focal/Non-Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
BD-1-1	GET	1,275,141	4,250,000
BD-2-7	GET	686,098	4,250,000
	Total Project Cost ($)	**1,961,239**	**8,500,000**

B. Indicative Project description summary

Project Objective

To improve the conservation of Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites.

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
Component 1. Improvement of the conservation status of 20 AZE sites and associated AZE trigger species in focus countries. Provisionally selected sites: Dominican Republic 1. Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte 2. Playa Bayahibe Chile 3. Zapahuira 4. Las Cascadas Loa River 5. Murmuntani 6. Río Vilama 7. Puquios 8. Mehuín 9. Los Molles – Pichidangui 10. Tocopilla Madagascar 11. Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetland Complex 12. Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif 13. Itremo 14. Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA 15. Ankafobe Colombia 16. Chingaza National Natural Park and surrounding areas 17. Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Natural Park and surrounding areas 18. Páramo Urrao / De Las Aves Colibri El Sol 19. Farallones de Cali National Natural Park 20. Munchique National Natural Park and southern extension	Technical Assistance	Outcome 1.1. Improved protection of critically endangered and endangered species through implementation of priority AZE site conservation actions. Indicators: Management plans developed and adopted for over 200,000 ha at 20 AZE sites in project countries (the provisionally selected 20 sites will be confirmed during PPG) Populations of	Output 1.1.1. Conservation plans for each site developed and implemented. Output 1.1.2 Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) approach tested and OECM status achieved. Where applicable, process to designate AZE sites as new protected areas initiated and advanced. Output 1.1.3. Local communities and NGOs fully integrated into conservation	GET	885,455	3,750,000

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
Component 2. Mainstreaming AZE site conservation at global and national levels.	Technical Assistance	Outcome 2.1. Biodiversity conservation enhanced and extinction threat reduced through mainstreaming AZE site conservation. Indicators: Number of lending institutions (local, regional and global banks and lending agencies) in the four project countries that integrate AZE site conservation into their policy approaches and ongoing screening of	Output 2.1.1. Technical services provided to lending institutions, including local, regional and national banks and investors, for mainstreaming of AZE site conservation. Output 2.1.2. Financial and technical support to project countries to include AZE in their national policies and regulations. Output 2.1.3 Technical support provided to businesses	GET	563,349	2,450,000

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
Component 3. Knowledge management to enhance understanding of and interest in AZE site conservation across sectors.	Technical Assistance	Outcome 3.1 Application of KBA standards is advanced in pilot countries. Indicator: Number of new KBAs, including AZE sites, confirmed and documented globally. Outcome 3.2. Increased understanding and application of AZE site conservation implementation in policies and plans by local, national, regional and global stakeholders. Indicator:	Output 3.1.1. Capacity developed in pilot countries for the application of KBA standards. Output 3.1.2 Documentation of existing and new AZE sites developed, shared and disseminated through the World Database of KBAs and the AZE and KBA websites. . Output 3.2.1. Improved knowledge of site-based conservation in non-project countries supported.	GET	334,141	2,000,000

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
				Sub Total ($)	**1,782,945**	**8,200,000**
Project Management Cost (PMC)						
				GET	178,294	300,000
				Sub Total($)	**178,294**	**300,000**
				Total Project Cost($)	**1,961,239**	**8,500,000**

C. Indicative sources of Co-financing for the Project by name and by type

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
CSO	American Bird Conservancy (AZE Secretariat)	Grant	Investment mobilized	2,000,000
CSO	BirdLife International	Grant	Investment mobilized	500,000
CSO	AZE Partners	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000
Government	Government of Chile	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
Government	Government of Colombia	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
Government	Government of Dominican Rep.	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000
Government	Government of Madagascar	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
			Total Project Cost($)	**8,500,000**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

ABC’s co-financing will come directly through fundraising to support AZE site conservation in project countries and outside of project countries. BirdLife’s co-financing will come directly through fundraising to support AZE site conservation in project countries as well as global policy and technical work to integrate AZEs into the KBA database and wider policy processes.

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount($)	Fee($)	Total($)
UNEP	GET	Global	Biodiversity	BD Global/Regional Set-Aside	365,297	34,703	400,000
UNEP	GET	Colombia	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	176,277	16,746	193,023
UNEP	GET	Madagascar	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	441,055	40,281	481,336
UNEP	GET	Chile	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	890,025	84,552	974,577
UNEP	GET	Dominican Republic	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	88,585	8,130	96,715
				Total GEF Resources($)	**1,961,239**	**184,412**	**2,145,651**

E. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

PPG Required

☐

PPG Amount ($)

49,635

PPG Agency Fee ($)

4,714

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount($)	Fee($)	Total($)
UNEP	GET	Colombia	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	6,372	605	**6,977**
UNEP	GET	Madagascar	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	17,045	1,619	**18,664**
UNEP	GET	Chile	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	23,218	2,205	**25,423**
UNEP	GET	Dominican Republic	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	3,000	285	**3,285**
				Total Project Costs($)	**49,635**	**4,714**	**54,349**

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
200,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park	125689	Select				

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
200,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Akula National Park 20 sites in Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Madagascar (the names and targets to be specified at PPG)	**125689**	**Select**	200,000.00						

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
400000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
400,000.00			

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes that meets national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations (hectares)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Please upload document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title	Submitted

Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	4,000			
Male	6,000			
Total	10000	0	0	0

Part II. Project Justification

1a. Project Description

1a.1. The global environmental problems, root causes and barriers

Background

The Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) was launched globally in 2005 and is a joint initiative of local, national and global biodiversity conservation organizations. It was established to designate and effectively conserve the most important sites for global biodiversity conservation. These sites have threatened species restricted to just a single site in the world.

Global AZE sites are identified by the following criteria (a site needs to meet all three criteria to qualify):

1. Endangerment: An AZE site must contain at least one Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR) species, as assessed on the IUCN Red List;

2. Irreplaceability: An AZE site should only be designated if it is the sole area where an EN or CR species occurs, contains the overwhelming significant known resident population (>95%) of the EN or CR species, or contains the overwhelming significant known population (>95%) for one life history segment (e.g. breeding or wintering) of the EN or CR species.

3. Discreteness: The area must have a definable boundary within which the character of habitats, biological communities, and/or management issues have more in common with each other than they do with those in adjacent areas.

In the 2018 global AZE map update, 853 AZE sites were identified globally for 1,483 AZE trigger species, as many sites have more than one species that triggers the site's AZE status. Of these 853 sites, 43% remain completely unprotected, and of the 57% of sites that are fully or partially protected, many are still in urgent need of improved management to safeguard AZE trigger species. In many cases, habitat conservation and management measures need to be complemented by species-specific measures (e.g., to curb illegal taking in the wild, provide artificial breeding sites or prevent disease or invasive species).

All AZE sites are also Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). KBAs are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. The KBA Standard, launched in 2016, provides quantitative criteria and associated thresholds for identifying KBAs in an objective, repeatable and transparent way. The KBA Partnership, launched in the same year, has the aim to identify, document and promote KBAs around the world. ABC and BirdLife are both KBA Partners, implementing the KBA Programme through their international networks.

The Alliance for Zero Extinction is a consortium of over 100 conservation organizations globally, ranging from large international NGOs to small-scale local NGOs. The Alliance is led by the Secretariat, based at American Bird Conservancy, the Chair, Michael Parr, President of American Bird Conservancy, and a Global Steering Committee, comprised of 10 NGO leaders from around the world dedicated to preventing species extinctions.

AZE sites are defined based on the above criteria and not on protection status; therefore, while some AZE sites are also protected areas, many are not. Management of AZE sites is determined on a site-specific level, with some fully managed by public or private institutions and others lacking any effective management. Of the 853 AZE sites globally, 21 are in Chile, 4 are in the Dominican Republic, 53 are in Madagascar, and 39 are in Colombia. Please see Annex D for a complete list of AZE sites in project countries and the associated AZE trigger species.

The following set of criteria were used to identify the candidate priority AZE sites for the project. Please see Annex E for complete evaluation matrices for each of the 20 AZE sites provisionally selected for this project. The final list of sites will be confirmed during the PPG phase.

Factors	**Specific questions to answer**

State	Is the AZE trigger species improving/declining?
Pressures	Are there ongoing or worsening threats to the AZE trigger species?
	Are there ongoing or worsening threats to the AZE site?
Responses	Is the AZE site protected?
	Is the AZE site well-managed (i.e., does it have and implement a management plan)? Does it have a recent METT or similar assessment of management effectiveness?
	Is conservation action being conducted at the AZE site?
Likelihood of success	Are there local community groups that currently support or could support conservation at the AZE site?
	Is there a strong baseline (existing projects at the site)? These can be government, NGO or local community efforts.

Chile: Chile has high levels of endemism and many micro-endemic species, several of which face multiple threats due mainly to land use changes, the presence of invasive species and pollution. Other threats to biodiversity in Chile include urban expansion, deforestation, mining impacts and other causes of habitat loss. To address these concerns, the country developed a National Biodiversity Strategy for 2017-2030, which includes action plans for protected areas, wetland conservation, the conservation of native species and the management of invasive species.

The AZE concept in Chile was strengthened during the previous GEF AZE project. As a result, AZE sites were used to identify areas of relevance for the conservation of threatened species, which triggered the formulation of the *Plan to Protect Last Refuges,* which identifies areas of particular relevance for threatened species, especially those that are microendemics. The AZE concept was also used as the basis for the definition of the *Chilean Action Plan for the Conservation of Native Species*, which seeks to improve the representation of protected areas from the perspective of the distribution of threatened species.

Of the 21 AZE sites in Chile, two are triggered by birds, eight for amphibians, nine for cacti, one for marine fish and one for multiple taxonomic groups. This project focuses on 8 AZE sites in Chile, which can be grouped into three categories: five AZE sites supporting 6 AZE trigger species of the amphibian genus *Telmatobius*, two AZE sites that contain AZE trigger species from the cactus genus *Eriosyce*, and one AZE site for an amphibian trigger species with a strong baseline of conservation action.

There are 63 known species in the genus *Telmatobius*, one of the most threatened in the Andes. Ten (10) species of the genus *Telmatobius* are found in Chile, seven of which are Critically Endangered (CR) or Endangered (EN), according to the IUCN Red List. Six of these seven CR / EN species are species that activate the AZE designation of a site. These six AZE trigger species are found at five sites, Zapahuira, Las Cascadas Río Loa, Río Vilama, Murmuntani and Puquios, all of which have been selected for inclusion in this project.

The AZE site Zapahuira is located in the arid high Andes. Due to freshwater scarcity, small areas of habitat for two AZE trigger species, the Zapahuira Water Frog (*Telmatobius zapahuirensis*) and the Arico Water Frog (*Telmatobius pefauri*) are found at the site, in areas at and above 3,200 meters above sea level (m.a.s.l.).

The Las Cascadas Río Loa AZE site protects a small stream outside of the city of Calama in northern Chile's Atacama Desert. This site is the last known habitat for the AZE trigger species Loa water frog (*Telmatobius dankoi*). In 2019, a team including members of RECH, a key project partner in the GEF-5 AZE project and in the proposed project, collected the last 14 individuals from the site and transferred them to the National Zoo of Chile to start a conservation breeding program. Ideally, the frogs will be returned to the AZE site once it sufficiently restored to provide habitat for the frog.

The AZE site Río Vilama, activated by the presence of *Telmatobius vilamensis,* is located near the tourist town San Pedro de Atacama in northern Chile near the border with Bolivia. It is partially protected by the Regional Priority Site Sector Volcán Licancabur and is also included in the Zone of Tourist Interest (ZOIT) San Pedro de Atacama. The AZE site Murmuntani, triggered by *Telmatobius philippii*, is located north of Rio Vilama, also near the Bolivian border. Puquios is a candidate AZE site that will soon be confirmed, as it is the only known location of the CR *Telmatobius fronteriensis*. This small AZE site provides habitat for the frog up to 4,150 m.a.s.l.

Six additional AZE sites in northern Chile (Tocopilla, Taita, Colinas costeras al sur de Chañaral, Huasco-Totoral, Norte de Coquimbo and Los Molles – Pichidangui) have AZE trigger species from the cactus genus *Eriosyce*. While some conservation actions, such as restricting illegal collection, will have a positive impact across the six sites, this project will specifically focus on two sites, Tocopilla and Los Molles – Pichidangui.

The final AZE site included in this project, Mehuín in the Valdivian rainforests of southern Chile, is activated by the presence of Miguel's Ground Frog (*Eupsophus migueli*). This small site is located on land owned by Mapuche Communities north of the city of Valdivia. A strong baseline of conservation actions was initiated in the previous GEF AZE project that will be significantly scaled up in this proposed project.

