

Capacity building of Colombian communities for Payment for Environmental Services, climate change and REDD+

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Case Studies

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1. Country Context

Colombia has a continental area of 1,141,748 km² (114,174,800 hectares), of which the total natural forest coverage is 61,246,659 hectares, i.e., 53.64% of the country's continental surface. The departments of Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, and Vaupés have the largest natural forest area in the country, with a total of 35,184,675 hectares. According to the following table, yearly average deforestation reaches a little more than 336,000 hectares/year.

Range of deforested areas and yearly average deforestation, 2000–07*						
Region	Total Deforestation 2000–07 period (ha)			Yearly Average Deforestation (ha /yr)		
	Lower	Average	Higher	Lower	Average	Higher
Andes	462.902	578.627	694.352	66.129	82.661	99.193
Pacífico	376.718	470.897	565.076	53.774	67.217	80.660
Oninoquia	204.394	255.493	306.592	29.199	36.499	43.799
Amazonia	585.088	731.360	877.632	83.584	104.480	125.376
Caribe	256.054	320.068	384.082	36.579	45.724	54.869
Total	1.885.156	2.356.445	2.827.734	269.265	366.581	403.897

* Preliminary figures subject to validation with high-resolution remote sensing data or field data.

This is due to seven main causes or drivers of deforestation, namely:

- Pushing back the farming and ranching frontier;
- Crops for illicit uses;
- Population settlement / displacement;
- Infrastructure;

- Mining;
- Extracting wood for sale or self-consumption (including both legal and illegal extraction); and
- Forest fires.

Public policies for forests are framed by the Forest Policy (Ministry of Environment and National Planning Department, 1996), approved through document CONPES 2834 of 1996. Its purpose is to achieve sustainable forest use, enable their conservation, consolidate the forest sector's integration into the national economy, and enhance the people's quality of life. The R-PP that is currently being prepared proposes a national REDD+ strategy, institutional arrangements, and other policy elements.

Colombia now has some 12 demonstrative projects in the initial design and implementation stages:

- REDD Amazon Project: This project covers a total of 14.6 million hectares and includes the four types of REDD+ activities: preventing deforestation and forest degradation, capturing carbon by forest regeneration, and conservation.
- Project to implement the enhanced natural forest management strategy in the community council of *Con Costa*: Area – 73,033 ha, No. villages – 18, No. families – 829, No. Individuals – 4743.
- Project to implement the enhanced natural forest management strategy in the community council of *Cajambre*. Project to implement the enhanced natural forest management strategy in the community council of *Cajambre*.
- Project to implement the enhanced natural forest management strategy in the community council of *Bajo Mira*: Area – 46,482 ha, No. villages – 42, No. families – 1240, No. individuals – 6271.
- Project to implement the enhanced natural forest management strategy in the town council of *Chigorodó*: Area – 9,000 ha.
- Technical coaching for the “Corazón del mundo” family forest ranger program in *Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta*, benefitting 1,727 campesino families.
- Incorporating biodiversity conservation by preventing / reducing deforestation in Colombia's Andean–Amazon piedmont. Designing the Project Development Document (PDD).
- REDD project in the San Nicolas forests. REDD project in the San Nicolas forests.
- REDD project in the rural parishes of *Pedreras* and *Tarapacá* in the Colombian Amazon region. Area of 649,834 ha, involving the indigenous community groups of *Yucuna*, *Matapí* y *Miraña*. Conservation International, *Corporación Ecovera*, *Corpoamazonia*.
- Participatory land use planning, livelihood enhancement & forest conservation in the *Macizo Colombiano*. 73,183 ha, calculating 80 to 150 tCO₂/year for 20 years. ONF International and CAM.
- REDD as a funding mechanism for implementing a conservation strategy. 600,000 ha, which cover 19 municipalities in *Cundinamarca* and one in *Meta*. Conservation International, *Corporación Ecovera*, the Provincial Government of *Cundinamarca*, *Corpoguavio*, and *CAR*.

