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**USAID CONVENES LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEADERS TO DISCUSS THE STATE OF THE CARBON MARKET IN COLOMBIA**



Maria Claudia García Dávila, Vice Minister of Environmental Policies and Normalization, speaking at the opening of the carbon market event hosted by USAID.

USAID/Colombia convened local and international leaders on November 27th of 2018 to demonstrate the potential that the Colombian carbon market offers in promoting national green growth, continuous improvement of regulatory and institutional frameworks, and increased market participation by buyers, sellers, investors, and market makers. Conservation International and the newly formed Association of Actors of the Colombian Carbon Market (ASOCARBONO) collaborated with USAID on the event.



Danilo Villafaña, an Arhuaco indigenous leader speaking at the carbon market event hosted by USAID

The theme of the event focused on the current status of the carbon market and expectations for 2019. The event brought together international experts, national authorities, and private enterprise in Bogota to discuss the topic and how the carbon market can benefit social and economic development initiatives in remote, conflict-affected communities across Colombia.

USAID Mission Director Larry Sacks highlighted the use of carbon neutrality as a mechanism to help the Colombian government mitigate carbon emissions and encourage forest conservation. Conservation International's Director Fabio Arjona noted that Colombia offers a unique alternative to private companies that consume large amounts of liquid fossil fuel. Although 50 countries throughout the world implement carbon neutral mechanisms, companies can offset carbon tax payments by purchasing carbon credits at cheaper rates and deduct them from corporate taxes.

During the event, the Colombian government expressed its support for the carbon market and confirmed its continuing resolve to uphold commitments set forth in the Paris Climate Agreement, which includes a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent before 2030. Speakers shared their perspectives on projections for the carbon market in 2019, especially noting the role that the National Registry of Emissions (RENARE), a newly entity formed under the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, will have in monitoring the country's carbon credit mechanism.

Wildlife Works Carbon Founder and President Mike Korchinsky discussed the opportunities and effects of the carbon market in developing countries during his keynote address and emphasized the importance of increasing participation of the private sector in these markets. Notable speakers also included Vice Minister of the Environment Roberto Esmeral and Sandra Garavito from USAID's Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program.

A total of 200 people attended the event and over 700 joined via a live-stream. Participants learned about the supply and demand of carbon credits in the domestic market, updates made to current regulations, the current state of international carbon markets, and the demand it has generated for 2019, which is essential to stimulating national interest in the Colombian market. Also, in attendance were nonprofits, and representatives from indigenous communities and Afro-Colombian councils who are participating in USAID REDD+ programs. ■

**INNOVATIVE PAYMENT FOR SERVICES MODEL PROMOTES SUSTAINABILITY IN TOLIMA**



The Colombian páramos ecosystem threatened by unsustainable land use.



A view of Las Dominguez DMRI in the Las Herosas Páramos Complex.

A USAID/Colombia grant will help fund an initiative to conserve and manage 12,946 hectares of the Chilí-Barragán and Las Herosas páramos complexes and establish a payment for environmental services (PES) scheme under a results-based mechanism. The grant is a result of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between USAID/Colombia and the Regional Autonomous Corporation of Tolima (CORTOLIMA), the highest environmental authority in Tolima, on December 7.

Through this joint effort, USAID/Colombia and CORTOLIMA will ensure the sustainability of the páramos' flora and fauna and large repositories of water by improving land management methods and helping implement sustainable farming practices for residents. The PES mechanism reinforces that goal by offering communities economic incentives to preserve and restore the páramos. USAID's Páramos and Forests Activity will provide technical assistance to the communities and will also train local stakeholders on how to conserve water sources and carbon reserves stored in forests and soil. ■

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR CONFIRMS INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-COLOMBIAN COMMUNITIES DECREASED DEFORESTATION LEVELS AND WILL RECEIVE CREDITS**



Three indigenous Embera community members trekking to their natural reserve in Mutatá.

To determine whether certain Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have generated carbon credits through their efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, P&F facilitated the verification of the Biodiversity and Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. Verification was conducted by AENOR, a Spanish auditing firm that reviewed documentation, interviewed stakeholders and held field visits. AENOR used two international standards: Carbon, Community and Biodiversity and Verified Carbon Standard to determine whether carbon credits had been generated correctly.

Through USAID-funded grants, P&F trained community members in preventing deforestation using sustainable farming methods and in how to govern their territory more efficiently. The communities demonstrated to international auditors that they had decreased deforestation and forest degradation levels since a baseline was established in July 2012. The credits earned during that period will help improve the livelihoods of 8,120 families in Valle del Cauca, Chocó and Antioquia. With P&F support, the communities will determine how the revenue will be invested in initiatives that bolster social services and infrastructure and create more jobs. ■



Indigenous community leader Lijja standing in one of the Embera villages in Mutatá, Antioquia.