Colombia: Colombia has 54,871 species recorded in the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), a figure that does not include the huge variety of microorganisms in the country. Most of the endemic species of Colombia are located in two of the most important biodiversity hotspots identified in the world: the Amazon and the Chocó (PNGIBSE, 2012). Colombia ranks first worldwide in terms of diversity of birds and orchids; second in the diversity of plants, amphibians, freshwater fish and butterflies; third in the diversity of reptiles and palms; and fourth in variety of mammals. Colombia's high levels of biodiversity are reflected in the high number of AZE sites in the country, 39. Twenty seven of these sites have been triggered by amphibians, three by birds, one for cacti, two each for cycads and mammals, and four for multiple taxonomic groups.

The underlying drivers of biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems in Colombia include increasing social inequality and the more than five decades of internal armed conflict, both of which have resulted in the displacement of the rural poor into marginal lands; redirection of the economy towards the production of primary commodities (e.g., mining and agriculture); conflicting policies regarding access to and titling of land; and implementation of extensive livestock and agricultural production models. Biodiversity and ecosystem integrity have been heavily impacted by human settlement and production activities and by both legal and illegal use and extraction of renewable and nonrenewable natural resources. Deforestation and biological invasions are primary causes of biodiversity loss. In Colombia, 296 introduced, transplanted and continental invasive species have been identified (terrestrial and aquatic), including plants, mollusks, crustaceans, fish and terrestrial vertebrates (Franco, Baptiste and Diaz, 2011).

The trend in urban development is forming large urban agglomerations (such as in Bogota and the axis of the Cauca Valley) with the consequent transformation of the territory, mainly in the Andean region, where 77.4% of the population lives. These dynamics also generate pressure on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Five AZE sites in Colombia have been provisionally selected for inclusion in this project. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Natural Park and surrounding areas AZE site, henceforth Santa Marta, has the largest number of AZE trigger species, ten, of all AZE sites in Colombia. These species, including mammals, amphibians and birds, join many others to make this site an incredibly rich one for biodiversity. This site includes the highest coastal mountain range in the world and is a Biosphere Reserve.

Two sites in the Cauca Valley will be included in the project. The AZE site Farallones de Cali National Natural Park, henceforth Farallones de Cali, is home to the trigger species *Atelopus pictiventris*. Despite its location near the city of Cali, discoveries continue to be made at this site: in late 2019, a new species of antpitta was discovered. Once this new bird is officially described, it may also become an AZE trigger species for the site. Also in the Cauca Valley is the Munchique National Natural Park and southern extension AZE site, henceforth Munchique, which is activated by the presence of *Atelopus famelicus*.

The AZE site Páramo Urrao / De Las Aves Colibri El Sol is located in the Vereda El Chuscal in Colombia's Cordillera Occidental to the west of the city of Medellin. The altitude of this site ranges from 2,650 to 3,750 m.a.s.l. It is triggered by the amphibian *Atelopus nicefori* and the bird *Grallaria fenwickorum*.

The fifth site in the project is Chingaza National Natural Park and surrounding areas AZE site, henceforth Chingaza, located northeast of Bogota in the eastern range of the Andes. The site's elevation ranges from 2,600 to over 4,000 meters above sea level. It was activated by the presence of 3 amphibian AZE trigger species, including *Atelopus lozanoi*.

Dominican Republic: The country boasts a diversity of ecosystems and habitats, which in turn are linked to high levels of biodiversity. Hispaniola Island has the second highest levels of floral diversity in the Caribbean, after Cuba. As not all taxa have been comprehensively surveyed, it is likely that real biodiversity levels could be even higher. The country is part of the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot.

Dominican Republic's biodiversity is under threat from a number of sources, including mining, infrastructure development, agriculture, forestry, fuelwood production, and forest fires. The underlying causes of this biodiversity loss are considered to be population growth, poverty and existing inequality, land tenancy issues, and fiscal and development policies, among others.

The richness and uniqueness of the biodiversity of the Dominican Republic is well known. Four AZE sites have been identified to date in the country; two for amphibians, one for birds and one for cacti. It is clear, however, that as species data becomes increasingly available and as AZE sites for non-globally assessed species are increasingly evaluated for AZE status, other sites will qualify, particularly for plant species. Many endemic species are restricted to very small areas, and, unfortunately, threats to biodiversity are very serious. Therefore, the AZE concept has the potential to contribute greatly to nature conservation in the Dominican Republic through the identification of additional AZE sites, by promoting their sustainable management and conservation, and by integrating the conservation of AZE sites and species into national policy. The AZE concept has been integrated into national CBD reports and national policies and plans. However, the AZE concept has not yet gained widespread recognition in the country.

The AZE site Playa Bayahibe, one of the sites selected for this project, is located in southeastern Dominican Republic. Its AZE status is activated by the presence of the cactus *Pereskia quisqueyana*. Known as the Rosa de Bayahibe, the flower of this cactus is the national flower of the Dominican Republic.

The second site in the project is the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte, a national protected area designated as IUCN management category III. This biodiverse site in southwestern Dominican Republic in the Sierra de Bahoruco contains 25% of all species in the country, including 29 of the 31 endemic birds. The Monument holds the AZE species *Eleutherodactylus rufifemoralis* as well as other globally-threatened species.

Madagascar: Madagascar has been isolated from other land masses for 88 million years. It covers 587,000 km2, making it the world's fourth largest island. Its long isolation, together with remarkable climatic variation, has led to its exceptional biological diversity and endemism in fauna and flora unequalled by any comparably sized land mass. Endemicity reaches 98% or more in reptiles, amphibians and non-flying mammals, 80-90% in flora (which is also highly species-rich) and 50% in birds; moreover, very many (even most) species are endemic to parts (often very small parts such as single mountains or catchments) of the island.

This biodiversity is highly threatened, placing Madagascar (together with associated oceanic archipelagoes) among the 'hottest' of the world's biodiversity hotspots, which are identified by a combination of rich biodiversity and high threat levels. Madagascar has been divided into five Endemic Bird Areas (Western dry forest, Eastern rainforest, Southern spiny forest, Eastern wetlands and Western wetlands) and 6 ecoregions (Madagascar Dry Forests, Madagascar Forests and Shrublands, Madagascar Freshwater, Madagascar Mangroves, Madagascar Spiny Thicket, West Madagascar Marine). Due to these characteristics, Madagascar has a very high number of AZE sites (53). Of these, 16 are triggered by amphibians, five by chameleons, one by conifers, 20 by mammals, one by reptiles, and 10 by multiple taxonomic groups. Madagascar has included the conservation of AZE sites in its NBSAP for 2015 - 2025.

Five sites have been provisionally selected for inclusion in the project in Madagascar: Itremo NPA, Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA, Mahavavy-Kinkony wetlands NPA, Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif and Ankafobe Forest.

Three of the five AZE sites selected for this project, Itremo NPA, Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA and the Mahavavy-Kinkony wetlands NPA, were also selected as CEPF Investment Priorities in Madagascar in the December 2014 Ecosystem Profile for the hotspot. The Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA and Itremo NPA are in the central high

plateau of Madagascar and are among the last remaining fragments of the highland ecosystems. These areas are high in biodiversity, especially for amphibians and plants, and also are the sources of several main rivers that supply water for domestic and agricultural use. Itremo NPA, a protected area since 2012, is a rocky massif with humid gallery forests, savannah grasslands and moorland habitats. The site covers 100,110 ha and contains the AZE trigger conifer *Podocarpus capuronii*. The Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA, an extinct volcanic mountainous region, is managed by the national NGO Vondrona Ivon'ny Fampandrosoana Association (VIF). This site contains two AZE trigger species, Williams' Bright-eyed Frog (*Boophis williamsi*).and the Madagascar Frog (*Mantidactylus pauliani*), and an unconfirmed third AZE trigger, the Marvelous Gecko (*Lygodactylus mirabilis*).

The Mahavavy-Kinkony wetlands NPA covers 275,900 ha of a wide diversity of ecosystems, including lakes, mangroves, coastal beaches, gallery forests, dry forests and savannahs. The national NGO Asity Madagascar manages the site, which has two confirmed AZE species, Ahmanson's Sportive Lemur (*Lepilemur ahmansonorum*) and the fish *Paretroplus dambabe*. This site is currently included in a GEF-6 project, *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Northwestern Landscape (Boeny region)*. Depending on the overlap of activities between this project and the GEF-6 project, this site may be replaced with another AZE site for inclusion in this project. This decision will be made during the PPG phase.

The Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif, a RAMSAR site since 2017, contains lakes, marshes, rainforests and grasslands in northwestern Madagascar. The variety of wetlands at the site maintain water regimes in the area and provide habitat for many species, including the AZE trigger species Margot Marsh's Mouse Lemur (*Microcebus margotmarshae*) and Madagascar Pochard (*Aythya innotata*).

The 132-ha Ankafobe Forest, currently a candidate AZE site but expected to be confirmed shortly, has been under temporary protection since 2018. Located 135 km NW of Antananarivo, this site is one of the last remaining areas of highland forest. In addition to the AZE trigger species, the CR Sohisika tree (*Schizolaena tampoketsana*) (CR), this site is home to the VU Goodman's Mouse Lemur (*Microcebus lehilahytsara*) and the VU Red Stinkwood tree (*Prunus africana*).

Root causes

The key root causes of threats to many of these sites and the species within them are habitat loss caused by small-scale deforestation (further linked to agriculture, logging and other causes) and the presence of invasive species. Habitat loss and the exploitation of ecosystems around protected areas further contributes to the threats to these sites. AZE trigger species, which often have tiny global ranges, are especially vulnerable to such external threats.

More specifically, the five AZE sites triggered by species in the *Telmatobius* genus in northern Chile share common threats of water extraction from streams for agricultural and human use and for mining operations, as well as contamination of water caused by mining activities. Illegal harvesting is the main threat to the AZE species *Eriosyce laui* at Tocopilla and *Eriosyce chilensis* at Los Molles – Pichidangui; however, mining is a potential additional threat at the Tocopilla AZE site while urban development and the sale of land for vacation homes in the area is a secondary threat to Los Molles – Pichidangui. In southern Chile, the AZE site Mehuin confronts habitat loss, the introduction of invasive animals and exotic trees (plantations), trampling produced by livestock, emerging diseases, riparian forest degradation and forest fires.

In Colombia, habitat loss is a primary threat to the Santa Marta AZE site, as only 15% of its original vegetation remains intact. Agricultural expansion is the main cause of this habitat loss. Other threats include diseases (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* fungus), pollution from agrochemicals, fire, logging, and climate change. At the Farallones de Cali AZE site, habitat loss due to cattle grazing and agriculture, as well as illegal mining, are the main threats. Similarly, the primary threat to the Munchique AZE site is habitat loss caused by an advancing agricultural and ranching frontier. Deforestation for ranching, unregulated tourism, and avocado cultivation are the primary threats to the AZE site Páramo Urrao / De Las Aves Colibri El Sol. Threats to the AZE site Chingaza include agricultural activities, such as cattle grazing. Climate change, due to temperature and rainfall variations, is also a threat to this and other sites.

In Dominican Republic, Playa Bayahibe faces degradation due to livestock farming and ranching, logging and wood harvesting, and housing development. The Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte is threatened by agricultural expansion, livestock grazing, illegal logging and firewood harvesting, and the artisanal mining of larimar, a stone used in jewelry found in the north of the site.

In Madagascar, habitat loss and degradation due to ongoing agricultural practices, combined with unsustainable fishing methods, are the main threats facing the Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetland Complex, while swidden (so-called ‘slash-and-burn’) agriculture in the rice-producing region degrades the Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif. Itremo faces threats from deforestation, firewood harvesting, fire and livestock grazing and the Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA is threatened by crop field extension, annual burning (wildfire), overgrazing, and by illegal logging for charcoal production and for construction. The endemic species of Ankafobe are threatened by the loss of their habitat, mainly caused by fires and wood harvesting. Wildfire kills and/or prevents the growth of juvenile *Schizolaena* plantsfrom reaching maturity, thus causing a gradual decrease in the numbers of individuals. In addition, the fauna species (lemurs, bats and birds) that disperse the seeds of this species are also threatened by fires.

Barriers

The long-term solution sought by the project is to improve the conservation of AZE sites and reduce pressures from direct and indirect drivers by mainstreaming AZE site conservation into diverse sectors and broader initiatives. However, the following barriers are preventing this solution.

Barrier 1: Limited efforts in conservation of AZE sites and trigger species

The primary barrier to achieving this component is a lack of implementation of participatory conservation action to reduce the key threats at each site. Gaps in data availability to inform conservation action are also a barrier in some project countries. Eight of the 20 project sites are currently completely unprotected with limited conservation actions. At these eight sites, comprehensive monitoring data on the AZE trigger species to provide information to direct conservation plan development is lacking. Specific conservation actions, including the establishment of protected areas and OECMs, need to be tailored to the conditions at each of these sites. At the twelve sites with full or partial protection, there is insufficient targeted conservation of the AZE trigger species, including for example actions to reduce invasive species impacts. Efforts to reduce the main threats to these AZE sites, including agricultural expansion and uncontrolled fires, are inadequate. Finally, there is a lack of emphasis on long-term sustainability through collaboration with local communities, government and other partners at all sites. There is limited involvement of the full range of stakeholders, including local and regional actors, women, and Indigenous Peoples, in determining and implementing conservation measures. Furthermore, since AZE sites and their species are influenced by the surrounding landscape, the lack of a connection between broader sustainable development efforts and AZE site conservation is part of this barrier. AZE site conservation cannot be successful in a vacuum, but rather must be integrated into larger sustainable development initiatives, such as reforestation and watershed conservation.