2. Describing the project/action in which the Environmental Fund is involved

The project seeks to design and implement a capacity-building program for local community organizations on the thematic areas of environmental services, climate change and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation plus (REDD+). The purpose for this program was to facilitate skill and competency building among these stakeholders, persons and institutions, in order to evaluate initiatives in these areas and successfully establish future local experiences that will:

1. Contribute to biodiversity conservation;
2. Help preserve the related ecosystem services; and
3. Contribute to local or regional economic development.

In order to meet this goal, three REDD+ related outcomes were proposed:

1. Communities, environmental authorities and regional universities are informed of the existence, characteristics and progress of PSE/REDD strategies.
2. Local community members, environmental authorities and regional universities understand the basics of PSE/REDD and are able to convey them to their communities, colleagues, and students.
3. Communities are prepared to take action to develop a REDD – local project. Two courses were implemented with indigenous communities in the Colombian Amazon region with the attendance of more than 40



leaders, one high-level course attended by over 100 representatives, and one certificate course for practitioners in alliance with the *Universidad Militar Nueva Granada*. In addition, procedures were put into place to replicate these courses with communities. Accordingly, nine replication courses were held with indigenous communities in Putumayo and Amazonas, where over 300 persons participated.

An internship was also designed and implemented for indigenous leaders in Bogota, with the attendance of 5 indigenous leaders who had been identified during the courses.

Based on this project, the hope is to build alliances with communities and other organizations to develop concrete REDD/REDD+ initiatives, in order to put the abilities learned into practice.

3. What does the Environmental Fund do?

Role: *Fondo Acción* is responsible for designing and implementing this program in partnership with Conservation International Colombia and with the support of the REDD Table. During the design phase, *Fondo Acción* identified the program contents, strategies and tools, considering different audiences. It also managed the program resources, both its own and those of its partner. This administration was in charge of selecting suppliers, accompanying activities, and reporting outcomes.

Background: *Fondo Acción* decided to get involved in this initiative for the following reasons:

- The Fund Board of Directors decided that one of its strategic goals was capacity building for non-governmental organizations in environmental subjects, especially forest-related carbon. This is due to prospects for the REDD+ mechanism to finance forest conservation.
- The AFCP project contemplated developing pilot activities in the Amazon region of participating countries, so it is necessary for forest owners to have everything they need to decide whether to get involved.
- There were philanthropic resources available to develop preparatory initiatives for this.

Budget allocation: The Board of Directors allocated US\$ 75,000 of the Americas Initiative budget for implementing activities associated with fulfillment of OE 5. With these resources, *Fondo Acción* leveraged US\$ 137,500 from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation through Conservation International. In total, the program executed US\$ 187,500.

Work Team: Once the agreement was signed, *Fondo Acción* became the administrator of these resources. Within its team, it designated a manager for the technical area initiative, who was responsible for designing program contents in partnership with CI Colombia and with the support of the REDD Table. The manager was also responsible for applying the processes and procedures of the Fund's Quality Management System, for convening the consultants, for accompanying program design and implementation, and for reporting on outcomes and impacts. Administrative and financial personnel also participated in the accounting, IT and archive areas. Finally, the legal area of *Fondo Acción* appointed a team coordinator for hiring and critical path procedures, and in general to support project execution. The financial, administrative, technical, and legal directors also provided support for project implementation, as did the Executive Director.

Challenges and prospects: The project was implemented correctly and the expected outcomes were achieved. However, a few challenges were identified while it was being implemented.

Working with communities requires relationships of trust, which are built upon the foundations of continual communication with project beneficiaries, and this means long time periods and much travel.

When working with this type of community, administrative and financial matters require flexibility on behalf of the manager, since these regions do not have the same conditions as where the Fund usually works.

These preparatory actions should be approached within the context of larger, longer-term investments, so that investments made will be appropriate. For example, capacity building should lead communities and organizations to implement efforts relating to what they have learned (designing projects or plans, organizing communities, implementing financial sustainability mechanisms, etc.).

Although the project has ended, *Fondo Acción* hopes to continue working with these communities and organizations on project development and on partnerships to manage the funds arising from them.

Bibliography

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