



LAC-IEE-05-26

ENVIRONMENTAL THRESHOLD DECISION

Activity Location: Colombia, Paraguay, and Ecuador

Activity Title: Advancing Development Cooperation Opportunities in the Hemisphere (ADCOH) - The Last Mile Initiative

Activity Number: 598-021

Funding: \$1.1 million

Life-of-Activity: August 2005 – August 2007

IEE prepared by: LAC/SPO, Susan Hill

Recommended Threshold Decision: Categorical Exclusion

Bureau Threshold Decision: Concur with Recommendation

Comments:

Pursuant to the following sections of 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2),

(i) Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.);

(xiv) Studies, projects or programs intended to develop the capability of recipient countries to engage in development planning, except to the extent designed to result in activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.); and

a **Categorical Exclusion** is issued for the activity to provide technical assistance to Colombia, Paraguay and Ecuador for their ADCOH Last Mile Initiative activities.

If any construction might be supported by this activity, an approved supplemental Initial Environmental Examination is required before it can be undertaken.

_____ Date _____

Victor H. Bullen
Bureau Environmental Officer
Bureau for Latin America & the Caribbean

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ADCOH Tech Asst).doc

Request for Categorical Exclusion/

Activity Location: Colombia, Paraguay, and Ecuador

Activity Title: Advancing Development Cooperation Opportunities in the Hemisphere (ADCOH) - The Last Mile Initiative

Activity Number: 598-021

Funding: \$1.1 million

Life-of-Activity 2 years

IEE prepared by: LAC/SPO, Susan Hill

Date prepared: August 4, 2005

Recommended Threshold Decision: Categorical Exclusion

Background: The Last Mile Initiative is an effort sponsored by the Administrator to foster the expansion of information and communications technology in rural areas of USAID presence countries for developmental purposes. The program is administered by the EGAT Bureau and supported by budget resources from all the regional bureaus. On July 8, 2005, AA/LAC approved the use of \$1.1 million to support activities in Colombia, Paraguay and Ecuador.

Summary Activity Description: The Last Mile Initiative provides technical assistance of private telecom service providers (where possible) working with wireless and other state-of-the-art information technologies (IT) to provide telecommunications, internet, and other IT links in underserved rural communities. The planned activity in Colombia has a strong link between technical innovation and policy reform in the telecommunications and IT sectors. The Paraguay activity demonstrates an innovative use of low cost IT technologies including community radio that will be integrated with existing USAID mission programs in selected community areas. Finally, the activity in Ecuador will provide timely market information for alternative products in rural areas along the northern border. It will also aid in the clearing and settlement process for a series of financial institutions associated with cooperatives that handle remittances in the communities served.

Recommended Threshold Decision: It is recommended that a categorical exclusion be approved for the above activities to be funded from the LAC Regional ADCOH objective. The activities fall within 22 CFR Section 216.2c as follows:

- (1)(i) The action does not have an effect on the natural or physical environment
- (2)(i) Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.).

Concurrence: _____
Deputy Director, LAC/SPO, Ellen Leddy

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