

Main Objective

The long term goal of all ACTO Member Countries is to guarantee the protection and the sustainable management of the Amazonian natural resources. However, since policy making on the use of forest resources and law enforcement is often a controversial and a very sensitive issue, high quality information is needed to produce good policies, effective coordination and useful reporting tools.

The Monitoring Project responds to the need to support the Amazon countries in the regular analysis of information from reliable historical estimates and series on deforestation and forest degradation in the region. To that extent, the main objective of the project is to support all ACTO Member Countries on the development of a national monitoring system to promote increasing governance in the Amazon Region.

Expected outcomes

Forest monitoring technology is the most essential tool for making governments in the Amazon Region more capable and better equipped on implementing corrective measures on law enforcement activities. The exchange of information among stakeholders inside and outside governments is also supported by this proposal, which includes inter-sector cooperation and multi-national training activities.

The project is expected to cause positive impacts on several aspects. Among these the following are of special relevance:

- More accurate, reliable and regular information on intense deforestation and land use change hotspots will allow decision makers to act more precisely and policy makers to respond with a more appropriate normative framework.
- The institutional capacity of the Amazon countries and their ability to manage the region will allow them to assess trends, guiding their actions and defining public policies accordingly.
- Governmental action, based on monitoring technologies, will contribute decisively to reduce changes in forest cover and their consequences on soil carbon balance, water and energy cycles, etc.

Stakeholder and financing

The project is expected to last four years and its budget is USD 6.262,784. Currently it has the technical support of the Brazilian Space Agency (INPE) and the cooperation of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) as well as of the Ministries of Environment of the ACTO Member Countries.

As regards to financing, funds are provided by the German Development Cooperation -BMZ/GIZ, the Cooperation of the Netherlands for Development – DGIS and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).



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Monitoring Deforestation, Logging and Land Use Change in the Pan Amazonian Forest

The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) is an intergovernmental body that brings together the eight Member Countries of the Amazon Basin: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. Its Permanent Secretariat (PS/ACTO) was created at the end of 2002 to offer its Member Countries a political dialogue and regional cooperation platform based on the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT), signed in 1978.

The ACTO's Mission is: "To be a permanent cooperation, exchange and information forum guided by the principle of reducing regional asymmetries among the Member Countries through its actions, cooperating in national processes for socioeconomic progress and enabling a gradual incorporation of these vast territories into the national economies; promoting regional cooperation actions to improve the quality of life of Amazonian inhabitants; and working under the principle of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods in harmony with nature and the environment and considering the internal laws of the Member Countries".

The Amazon Cooperation Strategic Agenda adopted at 10th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2010, is the guiding instrument for the implementation of ACTO activities, for the short, medium and long term, it is included the vision, mission and strategic objectives of ACTO based on two cross-cutting axes (Conservation and Sustainable Use of Renewable Natural Resources and Socioeconomic Development). It establishes the role and action guidelines of the PS/ACTO's own project cycle and the institutional structure to manage the Agenda and the various finance modalities.

It also presents a thematic approach that integrates the areas of the ACT, namely: forests; water resources; management, monitoring and control of endangered wild fauna and flora species; protected areas; sustainable use of biodiversity and biotrade¹; indigenous affairs; knowledge management and information sharing; regional health management; infrastructure and transport; commercial navigation and tourism; in addition to emerging topics like regional development, climate change and energy.

At their 11th Meeting (Manaus, November 2010), the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ACTO reaffirmed their commitment to the relaunch of the Organization and adopted a set of feasible decisions to deepen regional cooperation activities, highlighting, among others, the Project Monitoring Deforestation, Logging and Land Use Change in the Pan Amazonian Forest aims to develop and implement participatory systems for monitoring forest cover in the Amazon and to strengthen existing regional coordination platforms for forest management.

¹ In the case of Bolivia, considering that their legislation does not provide for biodiversity and biotrade, this country does not participate of the concept and guidelines of the subtopic Biodiversity and biotrade.

Relevance of the project

The project covers approximately up to 8.2 million square kilometers as defined by ACTO Member Countries². As known, the Amazon presents a complex and delicate ecosystem where the conservation and preservation of climatic and ecological processes in the Amazon Region contributes to the essential stability of global environmental mechanisms. All of its elements (climate, soil, fauna and flora) are closely interconnected, water and biodiversity among the most important aspects to be monitored.

The monitoring supported by the project will provide more accurate statistics about balances that are really impressive in the Amazon Region:

- The plant mass in the Amazon Region releases approximately seven trillion tons of water into the atmosphere per year through evapo-transpiration, while its rivers discharge close to 20% of the all fresh water that flows into the oceans.
- Tree diversity in the Amazon varies from 40 to 300 different species per hectare. Of the 250,000 species of over story plants, 170,000 (68%) live exclusively in the tropics and 90,000 of them in South America.
- Its extensive biodiversity is evidenced by its several ecosystems: dense dryland forests, seasonal forests, igapo forests, floodplains, varzea forests, savannas, mountainous refuges and pioneer formations.
- More than one hundred trillion tons of carbon is sequestered in the region.
- The region houses approximately 2.5 million insect species, 2,000 fish species, over 1,500 bird species, 550 reptile species and 500 mammal species.

Photos: ACTO/Sergio Amaral



² According to the Panamazonia Monitoring Project, the number of 8.2 million square kilometers represents the Amazonian territory in its maximum extension on the basis of at least one of the criteria (hydrographic, ecological, political-administrative).

Background

In the Amazon Strategic Cooperation Agenda, the Project responds to the need to support member countries in meeting a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable forest management and conservation. However, it is noteworthy to point out that the project was born out of a collaborative effort among ACTO countries initiated formally in 2005 within the regional context to validate the Tarapoto Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for the Sustainability of the Amazon Forest (Tarapoto, Peru, 1995). As a result of this process, forest cover was identified as a key indicator to respond to indicators of: (a) extension of areas by forest type; (b) rate of forest conversion; (c) proportion of environmental protection areas compared to permanent production areas; and (d) contribution to the conservation of biological diversity.

Among others, the discussion process about C&I in the Amazon countries was undertaken by meetings of the Forestry Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (COFLAC) and in the context of the Amazon Sub-regional Group Work Plan 2004-2007. In 2005-2006, with the support of ACTO, an Amazon Common Agenda Project was launched with the technical and financial support of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) supporting forest monitoring of the Amazon region. This Agenda focused on the benefits of the freeware systems developed by the Brazilian Space Agency (INPE) in processing remote sense images and GIS data using the low cost and high benefits of available technologies for forest cover monitoring.

The constructive dialogue between the forestry sectors of the Amazon countries will allow a regional information system for monitoring the forest cover as well as the promotion of a mechanism to institutionalize sub-regional dialogue as a priority for action. The Monitoring Project is a response to the decision made by the authorities and the mandate that was given to ACTO/PS. It reflects the regional consensus and commitments regarding the need identified to develop harmonized national forest cover monitoring systems at regional level.