Barrier 2: Insufficient knowledge of AZE among sectors, particularly the private sector and some governments, and limited tools to mainstream AZE site conservation into diverse sectors.

There are inadequate efforts to mainstream AZE site conservation into the policies and actions of key sectors, including industry, financial institutions, global and disaggregated targets of the CBD and the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, and climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. While necessary advances were made during the GEF-5 AZE project, including mainstreaming of AZE into World Bank, IFC and Equator Principle standards, additional progress in mainstreaming AZE into local, regional and national banks and investors is needed, as are efforts to integrate AZE into a broader range of sectors. Such mainstreaming is key to the long-term conservation of AZE sites.

Barrier 3: Limited knowledge products to enhance understanding of and interest in AZE site conservation across sectors

While much data was generated in the GEF-5 project, we are now at a phase when data and knowledge on AZE sites must be communicated and promoted to stakeholders to encourage them to use this knowledge. Without the resources of the proposed project, the project team will not be able to develop such strategies nor build the capacity necessary for these strategies to be sufficiently disseminated. Although the GEF-5 AZE project increased the number of AZE sites identified and documented around the world, this is still only a partial list. As the KBA Standard is applied systematically to an increasing range of taxonomic groups in more and more countries, it is expected that the number of confirmed AZE sites will grow further.

The knowledge about and capacity to implement AZE site conservation by local, national, regional and global stakeholders is still insufficient. Information and buy-in at the local, national, regional and global level on the conservation of AZE sites are also still insufficient. While much progress has been made in recent years, it has mainly been at global and national levels. Awareness of AZE site conservation remains lacking at local and regional levels. While at the national level 22 countries now include AZE in their NBSAPs and national reports, the majority of countries still do not explicitly pledge to protect these critical sties for threatened endemic species conservation. There are not platforms or mechanisms for sharing of experiences, lessons learned and good practice examples at the regional and global level by groups working to conserve AZE sites.

1a.2. The baseline scenario and associated baseline projects

In the absence of the proposed project and its additional funding, it is expected that some progress in the conservation, management and mainstreaming of AZE sites will continue, but at a much slower rate. In Chile and Madagascar, efforts initiated at selected AZE sites during the GEF-5 AZE project would continue to be implemented using existing funding streams. However, in the absence of new funding, protection and targeted conservation measures, these and other AZE sites could experience increased pressure resulting in habitat loss or degradation, which in turn could lead to further population declines with potentially irreversible effects, including species extinctions. While such pressures are not unique to AZE sites, the scale of the consequences of habitat loss and degradation at AZE sites is likely to be much more severe given the fragile status of these sites and the AZE trigger species within them.

Safeguard mechanisms and policies that have integrated AZE sites will continue to provide protection to these sites if fully implemented. There are, however, many financial institutions, particularly at the national and regional level, that still lack such safeguards and can continue providing funding for projects that pose a threat to unprotected (and sometime even protected) AZE sites. In the absence of strong, coordinated efforts from international and national actors, mainstreaming of AZE sites is expected to be ad-hoc rather than systematic and strategic. NBSAPs already including a reference to AZE sites will continue to be implemented, depending on government funding, NGO capacity and

local stakeholder involvement. Mainstreaming of AZE sites into national and international policies not directly relevant to biodiversity conservation (e.g. land use planning, climate change adaptation) is, however, unlikely in the absence of dedicated, sustained efforts of civil society experts working in close collaboration with government agencies.

There are several KBA National Coordination Groups being established, mostly in Africa, whose efforts are expected to include the identification of KBAs for a wide range of biodiversity elements. On the other hand, no such groups have so far been established in the focus countries of this project. Therefore, it is expected that the identification of KBAs and more specifically new AZE sites would proceed slowly. The World Database of KBAs, the KBA Website and the IBAT database will continue to hold information on AZE sites as a sub-set of KBAs. Nevertheless, the continued development and maintenance of these key infrastructures is unlikely without further efforts. Without adequate platforms, the sharing of information and best practices on AZE site identification, documentation, conservation, management and safeguards is expected to be low, preventing other countries from benefitting from lessons learned in the focus countries.

Baseline projects

GEF-5 AZE Project

The GEF-5 AZE project focused on preventing species extinctions at AZE sites. It consisted of two components. Component 1 sought to improve the conservation status of at least 17 AZE species at five demonstration sites in Brazil, Chile, and Madagascar, while Component 2 focused on mainstreaming AZE into national governments, through CBD reports and NBSAPs, and into the safeguard policies of International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The project also included an update of the AZE map, leading to the inclusion of a much broader range of taxonomic groups in AZE site identification.

Component 1 of the GEF-5 AZE project resulted in the establishment of a 58,500 hectare protected area for the Tsitongambarika Forest AZE site, the implementation of a conservation plan for AZE sites in southern Chile developed and enacted with strong participation from local Indigenous Communities, and improved management at over 10 AZE sites globally. A global update of all AZE sites, launched at CBD COP14, identified 853 AZE sites for 1,483 AZE trigger species and is now available via an interactive map at the updated website www.zeroextinction.org.

For Component 2, results included the adoption by the International Financial Corporation (IFC) of a policy to recognize two types of sites as those considered most critical habitats in its safeguards: UNESCO Natural and Mixed World Heritage sites and AZE sites. These sites “will not be acceptable for financing, with the possible exception of

projects specifically designed to contribute to the conservation of the area." (International Finance Corporation's Guidance Note 6. https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/5e0f3c0c-0aa4-4290-a0f8-4490b61de245/GN6_English_June-27-2019.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mKqG85z). Similarly, the Equator Principles' current draft, adopted by 97 financial institutions in 37 countries, also prioritizes AZE sites with the highest consideration for conservation (The Equator Principles draft for Consultation – June 2019. https://equator-principles.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/DRAFT-FOR-CONSULTATION-Equator-Principles-version-4-June-2019.pdf). On the national government side, 22 countries have included AZE sites in their NBSAPs and CBD reports, far exceeding the project goal of 9 countries and demonstrating strong support by governments for protecting the world's most threatened sites and species. Above and beyond the initial project goals, the Brazilian government enacted two national ordinances to identify and recognize Brazilian AZE sites in 2018, and AZE site conservation was included in a CBD Decision urging Parties to accelerate progress on Aichi Targets in 2018 by conserving AZE sites (CBD Decision XIV/1 (https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-01-en.pdf).

Among the successes of the GEF-5 project, there were also several lessons learned that have been incorporated into the development of the GEF-7 proposal.

Lesson learned in GEF-5	**Implementation in GEF7**
Strong NGO-government collaboration led to multiple project advances	NGO-government collaboration will continue to be prioritized
Limited communication among teams working in the different focus countries	Robust connections between project country teams will be achieved through an in-person meeting with all project teams at the beginning of the project and bi-monthly project team teleconferences to provide updates, share experiences, and troubleshoot challenges
A combination of global and local capacities enhances work and increases the chances of project success	Global and local actors will continue to collaborate on project objectives
An emphasis on data generation was expected in the GEF-5 project, given the important information gaps that the Project had to tackle. An important next step will be developing strategies to encourage key stakeholder groups to adopt and use AZE data and knowledge.	Local, regional, national and global stakeholder involvement will be expanded by more effectively communicating AZE data and implementation through a robust knowledge management approach, particularly in Component 3 of the project
Successful application of a hands-on conservation approach and adaptive management	The Project will continue to employ adaptive management to handle challenges that will inevitably arise during the course of the project

Chile:

The Ministry of Environment is implementing projects to support conservation action for species in the *Telmatobius* genus that are a focus of this project. First, together with the National Zoo, University of Chile, and the Chilean Network of Herpetology (RECH), the Ministry of Environment will execute a project to reduce the pressures of agricultural practices, water extraction, and natural system modifications to save *Telmatobius dankoi*, an AZE trigger species on the verge of extinction that is one of the AZE trigger species included in this project. The project aims to mitigate the threats facing the species and develop an ex situ conservation program for future reintegration, with the participation of local communities. The Project has a budget of $150,000 and will begin in 2021. The second project is the Loa Frog Recovery, Conservation and Management Plan, which is managed by a public-private committee. The project runs from 2020 to 2023 and has a total budget of $50,000. In addition, in April 2020, the Regional Government of Antofagasta approved a USD$290,000 project, "Diagnosis and conservation of amphibians of Antofagasta region." This project will focus on species in the *Telmatobius* genus and will run from 2021-2022. All three of these projects will strengthen the proposed project and will make possible greater conservation gains for the selected AZE project sites.

The GEF-5 AZE project included two AZE sites in southern Chile, Mehuin 1 and Mehuin 2. Mehuin 2 has since been removed from the AZE list due in large part to research supported by the GEF-5 project, which found that the species occurs in areas outside of the AZE site. Conservation actions at both sites have continued since the end of the GEF-5 AZE project. At Mehuin 1, now known as Mehuin, a total of 8.1 ha of *Eupsophus migueli* habitat has been fenced off to safeguard the species. At the end of the GEF-5 project, local communities successfully garnered support from local authorities, including the regional offices of the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Public Works, and from the Municipality of Mariquina, to continue the project. In addition, the Ministry of Environment is implementing an environmental education program and a conservation plan for the endemic amphibians of Mehuin, together with a public-private committee. The total budget of the project is $50,000 for the period 2020 – 2023. This strong baseline will provide support for continued and expanded conservation at the Mehuin AZE site.

The Ministry of Finance and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) approved in late 2019 a $63 million REDD-plus results-based payments project. This project will have restoration benefits in southern Chile, and the Mehuin AZE site is among sites that can be included in this work.

Colombia:

WCS Colombia, the Universidad del Tolima and Chingaza National Natural Park support research on two amphibians species, including *Atelopus lozanoi*, to study the conservation needs of the species.

The Government of Colombia, together with USAID, implements a Natural Wealth project to protect priority ecosystems and species, develop financial incentives for conservation and advance land-use planning and management to reduce threats to biodiversity. The total budget of the project is $38,989,581 for the period 2017 – 2022.

The Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) implements a project to designate and sustainably manage protected areas for marine and coastal biodiversity, with funding from the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ). The total budget of the project is $5,456,875 for the period 2019 – 2023.

The Alexander von Humboldt Institute, a research institute of the Government of Colombia, is implementing with many partners a project on Preserving, Restoring and Managing Colombian Biodiversity Through Responsible Innovation, funded by UK Research and Innovation. The total budget of the project is $6,912,347 for the period 2017 – December 2021.

Dominican Republic:

The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources implement a project to increase the adaptability of ecosystems in biosphere reserves in border regions of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, with funding from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ). The total budget of the project is $4,350,420 for the period 2014 – 2022.

Likewise, the GEF-7 AZE project will be aligned to the project *Strengthening the Biological Corridor in the Caribbean* implemented by the Secretariat of the Biological Corridor with Headquarters in DR-UNEP-Panama / ORPALC-Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. The project is funded by the European Union for 3,500,000 EUR and will run from July 2017 to 2021.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and **SOH Conservación are implementing a project to conserve ecosystems in the Sierra de Bahoruco National Park and the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte.** The total budget of the project is $154,000 for the period 2019 – 2020.

Several other ongoing projects at **Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte will support the proposed project, including efforts to promote organic coffee production in partnership with local government led by the Smithsonian Institution and a new REDD+ project in areas surrounding the Monument. Initial work has begun on a** Payment for Ecosystem Services project to finance sustainability through commitments by local companies to fund management at the Monument to protect water resources. Two local companies have already agreed to be part of this initiative. A Project funded by the March Conservation Trust is supporting the initial phases of creating a private reserve adjacent to the Monument to enhance protection of the AZE site.

There are currently no baseline projects focused on conservation in the Playa Bayahibe AZE site. However, the corporation that owns much of the land in the area, Central Romana, is interested in supporting the creation of a private reserve for the AZE trigger species.

Madagascar:

At Itremo NPA, there are two baseline projects, by the Kew Madagascar Conservation Centre and by the General Directorate for the Environment, Madagascar Biodiversity Fund (FAPBM), to improve site conservation. In addition, a $19,000 CEPF project to help develop an effective management plan for Itremo, *Map Plant Diversity, Land Use and Fire History for Effective Management of Itremo and Ambatofinandrahana Biodiversity*, was completed in early 2020 by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

At the Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA, an EDGE (Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered) Fellow has been working since 2017 to increase knowledge of the distribution, abundance and gene flow of both Madagascar frog and William's bright-eyed frog and to promote conservation actions by local communities. Her project focuses on population monitoring, gene flow characterization, and raising awareness in local communities about assisting conservation. Also, a $160,000 CEPF project, *Preserving the Endangered Species of Manjakatompo Ankaratra, Madagascar, through Supporting Community-Based Ecosystem Management,* runs through 2020 and focuses on supporting local community-based organizations (VOI) in engaging in the protection of the forest through monitoring of endangered species and reforestation activities while also developing alternative livelihood options.

