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## SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

Addressing the causes of land use change, promoting sustainable livelihoods and increasing the effectiveness of environmental policies.

### OVERVIEW

USAID promotes sustainable forest, agricultural and community land management. In the last 20 years, 5.4 million hectares (Ha) of Colombian forests were lost. Between 1990 and 2012, 71 percent of Colombia's national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulted from changes in land use, primarily from deforestation. Protecting forests and other key ecosystems sustains livelihoods, mitigates climate change risks, and maintains environmental services like biodiversity preservation, carbon capture and water purification.

To encourage and fund environmental conservation efforts, the Government of Colombia (GOC) passed a national carbon tax on liquid fossil fuels in 2016. This tax encouraged fuel distributors to reduce their carbon tax obligation by buying carbon credits from renewable energy and forest protection projects. USAID helps communities take advantage of this carbon tax by developing carbon offset projects and selling carbon credits to companies. Communities can then use revenue generated through carbon credit sales to fund forest conservation and community services. The Colombian Ministry of Finance estimates this tax will generate USD \$250 million in annual financing for conservation and restoration projects.

PHOTO BY USAID/COLOMBIA

## COMPONENTS

### ADDRESSING LAND USE CHANGE DRIVERS

USAID promotes inclusive peace and sustainable rural development with the understanding that illicit economies drive land change in Colombia. Illicit economies include coca crop expansion, illegal gold mining and illegal logging. These economies are perpetuated by corruption, armed actors, lack of formal land tenure, weak sub-national government actors and a lack of licit economic opportunities.

### PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LAND USE AND LIVELIHOODS

USAID works with communities to develop Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) projects. These projects generate revenue for communities, and encourage improved natural resource governance, by selling carbon offset credits to private sector actors. The revenue generated by REDD+ projects can be invested in other community development priorities like health, education and security.

### INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

USAID helps design a national greenhouse gas monitoring, reporting and verification system to guarantee that GOC environmental programs are rigorous, transparent and functional. This system is needed to report policy objective progress and to develop greenhouse gas information systems.

## RESULTS

- Worked with 18 Afro-Colombian communities and one indigenous community to develop and implement eight REDD+ projects protecting 650,000 Ha of pacific forests;
- Generated 5.4 million carbon credits worth USD 20 million in new income for communities;
- Designed Payment for Environmental Services (PES) mechanisms to support sustainable land use and livelihoods in subalpine forest ecosystems (paramos); and
- Used the public-private business model to establish acacia plantations on lands deforested and degraded by illegal gold mining.