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BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Conserving biodiversity through ecosystem restoration, economic incentives for conservation and improved governance capacities.

OVERVIEW

USAID works to mitigate threats to Colombia's biodiversity. Colombia is the second most biodiverse country on Earth and is home to approximately 10 percent of the world's species. Not only does protecting biodiversity preserve the country's natural heritage, but biodiversity conservation is needed for economic development. This is because ecosystems provide direct-use goods and services, like food, medicine, fuel and water, as well as indirect-use services, like soil formation, water purification and recreation. For example, two percent of Colombia is subalpine forest (páramos). These forests are important ecosystems for Colombians because they provide the population with clean, drinkable water.

Deforestation is the primary threat to Colombia's biodiversity. In the last 20 years, 5.4 million hectares (Ha) of natural forest have been lost, and between 2015 and 2016 deforestation increased 44 percent. Deforestation is the result of illegal land appropriation, agriculture expansion and illegal gold mining. Increased coca production has also resulted in deforestation. With these challenges in mind, USAID focuses on conserving and restoring tropical humid forests in the Amazon, tropical dry forests in the Caribbean region, and flooded savannas and transitional forests in the Orinoquia region.

PHOTO BY USAID/COLOMBIA

COMPONENTS

CONSERVING AND RESTORING PRIORITY ECOSYSTEMS

USAID works to formalize new national and regional protected areas, while strengthening the management of existing protected areas. This includes conservation areas established by civil society organizations and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, as well as those established by private sector companies as part of their biodiversity compensation requirements.

CREATING ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION

USAID supports mechanisms that reward private and communal landowners for their conservation efforts. These incentives may result from access to new market opportunities, improved productive practices, or from payments for ecosystem services.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES

USAID strengthens regional governments and environmental institutions' capacities to improve land-use planning and incorporate conservation priorities in their development strategies. USAID also fosters partnerships with private sector actors and promotes women, youth, and indigenous community inclusion in conservation efforts.

RESULTS

- Improved the management of 2.38 million Ha of land;
- Placed more than 340,000 Ha of priority ecosystems under legal protection;
- Helped 17,150 individuals obtain economic benefits from natural resource management;
- Supported 485 community organizations effectively manage natural resources;
- Improved 321 institutions' natural resource management capacities; and
- Leveraged USD \$3.5 million for biodiversity conservation from public and private sectors.