Most of the baseline projects at the Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif have focused on conservation of the Madagascar Pochard, including several projects supported by The Peregrine Fund.

At $6.8 million GEF-6 project approved in 2019, *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Northwestern Landscape (Boeny region),* will contribute over $1 million to strengthen the management and sustainable financing of five protected areas, including the Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetland Complex.

Two projects are currently supporting conservation at Ankafobe. The Nature Fund supports efforts by the Sohisika Association to improve agricultural techniques by adopting dynamic agroforestry, and the Missouri Botanical Garden supports a project to conduct ecological restoration and propagate rare species.

Sustainable Landscapes in Eastern Madagascar (2017 – 2026) is a $53.5 million Green Climate Fund medium-sized project being implemented by Conservation International (CI) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The project aims to demonstrate a replicable model for addressing smallholder vulnerability that mobilizes both the public and private sector. The project will achieve this by improving resilience to climate change in vulnerable local populations; avoiding/limiting deforestation of natural forests and other habitats for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services; improving or protecting the ecosystem services of natural habitats; strengthening communication management capacity, the management of protected areas and the maintenance of ecosystem services; and working to reduce soil erosion and improve soil structure and fertility through sustainable agricultural practices.

USAID funds two projects, ‘USAID Hay Tao’ and ‘USAID Mikajy,’ under implementation from 2019 – 2024. The total budget of the two project is approximately $45 million. USAID Hay Tao's main goal is to create a supportive and enabling environment to promote resilient livelihoods for communities and biodiversity conservation. This project will intervene at the national level to strengthen public policies, the capacities of civil society organizations, and the use of information technologies for the provision and use of data and information on biodiversity and related areas. USAID Mikajy focuses on two regions rich in biodiversity and economic potential – Menabe in the west and an area in the northeast consisting of protected rainforest landscapes and seascapes, anchored by Makira and Masoala Parks and Antongil Bay. Through an integrated approach focused on resilience, it will improve the conservation of unique biodiversity, promote sustainable livelihoods, and secure effective local governance and ownership of natural resources.

1.a3. The alternative scenario

The GEF-7 AZE proposal builds on and expands the GEF-5 AZE project, *Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity*. The GEF-5 project achieved the goals set out at the initiation of the project. AZE sites have been identified and mapped globally for a wide range of taxonomic groups, providing a blueprint for future conservation actions directed at these sites. Mainstreaming of AZE site conservation into NBSAPs and CBD reports and into the policies of international financial institutions has exceeded goals, with 22 countries now including AZE in their NBSAPs and other CBD reports and financial institutions, including the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Equator Principles and The World Bank, incorporating AZE site protection into their safeguard policies; indeed, AZE sites join UNESCO Natural and Mixed World Heritage Sites as the *only* sites designated as the most critical of Critical Habitat by the IFC. At the five demonstration AZE sites, site protection through protected area creation and improved management has been achieved with the input and participation of local communities and indigenous groups. As such, the GEF-5 project has provided a baseline that makes possible the success of the proposed project. Investment is still needed to overcome remaining barriers to conserve AZE sites and prevent the extinction of the world's most threatened species. Through the GEF-5 project, we have found successes, challenges and gaps, and new areas that have emerged that need to be addressed, which together inform the direction of the proposed project.

Component 1. Improvement of the conservation status of 20 AZE sites and associated AZE trigger species in focus countries:

The updated map of AZE sites completed in the GEF-5 project provides a blueprint for national-level conservation planning aimed at AZE site conservation. Twenty AZE sites have been provisionally selected for initial implementation. Conservation action plans will be developed or refined for these sites, and will include the following actions to improve the conservation status of AZE sites: 1) Actions to improve site management effectiveness; 2) An assessment of potential site conservation measures, such as the establishment of new protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and support for strengthening the management of existing protected areas; 3) Strong involvement of local communities, including women and Indigenous Peoples, and NGOs, including, where applicable, KBA National Coordination Groups; 4) The identification of mechanisms to improve or restore essential ecosystem services (e.g., reforestation, watershed protection, and climate change adaptation and mitigation); and 5) The identification and development of nature-based livelihood measures for financial sustainability to continue site conservation after project completion. The project will seek the implementation of these actions during the project's lifetime and beyond.

This project provides an excellent opportunity to test the OECM approach to achieve OECM status for some of the unprotected AZE sites. A recently published study[1][1] conducted by Birdlife International found that in 10 countries across the world a majority of unprotected KBAs (76.5%) were at least partly covered by one or more potential OECMs. The conservation of ecosystem services or biodiversity was a stated management aim in 73% of these OECMs. Local or central government bodies managed the highest number of potential OECMs, followed by local and Indigenous Communities and private landowners. Therefore, there is a good likelihood that OECMs can be an important

supplementary site conservation mechanism for AZE sites. The document “Recognising and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures” recently published by the IUCN provides guidance on a screening tool to identify candidate OECMs that can be used in the project countries to identify OECMs that overlap with AZE sites. There are plans at two of the AZE sites in the Dominican Republic to establish private reserves, for example, that will likely meet the criteria for OECM status.

Critical to the persistence of successful AZE site conservation, and the prevention of loss of AZE trigger species within those sites, is the integration of site-level conservation with broader sustainable development goals. Such integration, which could use an ecosystem approach tailored to the goals of each project country, may include safeguarding and enhancing natural habitat through sustainable management, reforestation, watershed protection, climate change adaptation and resilience, and other sustainability initiatives and adaptive strategies developed for AZE sites, including those particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Although AZE sites are the primary focus of this project, it is important not to separate them from those areas with which they relate at a landscape level and in a broad territorial context, and which most likely have pressures and require restoration and rehabilitation. Rather than being viewed as "islands," which in the medium and sometimes even in the short term compromises their existence, AZE sites must be viewed in a broader context. AZE sites are located in larger landscapes that include a variety of land uses that must be considered when developing conservation strategies. Robust participation of local communities, also aiming at improving their livelihood opportunities, and a focus on sustainable development goals, including reforestation, watershed conservation and climate adaptation, must be central to the conservation of AZE sites.

The Project's financial sustainability will be based on four revenue streams, including public funds, private sector partnerships, nature-based livelihoods in local communities, and market-based mechanisms, such as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) approaches. Country-specific financial strategies will be developed in full collaboration with project partners and local stakeholders during the project design phase. To provide some examples of the proposed financing strategy, private sector partnerships with corporations in Dominican Republic and Chile will be promoted to support AZE site management at Playa Bayahibe and at several sites for the *Telmatobius* genus, respectively. PES approaches will be initiated at the AZE site Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte and advanced at several AZE sites in Colombia, while nature-based livelihood opportunities, including ecotourism, beekeeping and silkworm farming, will be a focus at several sites in Madagascar. Please see more detailed information on sustainability in this project on page 25.

Chile:

In Chile, the project will commence with the development of a conservation plan for each of the AZE sites included in the project, with the full participation of local actors, including Indigenous Communities, local NGOs, and women. The exception is the AZE site Mehuin, which already has a participatory conservation plan. A major objective

across all 5 AZE sites triggered by frogs in the *Telmobatius* genus will be reducing impacts of water extraction in their very arid habitats. The project will work in collaboration with existing conservation projects at these AZE sites to amplify results. At the sites triggered by cactus from the *Eriosyce* genus, Tocopilla and Los Molles – Pichidangui, actions will include reducing illegal collection of the AZE trigger species and impacts from mining. Across the sites in northern Chile, the project will engage with mining companies to find solutions and to promote a shared obligation to the conservation of these sites. For example, a water reinjection technique used at the AZE site Murmuntani to conserve *Telmatobius philippi* will be evaluated for possible application at other AZE sites. The project will build upon the high level of local involvement at the Mehuin AZE sites during the GEF-5 project to advance implementation of a strong conservation approach in collaboration with local Mapuche Communities. Conservation measures begun during the GEF-5 project, such as instituting improved livestock management practices, will be scaled up throughout multiple communities.

Colombia:

In Colombia, the project will begin with an assessment of gaps in the sites' current management plans to determine where the project can make the largest contribution, such as in species-specific actions for AZE trigger species conservation or actions that have been identified as urgent needs that have not yet been implemented. Local civil sector organizations, Indigenous Communities, local NGOs, park authorities (where applicable) and others will be fully involved in decision making to ensure that project activities meet stakeholder needs and priorities and to enable strong collaboration in activity implementation.

Dominican Republic:

In the Dominican Republic, the project will begin with the development of a conservation plan for both of the AZE sites included in the project, with the full participation of local actors, including local NGOs, farmers associations and women. At Playa Bayahibe, measures that will be proposed for inclusion in the conservation plan are determining locations with intact remnant populations of the AZE trigger species; developing and conducting local educational and pride campaigns about the AZE trigger species, the national flower of the Dominican Republic and thus a national priority; and building capacity in local communities to find the remaining populations of the species by providing financial benefits for locating these individuals, following a model used in other parts of the country. The project will partner with the Central Romana Corporation, which will establish and finance a private reserve for the species. At the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte, the project will focus on improving site management, including better training for guards; establishing a private reserve adjacent to the Monument but within the AZE site, and advancing nature-based livelihood opportunities with local communities, including the promotion of tourism, shade coffee cultivation, REDD+ projects, and PES projects.

Madagascar:

In Madagascar, the project will start with the development or refinement of conservation plans for the 5 AZE sites included in the project, with the full participation of local actors, including local NGOs and women, and in collaboration with existing efforts to magnify conservation impacts. At Itremo NPA, work will build upon the development of a management plan in 2020 and will focus on implementing conservation actions. At Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA, the project will propose advancing conservation efforts begun in a recent CEPF project to support local community-based reforestation efforts and fill existing conservation gaps. At Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif, the project will identify gaps in current conservation actions and fill them to ensure the conservation of the AZE trigger species at the site. At Mahavavy-Kinkony wetlands NPA, the project will complete conservation action defined in the management plan, including conservation of AZE trigger species, ecological restoration and income generating activities development. At Ankafobe, conservation efforts will support the Sohisika Association's management plan. Nature-based livelihood opportunities, already identified for each site, will be promoted and/or enhanced.

Component 2. Mainstreaming AZE site conservation at global and national levels:

Through the GEF-5 project's success in mainstreaming AZE site conservation into a few key sectors, we have built the capacity and knowledge required to substantially expand mainstreaming into a much wider group of sectors. Our success in working with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), for example, has led to an understanding of the importance of also mainstreaming AZE into the policies of regional and national financial institutions, one goal of the proposed project.

To effectively achieve the long-term goal of conserving all AZE sites to prevent global species extinctions, it is essential to bring AZE and broader KBA site conservation into the mainstream by integrating AZE site conservation into wider sustainable development planning across multiple sectors. This will be achieved by mainstreaming language pertaining to AZE conservation priorities into the policies, spatial plans and standards of a wide variety of sectors. AZE site conservation will be integrated with lending institutions, including local, regional and national banks and investors, to achieve global proactive financing of nature-based solutions and national and regional safeguards. This will be accomplished through direct contact with such institutions and at workshops demonstrating the biodiversity, economic, and reputational benefits of avoiding damage to irreplaceable global biodiversity sites. The policies of IFIs that include AZE will be used as examples to demonstrate how local, regional and national banks and investors can also integrate AZE site conservation into their policies. Mapping of funding for the most damaging development projects to AZE sites will be undertaken in the focus countries and main investors in these projects will be identified. Work will also continue with IFIs that have already adopted adequate safeguard measures to assess how critical habitats, including AZE sites, are mainstreamed within the organizational workflow. This will also include identification of necessary tools and gaps to initiate the organizational behavior

change to ensure internal processes take proper considerations for AZE sites. Results of this assessment will be presented as a case study and via workshops in relevant events for wider engagement of the private sector.

There is a need to better understand climate change impacts to AZE and broader KBA sites and options for building resiliency into the network of sites, which was highlighted by the plight of one of the world's most threatened species, Stresemann's Bristlefront, at the GEF-5 AZE demonstration site in Brazil. Following the worst drought in recorded history, likely exacerbated by climate change, and related fires, the species was in an extremely perilous position and was undetected at the site for several months. Through the efforts of the GEF-5 project partners, the species was eventually found; however, the effects of the fires have made the long-term survival of this species more precarious. By mainstreaming AZE site protection into climate strategies, we can help guard against the continual worsening impacts of the climate crisis and prepare for new conditions. This project will work with the global climate community and at national levels to mainstream AZE sites into climate mitigation and adaptation actions, including REDD+, and climate resilience strategies and policies at national and global levels.

The integration of AZE site conservation into private sector policies will also be strengthened through outreach to private sector groups, such as the CBD Global Platform on Business and Biodiversity, and the creation of guidance documents for the private sector showing how businesses have included AZE site conservation in their policy approaches. We will build upon the experience of project partners in developing similar documents focused on the broader KBA network of sites. We will also ramp up efforts to encourage governments to include the conservation of AZE sites in their NBSAPs and CBD reports to prevent extinctions and safeguard essential habitats by increasing awareness among the government officials, who lead NBSAP formulation, and by providing south-south exchange opportunities across countries.

Finally, we will finalize the integration of AZE sites with KBAs by completing the process of consultation, documentation, review and verification required for all KBAs. AZE sites are an official a subset of KBAs. Through the full integration of AZE sites with KBAs, a greater focus by local and national stakeholders, through the establishment of KBA National Coordination Groups, on AZE site conservation will be realized. KBAs including AZE sites also appear on the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT), which brings together KBA and AZE site information with data on protected areas and threatened species for easy access for decision-makers, scientists and the business community. Many of the international banks as well as several private sector companies that are important target audiences of this project are subscribers to IBAT. Therefore, assuring that IBAT has the latest information on AZE sites is a high priority.

Component 3. Knowledge management to enhance understanding of and interest in AZE site conservation across sectors:

This component of the project will promote the communication of both the importance of and the methods to conserve AZE sites to diverse stakeholders and sectors. Much information and knowledge about AZE conservation, at the site, national and global scale, was generated during the GEF-5 project. In this project, the focus will be on disseminating this information broadly. Information will be tailored to different groups so that it is accessible, through online toolkits, webinars and seminars, workshops and trainings, and other communication strategies. Lessons learned in the GEF-5 project will be communicated to show how site-level conservation can be achieved, AZE site conservation can be incorporated into national plans and strategies, and approaches to mainstreaming AZE can be integrated in financial institution and other safeguard policies.

This component will also continue the identification and documentation of AZE sites and promote both understanding of the importance of AZE site conservation and practical knowledge on how to safeguard AZE sites at global, regional, national and local levels. There are a number of candidates AZE sites identified during the GEF-5 project that still need to be consulted and confirmed, including in the project focus countries. KBA Partners such as the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) are working to confirm the status of these candidate sites through local experts. The current project will provide further support to these efforts, as appropriate.

A suggestion for improvement highlighted in the GEF-5 MTR is greater exchanges between project countries. While such exchanges were strengthened towards the end of the GEF-5 project, more can be done. The proposed project will facilitate direct exchanges between countries through South-South exchanges and 'Communities of Practice' very early in the project, during the project development phase. In this way, we anticipate creating strong connections between project partners prior to the project initiation, which will lead to greater communication throughout the project.

This project's knowledge management approach will include regional workshops led by project countries to broaden knowledge of AZE site conservation outside of project countries, thus promoting the AZE concept beyond the partners involved in this project to support AZE site conservation globally. Nationally and locally, summits held in project countries at the beginning, middle and end of the project will encourage cooperation across sectors, including government and civil society, to support both site-level and mainstreaming efforts. Communication tools will be developed to assist governments, NGOs and others to successfully disseminate information on conserving AZE sites. Members of the Alliance for Zero Extinction will be targeted by communication efforts to help them become more effective advocates of AZE sites at all levels.

1a.4. Alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies

Component 1 addresses drivers and seeks sustainable solutions to protect and improve management at AZE sites and the species that occur in them. This component focuses on determining and implementing conservation actions to protect and improve management at 20 AZE sites in project countries. This component also focuses on identifying and developing financial sustainability opportunities for the long-term persistence of conservation at these sites. Additionally, the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)

will be used at the beginning, middle and end of the project to both measure and provide recommendations for improvements in AZE site effective management. Therefore, the project is aligned with the BD-2-7 ‘Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and Improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate’.

This project, in particular Component 2, focuses on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation across landscapes and in priority sectors and is in line with GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Outcome ‘BD-1-1 Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes through biodiversity mainstreaming in priority sectors.’ An important aspect of this component is ensuring that land use planning and development decisions take into account the global biodiversity conservation sites in most urgent need of conservation: AZE sites. First, this project seeks to ensure that land and resource use planning incorporates the safeguarding of AZE sites, and, consequently, avoids siting development or other projects where they will negatively impact AZE sites. This project will do so through broad outreach to incorporate AZE site conservation into the policies and standards of key sectors and institutions, including lending and business groups and climate mitigation and adaptation actions and resilience strategies. Second, this project seeks to spearhead wider landscape conservation in which AZE sites are located within a wider context of nature-based livelihood options, which will include income-generating activities around the AZE sites. Often, AZE sites hold the remnant of a formerly more widespread distribution of one or more trigger species. For such species, the option of restoring parts of their former habitat within or outside the AZE site will be explored, involving local communities and other key stakeholders. We aim to demonstrate that AZE sites should be recognized as “the jewels in the crown” of a larger suite of sustainability objectives, including restoration and scaling up space for nature.

1a.5. Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline

The incremental/additional GEFTF and co-financing contribution will build upon the strong advancements made by the GEF-5 AZE project and pave the way for both substantial global progress in AZE site-level conservation and for the lasting integration of AZE site conservation into key policies and standards and across multiple sectors.

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The differing budget allocations from each country will be reflected in the level of effort that the project will undertake in each country. However, even countries will lower budget allocations will be able to advance AZE site conservation, mainstreaming and knowledge management in their countries. The sites selected for these projects, particularly in countries with lower allocations, are those in which considerable conservation advances can be achieved by working synergistically with existing conservation partners and baseline projects. By strategically focusing on sites with critical conservation needs that have some level of support from existing partners and projects, the GEF-7 AZE project will complement current conservation efforts to maximize conservation success.

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Chile

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Under the GEF-5 AZE project, Chile succeeded in advancing the conservation and improving management at three AZE sites, Mehuin 1, Mehuin 2 and Isla Mocha. Project-funded scientific research led to the removal of Mehuin 2 as an AZE site, to improved management of the habitats used by the AZE trigger species on Isla Mocha, and to strong community support for the conservation of the AZE trigger species at Mehuin, which resulted in the safeguarding of over 8 ha of its habitat. The GEF-5 AZE project spurred interest in strengthening the conservation of other amphibian AZE trigger species in Chile. Baseline projects slated for upcoming years including national and regional amphibian conservation projects focus on species in the *Telmatobius* genus and on *Eupsophus migueli* at the Mehuin AZE site. However, much remains to be done to save these and other highly threatened species from extinction. As part of the GEF-7 AZE project, urgently-needed species monitoring will be conducted and specific actions for each site will be designed and executed at the five AZE sites that are home to six AZE trigger species in the *Telmatobius* genus, as well as at the two AZE sites for cactus in the *Eriosyce* genus. Implementation of the participatory conservation plan developed and initiated at the remaining Mehuin AZE site will be scaled up, cementing strong local interest in and control of the conservation of this site. With the support of the GEF-7 AZE project, the 9 AZE species at these sites, as well as the sites' other threatened species, will be safeguarded, preventing what would otherwise be likely imminent extinctions. To advance the conservation of all Chilean AZE sites, mainstreaming of the AZE concept will be conducted with private, public and civil society sectors in Chile with the solid backing of the Ministry of Environment, a strong actor already committed to the sites' conservation.

Madagascar

Among its achievements under the GEF-5 AZE project, Madagascar successfully protected and improved management at the 58,500 hectare Tsitongambarika Forest AZE site, gathered and mapped information on all of the country's AZE sites, and developed a national strategy for AZE mainstreaming to integrate AZE sites into national and regional plans. Baseline projects include funding to develop management plans at Itremo and reforestation efforts by the 275 members of local communities from the four villages surrounding the Ankafobe reserve. While these and other individual projects at the project sites are underway, there is a strong need to develop and implement a comprehensive approach for the long-term persistence of these sites. The GEF-7 AZE project will deliver such an approach in coordination with local and national actors. This project will emphasize reducing the key threats identified for each site and trigger species and identifying and implementing nature-based livelihood opportunities for and with local communities. While a national strategy for AZE mainstreaming in Madagascar has been prepared (see Annex F), there is currently no funding to implement the 4-year strategy. The GEF-7 AZE project will enable the implementation of this strategy, which includes raising awareness and providing information about the AZE concept nationally, establishing a national AZE working group, preparing suggestions for federal AZE decrees for sites of international importance, and promoting research and monitoring on AZE trigger species beyond the project sites to inform action plans.

Colombia

The five project AZE sites in Colombia all have some level of protection, as four of the five sites are fully or partially covered by National Natural Parks and the fifth by a Protective Forest Reserve. Each site has public baseline conservation projects in progress, and several have additional conservation action led by NGOs, Indigenous Peoples and other actors. However, despite this strong baseline, much needs to be done to safeguard these AZE sites and to prevent extinctions of AZE trigger species. While the exact actions to be conducted under this project will be determined during the project development phase in consultation with stakeholders and the national natural parks, the activities will be focused on actions to conserve the AZE trigger species and build sustainability into site conservation.

Dominican Republic

At Playa Bayahibe, local NGOs such as Ecoparque and national institutions such as the National Botanical Garden work to conserve the AZE trigger species and national flower, *Pereskia quisqueyana*. A diverse set of actors, including government agencies, local and international NGOs, small farmers associations and community groups, collaborates to conserve the Miguel Domingo Fuerte Natural Monument AZE site. Combined, the baseline projects and strong community interest in safeguarding each of these sites provide an effective framework for the conservation of both sites; however, substantial gaps in current conservation action at both sites remain. The GEF-7 AZE project will fill these gaps by conducting essential monitoring to determine the exact locations of the AZE trigger species *Pereskia quisqueyana* and identify the best site for a private protected area. At the Miguel Domingo Fuerte Natural Monument, unresolved management issues, including reducing illegal logging and mining impacts, increasing patrolling in less-accessible parts of the site, and initiating nature-based livelihood programs that have been conceptualized but not implemented, will be tackled. At a national level, the AZE concept is not well known in Dominican Republic. This project will enable workshops and trainings to be conducted with local and national participants to integrate the conservation of AZE sites into the national conservation conversation.

Global

Building on excellent progress in mainstreaming AZE site conservation into a few limited sectors in the GEF-5 project, additional funding will facilitate the project team in greatly expanding AZE site conservation mainstreaming to a wider range of sectors and investors, including those at national and regional levels. The effectiveness of existing safeguards will also be assessed and used for improved protection of AZE sites. The conservation of AZE sites through inclusion in a variety of policies and industry safeguards will become standard across sectors, providing many different routes by which AZE sites are conserved in perpetuity. The project’s knowledge management approach will be applied globally. This broad effort, which will not be limited to the project countries, will advance integration of these important sites for biodiversity conservation into policies, strategies and plans developed or implemented by local communities, private sector groups, NGOs and other stakeholders.

Project countries at different levels of AZE site conservation implementation will benefit from knowledge sharing through South-South exchanges among project partners, while additional countries will increase their capacity to safeguard AZE sites through regional workshops and evidence-based guidance materials provided in appropriate languages on the AZE website and through other venues. Members of the Alliance for Zero Extinction will be empowered to actively promote the conservation and management of these sites at different levels. Support will be given to various structures developed by the KBA Programme, including National Coordination Groups, Regional Focal Points, the KBA Secretariat and the KBA Database and website. These structures are essential to continue and expand the identification of KBAs, including AZE sites, for a wide range of biodiversity elements.

1a.6. Global environmental benefits (GEFTF)

The project will deliver global environmental benefits through the direct conservation of over 30 AZE trigger species through the creation of new protected areas, improved management at existing protected areas, and improved management at AZE sites outside of protected areas. Such actions will not only help to safeguard at least 20 of the most important sites globally for biodiversity conservation, but will also provide models for conserving similar sites in other countries around the world. Over 200,000 ha of protected areas will be created or under improved management for conservation. Global environmental benefits will extend beyond these 20 sites, as efforts to scale up AZE site conservation, including the development of guidance materials and regional workshops to build awareness and capacity for safeguarding AZE sites outside of project countries, will promote the conservation of more AZE sites. By providing case studies and lessons learned from project countries at different stages of AZE site protection, this project can help other countries and actors safeguard critical sites in similar situations elsewhere.

The global environmental benefits of the mainstreaming component of this project are potentially enormous as AZE site conservation becomes increasingly integrated into the policies and standards of a wide range of sectors. Moving beyond the initial successes of the GEF-5 project, AZE site conservation will be mainstreamed into business best practices, regional and national lending institution safeguards and national spatial planning, helping project partners and other countries to deliver on their post-2020 biodiversity targets, climate commitments and sustainable development goals. Such a multi-sectoral approach shifts AZE conservation from being a small-scale endeavor to embed it into wider, long-term, mainstream environmental sustainability and climate policies, as well as on-the-ground efforts around climate adaptation and resilience, while providing the considerable additional global environmental benefit of preventing the extinction of the most urgently threatened species globally.

AZE sites, already a subset of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), will be fully integrated with the KBA and IBAT databases, maps, and the various structures and activities of the KBA Programme, leading to improved efficiencies in identifying, delineating and updating AZE sites, and magnifying awareness of both AZE sites and KBAs. This in turn will result in global environmental benefits to both AZE sites and the larger group of KBAs essential to global biodiversity conservation. Global environmental benefits will be

enhanced as a result of the project's strong knowledge management approach, detailed in Component 3, to support information sharing and awareness raising, which is anticipated to promote broad multi-sectoral understanding of and interest in AZE site conservation.

1a.7. Innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up

Innovation:

The proposed approach has evolved since the GEF-5 project on AZE as a result of progress made and lessons learned from the earlier project. Learning from the previous project, which focused on five AZE sites in the project countries, the proposed project will amplify the number of AZE sites for conservation action to 20 sites. Seeking to maximize the impact of this project, this amplification will be achieved in part through economies of scale. In Chile, the project will focus on five AZE sites for the same genus of amphibians, which face similar threats, and on two AZE sites for the same genus of cactus, which likewise have common threats. It will also build on initial successful efforts at the AZE site Mehuin. While gaining local stakeholder trust at Mehuin took time during the GEF-5 AZE project, community support for AZE site conservation is now in place and will be essential to the success of the proposed project.

Sites for the project were selected with strong consideration of the likelihood of success. In Madagascar, conservation impact will be maximized by working at AZE sites that have a strong chance of successful conservation due to existing baseline projects. In Dominican Republic, the likelihood of success will be increased due to the selection of a site activated for AZE status that holds a species of interest to many Dominicans, the national flower. Similarly, the choice of Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte, a site with a diverse set of existing projects and stakeholders, will increase the likelihood of success of conservation actions.

The proposed approach also includes much more far-reaching mainstreaming than the earlier project. Evolving past a focus on international financial institutions, but learning from our experience in that sector, this project seeks to integrate AZE site conservation into a much broader range of sectors, including the private sector and climate policies and strategies. Realizing the limitations of an exclusive focus on the international financial sector, this project also includes a focus on mainstreaming into local, regional and national banks and investors, since many funding decisions are made at national and sub-national levels. We anticipate that this project will have a large impact on investing at AZE sites due to this focus on more local-level financial institutions.

This project has evolved to become more innovative through a strong focus on knowledge management, particularly at regional, national and community levels. Understanding of and capacity for AZE site conservation will be built at regional levels through workshops outside of project countries, at national levels through close collaboration with government and civil society to encourage AZE conservation, and locally through trainings on monitoring and conserving AZE sites. Finally, within the project itself, direct exchanges between project countries, which are at different phases of implementing AZE site conservation, will be actively facilitated in response to suggestions in the MTR of the GEF-5 project on AZE.

The KBA Standard, KBA Partnership and KBA Programme are relatively recent initiatives, all launched in 2016. Although there have been decades of experience in working with previous forms of KBAs, such as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) as well as AZE sites, applying the KBA Standard across a wide range of taxa and using KBAs as the international currency for site conservation are still in their early stages. Indeed, it is the first time that the GEF Strategic Directions explicitly refers to KBAs under the Protected Areas programme, giving an opportunity to finance KBA relevant activities at the global level. This project will provide an invaluable opportunity to be the testing ground for KBAs through the use of AZE sites as a high priority KBA subset. Experience learned through this project can be shared through the various relevant structures of the KBA Programme including the KBA Consultative Forum (bringing together end users, such as financial institutions, global conventions and governments) and the KBA Community (which provides a platform for the KBA experts and other stakeholders working to conserve these sites). This in turn will allow innovative solutions and methods to be transferred to new countries and sites, increasing the global impact of this project.

Sustainability: Several strategies are incorporated into this project to ensure sustainability. At the site level, the full integration of local communities, including women and Indigenous Peoples, essential to the long-term success of AZE site conservation, will be a key aspect of the project. With communities fully vested in project outcomes, the continued safeguarding of AZE sites and the trigger species within them beyond the life of the project is much more certain, particularly if local communities can couple site conservation with improved livelihood opportunities. In addition, by using a globally-recognized tool to measure and track site management effectiveness, the METT, local conservation organizations and communities will have a simple but clear approach to determine the most important strategies for continually improving site management. The project's efforts to build capacity outside of project countries will also increase its sustainability. One way in which the project will build capacity outside of project countries is through working with the members of the AZE partnership. Regional workshops will create connections between conservation decision-makers and practitioners across countries that will continue beyond the course of this project, which can be instrumental to knowledge sharing on AZE site conservation well into the future. In addition, user-friendly guidance materials on AZE site assessments and conservation, created with project countries at different stages of AZE site conservation implementation, will continue to serve as models to other countries eager to protect their AZE sites. Such materials will be tailored for different audiences, as national-level and local-level authorities have different goals and needs to develop planning approaches. Similarly, this project's diversified approach to integrating AZE site conservation into the policies and standards of organizations and institutions across a range of sectors will increase the likelihood that AZE sites are safeguarded after the conclusion of this project. Finally, central to the sustainability of this project is our Knowledge Management Approach, explained in more detail below.

The Project's financial sustainability will be based on four revenue streams. The first source will be public funds, which are for the promotion of sustainable development actions at the local level. Some governments have established competitive funds for environmental protection. The Project will support AZE site managers to seek such revenue streams and prepare proposals for funding. The second revenue source is expected to be from large corporations operating around the targeted AZE sites. Partnerships with local industry will be established to create a shared obligation to AZE sites with the long-term goal of safeguarding of these sites in the future. The third source will be through creating income-generating activities for local communities. The income activities will be either through implementation of conservation activities such as constructing firebreaks, planting seedlings for reforestation, etc. or promoting nature-based livelihood options, such as craftsmanship, beekeeping, sustainable agricultural production and ecotourism. The fourth source will be through market-based mechanisms such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) approaches. Financial sustainability will be achieved through these variety of financial mechanisms based on the situations of the different AZE sites and countries in the project.

Dominican Republic: Much of the region surrounding the **AZE site Playa Bayahibe** is owned by the large corporation Central Romana. Project partners have collaborated with Central Romana on other conservation work in Dominican Republic, and the corporation has established and managed private reserves nationally. Once the best area for a reserve in the AZE site is known, Central Romana is interested in establishing a private reserve for the AZE trigger species within the AZE site and financing the long-term management of this reserve. In addition, educational and pride campaigns will be developed and conducted for the AZE trigger national plant, in collaboration with the local NGO Ecoparque. Capacity will be built in local communities to train locals to find remaining populations of the species. Locals will receive financial benefits for locating these individuals, following a model used in other parts of the country. At the **AZE site Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte**, the GEF AZE project will advance several different approaches to financial sustainability, including organic agriculture and ecotourism initiatives, REDD+ and PES projects, and a partnership with local industry. Project partners will work with local government in the town of Polo on the joint goal of promoting organic coffee in the region around the AZE site. This will build upon baseline efforts to advance organic coffee for premium prices, including local workshops on bird-friendly coffee conducted by the Smithsonian Institution in late 2019. Two ecolodges are planned just outside the Monument. Ecotourism is already occurring in the region and will be further promoted by the GEF Project. Capacity building workshops will be held for local community members from the towns of Cortico and Cachote to work in ecotourism. A REDD+ Project will be implemented in the area. REDD+ is new to the Dominican Republic, but the government has approved the initiation of such projects. The project will work to launch a REDD+ Project in the area in and surrounding the AZE site to provide for financial sustainability through the protection of forests. Khoury Industrial, a cement company in the province of the AZE site with an interest in the environment, has been involved in conservation at the AZE site. This company will provide funds for management at the AZE site, including reforestation work, community education, and water protection efforts, and will continue to finance site management beyond the Project period. Finally, this project seeks to begin a PES approach through commitments by local companies to protect water resources.

Chile: Sustainability at the AZE sites for species of the genus *Telmatobius* will be achieved through strong collaboration with the Quechua and Aymara communities that own the land and with the mining companies that operate near the sites. The project will fully involve local communities in project development and work with them to reduce water extraction from areas that threaten AZE trigger species. Four of these five AZE sites (Zapahuira, Murmuntani, Río Vilama, and Puquios) are on Indigenous-owned land. To advance sustainability at the fifth site, Las Cascadas Río Loa, we propose the establishment of a nature sanctuary to protect the site in perpetuity. The Ministry of Environment (MMA) will work with mining companies to advance improved management practices to reduce impacts on the sites. All companies must complete environmental evaluations and mitigate damage. The MMA will communicate with the companies to reduce water extraction at and near AZE sites and to reduce contamination by dust and other pollutants. At the **AZE site Murmuntani,** the water company El Abra has implemented a water reinjection system for the recovery of the fertile plain, which has allowed the survival of *Telmatobius philippi.* This approach will be examined for potential replication at other sites. As part of this project, project partners will engage mining companies in project development to create a shared obligation to these sites, with the long-term goal of encouraging mining companies to commit to the safeguarding of these sites in the future. At the five AZE sites with trigger species from the *Telmatobius* genus and the two AZE sites with trigger species from the cactus genus *Eriosyce*, mining companies operating near these sites have shown interest in being involved in this project, and specific details of their involvement will be determined during the PPG phase of this project. The MMA has a competitive fund called the Environmental Protection Fund (FPA, http://fpa.mma.gob.cl/), which promotes sustainable development actions at the local level. As part of the development of the project, communities will be supported in the application process to receive these funds for conservation actions at the AZE sites. Several copper mining companies also have competitive funds that local communities can apply to receive, which will provide additional opportunities for financing site conservation after the end of the GEF project.

Colombia: Sustainability at the **Santa Marta AZE site** will focus on government incentives and PES approaches. Companies are required to provide compensation for biodiversity loss, and these funds are one of the sources of potential financing for PES programs at this and the other AZE sites included in the project.

At the two AZE sites in the Cauca Valley, government incentives that support nature-based livelihoods, including ecotourism and the production of organic agricultural products, such as coffee, honey, and chocolate, will help to provide long-term sustainability, and PES programs will reinforce local safeguarding of AZE sites and the areas surrounding them.

Sustainability at both **Páramo Urrao / De Las Aves Colibri El Sol** and **Chingaza** will be enhanced through funding from water use charges. Chingaza National Natural Park is the main supplier of water to the Bogotá Aqueduct and Sewer Company (EAAB), contributing 80% of Bogota's drinking water. In addition, REDD+ projects may be developed at the Páramo Urrao / De Las Aves Colibri El Sol AZE site.

Madagascar: Sustainability through nature-based livelihoods at the **Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetland Complex** will concentrate on income-generating activities related to craftsmanship using raffia as a raw material, beekeeping, and ecotourism. At the **Bemanevika / Tsaratanana massif**, ecotourism, sustainable agriculture and beekeeping will be promoted to generate local incomes. Ecotourism, agroforestry and silkworm farming will be the focus of nature-based livelihoods at **Itremo**, and beekeeping and potato production will at the **Manjakatompo-Ankaratra Massif NPA.** All of these initiatives will be developed with the full participation of local community organizations. **Ankafobe** is under ongoing designation as an IUCN PA special reserve, a designation which prohibits activities conducted by local communities inside the protected area. Therefore, to support local communities surrounding the reserve, a dynamic agroforestry project is being developed. A pilot project began with local farmers in 2017 and today there are 30 local family farms implementing the techniques in over 17,000m² of land subdivided into 30 parcels. The innovative agriculture techniques improve soil fertility, allow for continuous harvesting, provide income for daily needs for families, and increase forest area as corridors are created between forest fragments. The local community members in areas surrounding Ankafobe, 300 people in total, are paid salaries for their work during the implementation of conservation activities, such as constructing firebreaks, planting seedlings for reforestation, etc. Community members also generate income through work as guides to support tourism with ORTANA (Malagasy tourists offices) and to help visiting researchers.

Potential for scaling up: Scaling up occurred in the countries that benefitted from the GEF-5 investment on AZE, and we will replicate and build upon the GEF-5 approach in the current project. The approach to scaling in Brazil in the GEF-5 project included obtaining federal recognition of this new set of sites through two national ordinances. This recognition is an important step in further mainstreaming AZE sites into broader policies, which in turn can enable AZE site interventions to reach a much wider geographic area across Brazil. On July 12, 2018, Brazilian Ministry of Environment Ordinance No. 287 was published, which recognizes the Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction and links it to the National Biodiversity Council. On October 31, 2018, Brazilian Ministry of Environment Ordinance No. 413, recognizing Brazilian Alliance for Zero Extinction sites, was published. At a global level, the GEF-5 project successfully amplified its impact by achieving a total of 22 countries that incorporated AZE into national CBD reports and NBSAPs, far above the goal of 9 countries.

In Chile scaling up was achieved by integrating AZE sites into national-level conservation priorities, such as the Chilean Action Plan for the Conservation of Native Species. In Chile, the current project substantially scales up the commitment by the national government to invest in AZE site conservation, as demonstrated by the larger STAR allocation and greater number of AZE sites that will be included in the project.

In Madagascar, the approach to scaling in the GEF-5 AZE project was to develop a national-level mainstreaming plan that focused on organizing workshops to promote the AZE concept in municipal and regional plans, developing tools to encourage decision-makers to conserve AZE sites, drafting AZE decrees, and promoting conservation-directed research on AZE trigger species. This plan will be implemented in the GEF-7 project, which will enable scaling up through mainstreaming AZE site conservation into broader

policies, strategies and actions. It will also be used as a model for other project countries as they develop their own tailored mainstreaming plans, thus scaling up national-level mainstreaming to additional countries.

The scaling approach of the GEF-7 project in pilot countries will focus on three areas. First, the benefits and impacts of AZE site conservation will be expanded over a larger geographic area and with a greater number of beneficiaries, as this project increases the number of sites prioritized for direct conservation action compared to the GEF-5 AZE project. Second, this project will scale up by mainstreaming AZE into broader policies, strategies and actions by governments, civil society and the private sector. This mainstreaming approach will also scale up and strengthen partnerships and collaboration among a broader group of sectors. Third, this project will result in a geographical expansion of interventions that produce environmental benefits both within the project countries and in additional countries due to its strong knowledge management approach, as workshops and seminars will build capacity on implementing AZE site conservation within project countries and regionally. This effort will build upon initial seminars conducted as part of the GEF-5 project, such as webinars on conservation policies and practice to protect AZE sites.

Despite the successful scaling up of the GEF-5 project, challenges remain. A central challenges is that while there are currently 853AZE sites globally, there is not sufficient funding to have a detailed, tailored conservation approach for each site. Given the importance of these sites to preventing species extinctions, other approaches to conserve these sites are needed. For that reason, we propose a stronger focus on mainstreaming in this project than we had in the GEF-5 project. This focus on mainstreaming will include promoting strong policies in regional, national and local banks, as much of the funding that leads to impacts on AZE sites comes from banks at these levels. We also propose a stronger emphasis on knowledge management in this project, most of all on communicating both the importance of and the methods to conserve AZE sites. We will apply lessons learned in the GEF-5 project to show how site-level conservation can be achieved, the ways in which AZE site conservation can be incorporated into national plans and strategies, and approaches to mainstreaming AZE into financial institution and other safeguard policies. This project will have a much broader focus on reaching out to diverse sectors to encourage AZE site conservation. Finally, by including a focus on OECMs, the project will try to take advantage of a new and potentially very productive approach to site-based conservation.

Perhaps the greatest opportunities for scaling up are in the mainstreaming component of this project. As increasing numbers of business groups, investors and lending institutions incorporate AZE site conservation into their policies, opportunities for leveraging these achievements into the policies of other groups and sectors will multiply. The approaches employed to implement a knowledge management approach to reach audiences and sectors from multiple sectors and scales can serve as models for future projects. Regional-level workshops can provide lessons for communicating the AZE concept to new audiences, while meetings of project partners can demonstrate an integrative approach to global project management. These approaches, as well as South-South exchanges and ‘Communities of Practice’, can be scaled up as model tactics to advancing and sharing knowledge of conservation approaches aimed at protecting threatened species.

[1] https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12659

1b. Project Map and Coordinates

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

Project maps provided in Annex A

2. Stakeholders

Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Yes

Civil Society Organizations Yes

Private Sector Entities Yes

If none of the above,please explain why:

In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, civil society and the private sector participated in consultations during the project identification phase. In Chile, Ministry of Environment staff discussed the GEF-7 AZE proposal with Indigenous Communities at the Mehuin AZE site and consulted with individual Indigenous landowners about the potential opportunity to implement conservation actions on their properties. In addition, Chilean Ministry of Environment staff spoke with farmers from the local community and small agricultural entrepreneurs about the project at the Las Cascadas Loa River AZE site. Amphibian experts at Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) have been consulted about the project sites in Colombia. In Madagascar, the conservation organization Asity Madagascar has been engaged in proposal development. Likewise, in the Dominican Republic, the conservation organization SOH Conservación has been engaged in proposal development. Local communities surrounding the AZE site Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte, particularly in Cortico and Polo, have been consulted about the project proposal. Private sector entities, including several private companies operating near the Playa Bayahibe and the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte AZE sites, have also been consulted about the proposed project.

With government input, we have identified additional stakeholders who will be further consulted during the PPG phase. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities will be extensively engaged in project preparation. In particular, the participation of Indigenous Groups in Chile and Colombia in project development will be critical to the success of the project. Such engagement will be encouraged through in-person meetings and community workshops. Civil society will be extensively engaged in project preparation. Civil society organizations in each of the project countries are key partners in this project, and are essential to the effective conservation of AZE sites. Representatives of civil society have been involved in communications and in-person meetings to begin the development of this project, and they will continue to be equal members of the project team. Private sector stakeholders have been and will continue to be engaged in project preparations.

To ensure coordination between existing projects and programs with the project activities at the 20 sites, existing project personnel will be contacted during the PPG phase of the project to invite key actors to participate in project development. Similarly, regular communication will be maintained with existing projects to ensure that their activities and the activities of this project are coordinated to amplify conservation benefits.

Key stakeholders:

Institution/organization	**Role/mission**	**How the project will engage during PPG phase**
Chile		
Chilean Ministry of Environment	Project executor	Direct, plan and manage the formulation of the Prodoc, in coordination with ABC and UN Environment. Contact and include relevant actors and local communities in the planning and management of the PPG. Support in planning and project formulation at AZE sites in Chile, which will be necessary for all project components.
Chilean Network of Hepetology (RECH)	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.

Institution/organization	Role/mission	How the project will engage during PPG phase
National Zoo of Chile	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Indigenous communities in Zapahuira, Murmuntani, Socoroma and Belén (In the regions of Arica and Parinacota)	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Quechua community of Ollagüe and the Indigenous community Atacameña de Toconce (In the region of Antofagasta)	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Indigenous communities in Mehuín (In the region of Los Ríos)	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Chilean Ministry of Housing and Urbanism	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Center for Sustainability Research, Universidad Andrés Bello, Chile	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Department of Science, University of Chile	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Colombia		

Institution/organization	Role/mission	How the project will engage during PPG phase
Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS)	Project executor	Direct, plan and manage the formulation of the Prodoc, in coordination with ABC and UN Environment. Contact and include relevant actors and local communities in the planning and management of the PPG.
Natural National Parks of Colombia (PNN)	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Subnational Environmental Authorities/Regional Autonomous Corporation (CARs)	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Humboldt Institute for Biological Resource Research	An independent research institute of the Government of Colombia charged with conducting scientific research on national biodiversity	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Fundación Atelopus	Local NGO focused on the conservation of amphibians in the *Atelopus* genus	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
WCS - Colombia	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites

Institution/organization	Role/mission	How the project will engage during PPG phase
Regional Autonomous Corporations in the jurisdictions of each project site	Public entities of the Colombian government endowed with administrative and financial autonomy in charge of the public administration of environmental resources and their protection in each jurisdiction.	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Universities of Antioquia and Valle de Cauca	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Maza – Fonte Tourism Association	A tourism association in the Chingaza region	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Kogui and Arhuaco Indigenous Communities	Indigenous Communities in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Colibrí del Sol Civil Society Nature Reserve	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites

Institution/organization	Role/mission	How the project will engage during PPG phase
Association of Users for the Protection and Improvement of the Hydrographic Basins of the Yotoco and Mediacanoa rivers (Asoyotoco)	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Calidris	Collaborating partner	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Dominican Republic		
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Project executor	Direct, plan and manage the formulation of the Prodoc, in coordination with ABC and UN Environment. Contact and include relevant actors and local communities in the planning and management of the PPG.
Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
SOH Conservacion	Collaborating partner To conserve conservation of endangered species and their habitats on the island of La Hispaniola.	Project planning and formulation on Dominican AZE sites, which will be necessary for all project components.

Institution/organization	Role/mission	How the project will engage during PPG phase
National Botanical Garden of the Dominican Republic	Collaborating partner To promote the conservation, study and dissemination of Dominican flora, through the promotion of research, environmental education and recreation	Planning and formulation of projects in Dominican AZE sites, which will be necessary for all project components.
Central Romana	Large corporation and collaborating partner	Project planning and formulation for the Playa Bayahibe AZE site
Ecoparque (an NGO)	Collaborating partner	Project planning and formulation for the Playa Bayahibe AZE site
National Museum	Collaborating partner	Planning and formulation of projects in Dominican AZE sites, which will be necessary for all project components.
Farmers Association of Polo	Collaborating partner	Project planning and formulation for the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte
Local communities of Cortico and Cachote	Collaborating partner	Project planning and formulation for the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte
Ecological Society of Barahona, a local NGO	Collaborating partner	Project planning and formulation for the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte
Khoury Industrial	Cement company and Collaborating partner	Project planning and formulation for the Monumento Natural Miguel Domingo Fuerte
Grupo Jaragua	Collaborating partner	Advisers of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Madagascar		
Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Forests	Executing Partner	Direct, plan and manage the formulation of the Prodoc, in coordination with ABC and UN Environment. Contact and include relevant actors and local communities in the planning and management of the PPG.

Institution/organization	Role/mission	How the project will engage during PPG phase
Madagascar Protected Areas System Commission (SAPM Commission)	Collaborating partner An Government-Civil Society (national and international) commission hosted by MEEMF; responsible, through working groups, for technical and administrative support to implementation of the target to treble the Protected Areas coverage in Madagascar.	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Regional, District and Commune Government	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Asity Madagascar (BirdLife Partner in Madagascar)	Collaborating partner	Technical support in the preparation of the ProDoc, including the identification of local actors that should be included in the process.
Conservation organizations	Madagasikara Voakajy, ONG Fanamby, WWF, Conservation International, Missouri Botanical Garden, Wildlife Conservation Society, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and The Peregrine Fund are the most active civil society organizations working on the conservation of highly endangered biodiversity in Madagascar, but others are responsible for individual sites (including some of the short-listed sites here) and the species they hold.	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Local NGOs and community-based organizations in Madagascar	A consortium of local organizations has been created in order to implement community-based conservation programs. A typical model involves grassroots communities (Communautés locales de Base or CoBa) as the fundamental units of a community-based management structure, collectively forming an umbrella body or 'platform' with technical support, coordination and facilitation by an NGO (national or international) or Government agency	Designing the planning and implementation of projects in prioritized AZE sites
Global		
Alliance for Zero Extinction	Collaborating partner To designate and effectively conserve the most important sites for global biodiversity conservation	Project planning for all components.
KBA Partnership	Collaborating partner To map, monitor and conserve the most important places for life on earth	Project planning for all components.
Global Wildlife Conservation	Collaborating partner	Project planning in Colombia and Chile.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis).

Initial analyses conducted using The World Bank Gender Data Portal suggest that efforts to promote women's roles in decision-making in the project countries are needed to ensure that women are fully engaged in project development and implementation. Data serving as a proxy for women's roles in decision making show that in Chile, women hold 28% of senior and middle management positions and 35% of ministerial positions; in the Dominican Republic, they hold 37% and 21%; of these positions; and in Madagascar, 25% and 17%, respectively. Furthermore, according to the Gender Gap Index of 2018 (Word Economic Forum), Dominican Republic ranks 74th overall and 69th in political empowerment, Madagascar ranks 84th and 96th, Colombia ranks 40th and 59th, and Chile ranks 54th and 31st, respectively. There is clearly a wide range in gender gaps between project countries, though all countries can benefit from increased attention to and promotion of women's involvement in conservation decisions and actions.

To ensure that this project meaningfully engage women in decision-making, women will be fully involved in the project countries' teams at the design phase of project development. In addition, women also lead several NGOs' project planning efforts to develop the project. Through these appointments of women in relevant authorities and bodies of the project, we seek to increase the number of women in decision-making positions.

During the project design phase's stakeholder consultation process, groups with gender perspectives, such as NGOs focused on women's rights and conservation organizations that include the promotion of gender equality in their goals, will be actively sought out for advice on how best to promote the involvement of women in project decision-making. This project will also contribute to promoting gender equality by improving women's participation in project activities. Central to this project is the involvement of local communities in safeguarding AZE sites through protection, improved management and other measures. During the project design phase, following data collection and analysis as well as discussions with local organizations focused on gender, this project will assess both the gender implications of proposed actions and potential measures to address gender gaps in local participatory decision-making. Since community involvement is essential to the success of this project, it is imperative that the fifty percent of communities comprised of women is fully integrated into the project's activities. Successful efforts to engage Indigenous women in the GEF-5 project in Chile, such as in restoration projects with native species, will be amplified and will serve as models for this project.

Finally, this project will use its strong focus on knowledge sharing through regional workshops and other exchanges to ensure that women are involved at all levels in these meetings, including in presentations at workshops. It will also focus on developing communication products aimed at reaching women, to ensure that information is easily and conveniently accessible and absorbed. Building upon the strong role of women in leadership positions in the GEF-5 project, which was highlighted in the project's Mid-term Review, this project will have many women in project leadership roles. The lead on this project from American Bird Conservancy and several leads among the NGOs involved in this project are all women.

A detailed gender analysis will be conducted during the project design phase. This will provide many more and different options to integrate gender and will look beyond women empowerment options and include how to engage with men and the interaction between men and women, especially from a relational and power dynamics point of view. The project team and partners will also identify gender specific activities and budgets during the PPG phase.

Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? TBD

closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;

improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or Yes

generating socio-economic benefits or services for women. Yes

Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?

Yes

4. Private sector engagement

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.

Private sector engagement is a main focus of the project through working with lending institutions and business groups. The project seeks to mainstream AZE site conservation into policies and safeguards of regional and national banks and investors. Private sector groups including the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the CBD Global Platform on Business and Biodiversity will be engaged during project development.

5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the Project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the Project design (table format acceptable)

Risk	Proposed mitigation measures
Climate change impacts degrade or alter the last remaining habitats of one or more AZE trigger species	To build site-level resilience to climate change impacts, potential mitigation measures include buffering AZE sites through restoration with native species, which will enlarge potential habitat for AZE trigger species, helping both to mitigate climate change impacts and to provide additional habitat for species. Another option could be translocating AZE trigger species to former or new sites with appropriate habitat.
Climate change impacts have uncertain effects on AZE sites	The proposed project will integrate AZE site conservation into policies, analyses and spatial planning focused on climate mitigation and adaptation. In this way, the project seeks to improve AZE resiliency to climate change on a global scale.
Weak or poor commitment by government agencies	Given political uncertainties in some project countries, and potential political changes in all countries, there is a risk that government agency commitments to this project may be reduced. Mainstreaming AZE site conservation will help to mitigate this potential risk, as the integration of AZE site conservation into national plans and policies will help to reinforce it within governmental objectives. For sites, community-based management approaches also mitigate instability in governments.
Lack of participation of local Indigenous Communities and/or of the financial sector	Robust efforts to solicit the participation of Indigenous Communities and the financial sector during the project design phase should strengthen the participation of both groups during project implementation.

Risk	Proposed mitigation measures
Political instability or changes alter governmental priorities related to biodiversity conservation.	To mitigate the potential effects of political changes on the conservation of AZE sites, this project integrates a wide variety of actors, from governmental officials at the national and sub-national level to civil society to groups in the private sector, as project participants. Through the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, the project aims to mitigate potential changes in the governmental sector by ensuring continued support of participants in other sectors. If national governments express disinterest in biodiversity conservation, we propose to focus efforts even more strongly with sub-national governmental agencies and civil society as a path forward for continuing the conservation of AZE sites and working to prevent extinctions.
A snapshot approach to AZE site assessments could miss longer-term trends that affect site vulnerability	The inclusion of a reliable multitemporal dataset of geographic information to evaluate the status and trends of habitat loss and fragmentation at many AZE sites in the Americas (dependent on data availability) will inform prioritization decision-making.
Lack of interest in or resistance to conservation actions at AZE sites by local communities	Learning from the GEF-5 AZE project, which faced and overcame this challenge, the proposed project will promote robust inclusion of local communities during the project planning phase. Additionally, local community participation in AZE site conservation decisions and implementation will be an integral part of the project so that stakeholders have a real voice in such decisions. The OECM approach, which may be more compatible with and acceptable to local communities than traditional PAs, will support the Project's efforts to increase interest of local communities.

For an analysis of safeguards risks, please see the 'Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note' uploaded into the documents section. The safeguard risk types and level will be revisited by the Safeguards Advisor during the PPG.

6. Coordination

Outline the institutional structure of the project including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the project level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.

UNEP will act as the GEF Implementing Agency. ABC will lead the overall execution of the project and project execution of the project in Chile, Dominican Republic and Colombia. BirdLife will execute the project in Madagascar and will lead on mainstreaming efforts with the business and climate policies and standards and with the KBA Partnership and Programme. BirdLife will also ensure that AZE site data is stored in the World Database of KBAs and is available for use at the KBA Website and through IBAT. The project will be developed with and overseen by a Project Steering Committee. The Project Steering Committee will (a) guide and oversee the project's technical progress and performance on the data update, (b) coordinate the roles and contributions of project partners and their respective initiatives in the project to link national strategies to global

benefits, and (c) ensure that the project remains focused on its key outcomes. The Project Management Committee will include representatives of ABC, BirdLife International, the GEF Focal Points of the participating countries and a representative of UNEP as implementing agency.

The four project countries will work collaboratively on this global project. Chile and Madagascar were both project countries in the GEF-5 AZE project and will provide continuity with the previous project and help guide the amplification of AZE conservation in other countries. Including countries at different stages of AZE conservation implementation is a goal of this project and will enable countries to learn from each other. Colombia has worked on AZE site conservation in past years and seeks to reinvigorate its focus on AZE, while Dominican Republic is newer to AZE site conservation and can take advantage of lessons learned from other project countries.

The four countries will also work with non-project countries to increase awareness of AZE site conservation regionally. Each country will focus outreach regionally, in the Southern Cone (Chile), Tropical Andes (Colombia), Caribbean (Dominican Republic), and Eastern Africa (Madagascar).

As megadiverse countries, Colombia and Madagascar can demonstrate the importance of conserving AZE sites to other members of the Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries group. Similarly, Dominican Republic will be able to demonstrate the application of AZE site conservation in the Caribbean, a region that to date has not had a strong focus on AZE.

The Project will coordinate with the following relevant GEF financed projects:

In Chile,

The Project will coordinate mainstreaming actions with the GEF Project ‘Economic instruments and tools to support the conservation of biodiversity, the payment of ecosystem services and sustainable development’ (GEF id 10213) implemented by UNDP.

The Project will coordinate the actions on coastal AZE sites with the GEF Project ‘Strengthening management and governance for the conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biodiversity in coastal marine ecosystems in Chile’ (GEF id 10075) implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The Project's Component 1 activities in Chile will coordinate with the GEF Project 'Collaborative implementation of Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of High Andean Wetlands through improved management effectiveness of sites' (GEF id 10056) implemented by UNDP.

The Project will further coordinate with the UNEP implemented GEF Project "Mainstreaming Conservation of Coastal Wetlands of Chile's South Center Biodiversity Hotspot through Adaptive Management of Coastal Area Ecosystems" (GEF id 9766).

In Colombia,

The Project will coordinate with the GEF Project 'Páramos for Life' (GEF id 10361) currently under development and to be executed by UNDP and FAO.

The project will coordinate actions with the GEF project 'Contributing to the Integrated Management of Biodiversity of the Pacific Region of Colombia to Build Peace' (GEF Project ID 9441) currently under implementation with support from FAO.

The project will coordinate actions with the GEF project (GEF Project ID 5680) 'Consolidation of the National System of Protected Areas (SINAP) at National and Regional Levels', which is currently under implementation with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).

In Dominican Republic,

The Project will coordinate with the GEF Project 'Mainstreaming Conservation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Productive Landscapes in Threatened Forested Mountainous Areas' (GEF id 9424). This project is being implemented by UNDP.

In addition, the project will coordinate with the Project 'Conserving Biodiversity in Coastal Areas Threatened by Rapid Tourism and Physical Infrastructure Development' (GEF id 5088), which is under implementation by UNDP.

In Madagascar,

The Project will coordinate with the GEF Project 'Conservation and Improvement of Ecosystem Services for the Atsinanana Region through Agroecology and the Promotion of Sustainable Energy Production' (GEF id 9793), which will be implemented by UNEP.

The project will coordinate actions with the ongoing GEF project 'Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Northwestern Landscape (Boeny region)' (GEF id 9606), which is implemented by Conservation International.

Furthermore, the Project will seek to generate synergy with the GEF funded Projects 'Expanding and Consolidating Madagascar's Marine Protected Areas Network' (GEF id 9546) and 'A Landscape Approach to Conserving and Managing Threatened Biodiversity in Madagascar with a Focus on the Atsimo-Andrefana Spiny and Dry Forest Landscape' (GEF id 5486).

In addition, the Project will coordinate with the GEF Project "Conservation of Key Threatened Endemic and Economically Valuable Species in Madagascar" implemented by UNEP (GEF id 5352); and with the GEF Project "Strengthening the Network of New PAs in Madagascar" implemented by UNEP (GEF id 5351).

7. Consistency with National Priorities

Is the Project consistent with the National Strategies and plans or reports and assesments under relevant conventions

Yes

If yes, which ones and how: NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, INDCs, etc

Chile: The project is consistent with the overall objective of Chile's National Biodiversity Strategy and its Action Plan (NBSAP) for 2017 – 2030 and more specifically contributes to four of the five strategic objectives of the NBSAP: to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity for human wellbeing while reducing threats to ecosystems and species; to increase awareness, participation, information and knowledge regarding biodiversity; to include biodiversity objectives in public- and private-sector policies, plans and programs; and to protect and restore biodiversity and its ecosystem services.

Colombia: The project is consistent with Colombia's Biodiversity Action Plan – BAP (2016-2030). The overall objective of the Action Plan is to promote the integrated management of biodiversity conservation. The Project contributes to this objective. Furthermore, the Project will contribute to the implementation of the following thematic axes of the BAP: 1. Biodiversity, conservation and the care of nature; 2. Biodiversity governance; 4. Biodiversity and the management of knowledge, technology, and information; and 5. Management of risk and supply of ecosystem services.

Dominican Republic: The project is consistent with overall objective of the National Biodiversity Strategy and its Action Plan (NBSAP) and more specifically contributes to national targets to strengthen protected areas, improve the conservation status of threatened species, and to include biodiversity in national planning processes.

Madagascar: The project is consistent with overall objective of Madagascar's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which aims to set up measures to effectively reduce the loss of biodiversity; to ensure the provision of essential ecosystem services and equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity; and to ensure social welfare and economic and environmental development for current and future generations. More specifically, the Project contributes to the following strategic Objectives: 1. In 2025, policy makers and 65% of the Malagasy people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the measures they can take to protect and use it sustainably; 2. In 2025, at the latest, biodiversity values, opportunities and benefits of conservation and sustainable use will be recognized and integrated into the country's socio-economic development activities; 3. In 2025, at the latest, inappropriate and negative incentives on biodiversity will be eliminated or gradually reduced to minimize negative impacts; while positive incentives for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources will be developed and applied; and 4. By 2025, the rate of degradation, fragmentation and loss of habitats or ecosystems is reduced.

8. Knowledge Management

Outline the Knowledge management approach for the Project, including, if any, plans for the Project to learn from other relevant Projects and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

Knowledge management is designed as a standalone component in the project. Component 3 promotes learning and continuous improvement, documents existing and new AZE sites, generates documents for upscaling of lessons learned and provides assistance for strong collaboration across countries. The lessons learned will be communicated to the direct and indirect beneficiaries in various ways, mainly: training activities, technical publications, educational material, and awareness campaigns. The knowledge management approach will be based on evidence of success and failure with the GEF-5 project.

The project will help to develop the tools needed to extract and organize the acquired knowledge, and disseminate the results, lessons and good practices. Information will be tailored to different groups so that it is accessible, through online toolkits, webinars and seminars, workshops and trainings, and other communication strategies.

The project will facilitate direct exchanges between countries through South-South exchanges and 'Communities of Practice' very early in the project, during the project development phase. The project will organize regional workshops led by project countries to broaden knowledge of AZE site conservation outside of project countries, thus promoting the AZE concept beyond the partners involved in this project to support AZE site conservation globally. Nationally and locally, summits held in project countries at the beginning, middle and end of the project will encourage cooperation across sectors, including government and civil society, to support both site-level and mainstreaming efforts.

Communication tools will be developed to assist governments, NGOs and others to successfully disseminate information on conserving AZE sites.

9. Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

Provide information on the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project/program based on your organization's ESS systems and procedures

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification*

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Low			

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

Provide preliminary information on the types and levels of risk classifications/ratings of any identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project (considering the GEF ESS Minimum Standards) and describe measures to address these risks during the project design.

Supporting Documents

Upload available ESS supporting documents.

Title	Submitted

Part III: Approval/Endorsement By GEF Operational Focal Point(S) And Gef Agency(ies)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter with this template).

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Mr. David Felipe Olarte Amaya	Head of International Affair Office	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia	10/31/2019
Mr. Lala Noelison Jacques Ranaivomanana	General Secretary	Ministry of the Environment, Madagascar	3/23/2020
Mr. Miguel STUTZIN	Operational Focal Point	Ministerio del Medio Ambiente, Chile	3/26/2019
Ing. Patricia Abreu Fernandez	Deputy Minister for International Cooperation	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Dominican Republic	3/25/2019

ANNEX A: Project Map and Geographic Coordinates

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project intervention takes place

PROGRAM/PROJECT MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES (when possible)

The purple polygons in the maps below represent AZE sites in each project country.

Colombia:

Chile (north to south in each subsequent map):

Dominican Republic:

Madagascar: