



USAID
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AMAZON VISION 2020 REPORT

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CONTRACT INFORMATION

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ACRONYMS

ADELA	Amazon Development Entrepreneurial and Learning Alliance
AIME	USAID Accelerating Inclusion and Mitigating Emissions
AIRR	USAID Amazon Indigenous Rights and Resources
AREP	Amazon Regional Environment Program
CINCIA	Center for Amazonian Scientific Innovation
CO₂	carbon dioxide
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
ICMBio	Chico Mendez Institute for Biodiversity Conservation
PCAB	Program for the Conservation of Amazonian Biodiversity
PPA	Partnership Platform for the Amazon
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SCIOA	USAID Strengthening the Capacity of Indigenous Organizations in the Amazon
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFS	United States Forest Service
USG	United States Government

INTRODUCTION

The Amazon is home to 33 million people, 60 percent of the world’s remaining rainforests, and one-third of all known plant and animal species. Local communities rely on the region’s natural capital for water, food, and livelihoods. Populations worldwide benefit from the Amazonian ecosystem, which affects global weather patterns and holds up to 140 billion tons of carbon dioxide – the equivalent of 14 decades worth of human emissions.¹ This region’s importance cannot be overstated; the threats it faces cannot be underestimated.

Decades of settlements, land trafficking, energy and agricultural development, cattle ranching, gold and mineral extraction, and climate change are transforming the region. Illegal activities such as farming illicit crops, illegal gold mining, and occupation by armed groups contribute to regional insecurity and deforestation. In 2020 alone, an estimated 2 million hectares (20,000 square kilometers) of primary forest loss occurred across the Amazon region, an area the size of El Salvador.²

This combination of factors exacerbates tensions between biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, and Indigenous rights, as well as the growing demand for local and national development. Recognizing the need for a coordinated and strategic regional response to threats facing the Amazon forest in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Guyana, and Suriname, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) developed the **Amazon Vision** in 2016 to be the framework unifying the Agency’s goals across the region.

The Amazon Vision seeks to support a healthy and resilient forested region valued by society, promote

human well-being, and safeguard our global climate. The Vision describes, guides, and measures USAID’s investments and conservation impact at a regional scale and includes the work of the Amazon Regional Environmental Program (AREP), the bilateral Missions, and USAID/Washington projects in the Amazon.

The Amazon Vision has four overarching goals USAID is working toward across the region:

1. Decrease deforestation, forest degradation, and greenhouse gas emissions
2. Foster an environmentally friendly economy
3. Protect key landscapes and species
4. Secure rights, resources, and health of forest-dependent communities

At the bilateral level in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, USAID works closely with host governments, civil society, and the private sector to align efforts toward joint goals. Working with these key stakeholders at the regional level, AREP seeks to complement or fill gaps between bilateral programs and address basin-wide and transnational threats that best benefit from a coordinated regional approach.

USAID envisions sustainable and self-sufficient local governance of the Amazon. By seeking locally sustained results, leveraging external funding, building local capacities, accelerating enterprise-driven development, and responding to priorities set forth around regional cooperation, USAID helps host governments on their journey to self-reliance.

The purpose of this report is to describe the regional context, the current status and achievements of USAID’s biodiversity and sustainable landscape initiatives in the Amazon basin through the lens of the Amazon Vision.

¹ Soares-Filho, B.S., D.C. Nepstad, L.M. Curran, G.C. Cerqueira I, R.A. Garcia, C.A. Ramos, E.Voll, A. McDonald, P. Lefebvre, and P. Schlesinger. (2006) Modeling conservation in the Amazon basin. *Nature* 440(7083):520-523.

² <https://maaproject.org/2021/amazon-hotspots-2020/>

HOW USAID IS IMPROVING CONSERVATION IN THE AMAZON



Figure 1. Amazon Vision Goals

ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE AMAZON

In the Amazon basin countries of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname, USAID is supporting projects that combat deforestation, conserve biodiversity, create environmentally-friendly economic opportunities, improve the management of important landscapes, and support Indigenous rights. These include:

- Amazon Regional Environment Program-AREP (USAID/South America Regional)
- Amazonia Verde (USAID/Peru)
- Connected Landscapes (USAID/Colombia)
- Conservation and Governance (USAID/Colombia)
- Colombia Forest and Wetlands Support Program (USAID/Colombia)
- Natural Wealth Program (USAID/Colombia)
- Partnership for the Conservation of Amazon Biodiversity-PCAB (USAID/Brazil)
- Territories of Life (USAID/Colombia)

Building on a long history of partnership in the region, USAID assistance is showing results for both the environment and the people who rely on it. For the time period of 2015–2024, USAID has committed approximately \$257 million for the implementation of activities in the region,³ where

3 USAID investment in environmental programming in Brazil, Colombia, Peru and the South America Regional Office planned from 2015 through 2024.

it has historically been one of the five-largest conservation donors.⁴

In 2020, USAID and its global partners improved the management and conditions of key landscapes in the Amazon, **improving land management in more than 48 million hectares**, an area larger than Sweden. Improving land management and keeping forests standing sequesters and reduces greenhouse gases. An estimated **38.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂)** were avoided, sequestered, or reduced as a result of U.S. Government (USG) sustainable landscapes programming, the equivalent of 4.4 million U.S. homes' energy use for one year.⁵ Engaging the private sector as a key partner for realizing change, **USAID leveraged nearly \$21 million in private-sector investments** for improved natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, climate, sustainable livelihoods, and other environmental programming.⁶ People are directly benefiting from USAID's work in the environment; nearly **87,000 people gained improved economic benefits** as a result of USG environmental programming.

4 Strelneck, David and Thais Vilela. 2017. International Conservation Funding in the Amazon: An updated analysis. Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Palo Alto, California.

5 <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>

6 USAID commits environmental funds through biodiversity, natural resource management, and sustainable landscapes funding. Activities highlighted in this report are primarily implemented using one or more of these three funding types.

2020 USAID INVESTMENT IN THE AMAZON REGION



Approximately **\$257 million** committed for the implementation of USAID activities from 2015-2024



Land management improved in nearly **48 million hectares**



\$21 million of private sector funding leveraged by USAID



Improved economic benefits gained by more than **87,000 people**



Estimated **38.5 million metric tons of CO₂** avoided, sequestered, or reduced—the equivalent of 4.4 million U.S. homes' energy use for one year



COVID-19 in the Amazon and USAID's Response

Of the 15 countries with the highest COVID-19 death rates globally, 11 are in Latin America or the Caribbean. Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador each reported death rates of approximately one in 1,200 from COVID. As of January 1, 2021, Peru reported one in 900 deaths, despite having the region's most aggressive response. In the Amazon basin, Indigenous groups are especially hard-hit. High infection rates, low access to health care, and remote locations make addressing the pandemic in these communities challenging. The pandemic is also jeopardizing the region's ecological health. The collapse of the formal economy and the heavy stress on government resources have caused significant increases in deforestation and conservation crimes.

USAID is standing alongside Amazon region governments, responding rapidly and creatively to new priorities, converting live training and consultations into online delivery, and installing communications systems in remote communities to enable risk-free contact. Adaptation to virtual training was especially challenging for remote communities. It required purchasing biosecurity equipment and communications equipment, including satellite internet facilities and photovoltaic kits to charge communication equipment and enable implementing partners to maintain activities. An effective COVID response required direct participation of beneficiaries. The involvement of Indigenous organizations, in particular, was indispensable at all phases of design, implementation, and monitoring. COVID-19 has fundamentally altered the global aid landscape. USAID remains committed to meeting this challenge through innovative adaptation to local needs.





**GOAL
1**

DECREASE DEFORESTATION, FOREST DEGRADATION, AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Enable countries to access forest conservation finance
- Support low emissions development strategies
- Improve use of information to reduce hydrologic and fire risk



THE CHALLENGE

This goal aims to reduce emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation and minimize the potential impacts of fire, drought, and flooding. A key driver of global climate change, illegal deforestation poses an enormous threat to the Amazon and forest-dependent communities. It accounts for the loss of over 6 million hectares of rainforest between 2008-2018, greater than the size of Costa Rica, loss which has greatly accelerated during the COVID-19 era.⁷ The Amazon's ability to mitigate global warming is decreasing; the region absorbed over 3 percent of global CO₂ emissions per year in the 1990s, but this has decreased and the region risks turning into a net carbon source if deforestation is not reversed.⁸ Deforestation rates, both legal and illegal, are accelerating again after years of progress, with fire as a common tactic used to clear land for illegal development and drive Indigenous Peoples from their lands. To ensure the region's survival, combating further forest loss and degradation and promoting reforestation will be a monumental but vital challenge for decades to come.

⁷ https://rainforests.mongabay.com/amazon/deforestation_calculations.html

⁸ <https://apnews.com/article/384fdb5ee7654667b53ddb49efce8023>

ACHIEVEMENTS

Working alongside determined local partners, USAID is building capacities to monitor and prevent deforestation, investing in reforestation efforts, and improving the economic value of forests by enabling countries to access forest conservation finance mechanisms such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). Additionally, USAID is improving the use of hydrologic data and information about fire risk to help governments and stakeholders implement climate adaptation actions to better respond to the increased threat of fires, flooding, and droughts.

USAID's implementing partners are developing methodologies to scale up the restoration of lands degraded by mining, destructive agriculture, and ranching. These motivated groups are mobilizing government and private-sector investment to reforest degraded areas, expand community forest management, and establish sustainable agroforestry in Indigenous lands. **USAID sustainable landscapes programs contributed to the reduction of 38.5 million tons of CO₂ emissions in fiscal year 2020.**

SUCCESS STORIES

CINCIA Innovation Lab

In 2019, the Peruvian army raided and cleared the illegal mining town of La Pampa in Madre de Dios, Peru. There, they found an alien landscape devoid of vegetation. Bare stretches of sand ended in mercury-laden pools of stagnant brown water. Beyond ecological devastation, illegal mining towns such as La Pampa are hotspots for human trafficking, the drug trade, and money laundering by international criminal syndicates. In the face of this devastation, an innovative laboratory is researching novel solutions to reclaim the region's degraded lands and monitor mercury pollution. USAID, in partnership with Wake Forest University's Center for Amazonian Scientific Innovation (CINCIA), is researching reforestation techniques, mercury poisoning and mitigation, drone monitoring technology, and improved mine closure techniques. In a 42-hectare forest laboratory, CINCIA scientists have tested 75 native species in degraded soils collected from mining sites, selecting the heartiest and quickest-growing to reforest former mining sites in the Peruvian Amazon. The laboratory is also researching the use of cutting-edge organic fertilizers that bring nutrients back to degraded soils and accelerate reforestation. In December 2019, the Peruvian President planted



CINCIA uses drones to improve the analysis of deforested mining areas. Credit: Jason Houston for CINCIA

an experimental seedling in the Tambopata National Reserve, a protected area invaded by miners from La Pampa. This reserve is being reforested with technical assistance from CINCIA and Peru's National Protected Areas Service. If successful, the pilot could be scaled up to restore up to 800 hectares in Tambopata. Improved techniques from CINCIA's work may help guide the Peruvian government's efforts to reforest other degraded sites in the Amazon, such as the nearly 100,000 hectares of forest in southeastern Peru destroyed by illegal mining since 1985.⁹

Fire Science and Policy Change in Colombia

In areas formerly occupied by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Colombians now have easier access to develop the land. However, as a result of unplanned colonization, protected areas in biodiversity hotspots previously occupied and indirectly protected by FARC have experienced a six-fold increase in intentionally set fires that in 2019 resulted in a 50 percent increase in deforestation.¹⁰ With the help of two Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research grants, Colombian Forest Ecologist Dr. Dolores Armenteras and her team are researching the factors contributing to intense forest fires and their impacts. Their research findings are informing national level policies.

In the Andes and the Orinoco regions, the research team is analyzing spatial and ecological data collected at several field sites to reveal fire patterns and impacts. Working with Colombia's national parks system, the researchers are helping to strengthen their fire management tools, as well as working with rural communities in the Andes and northern Amazonia to understand their perceptions and uses of fire. The researchers found that fire management is likely to only be successful

⁹ Espejo, Jorge Caballero, et al. "Deforestation and Forest Degradation Due to Gold Mining in the Peruvian Amazon: A 34-Year Perspective." *Remote Sensing*. 2018, 10(12), 1903; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rs10121903>

¹⁰ Armenteras, Dolores, Liliana M. Davalos, and Laura Schneider. "Fires in protected areas reveal unforeseen costs of Colombian peace." *Nature, Ecology, and Evolution* 3:20-23. January 2019.

within a legal framework that integrates national guidelines and policies that account for regional and sociocultural differences. The Colombian House of Representatives has used these findings to create a national bill on fire management. When

officially passed, the bill will provide much needed national guidelines for fire management and promote the importance of the balance between cultural practices, social needs, and fire ecology to reduce deforestation.



Fires in the Amazon

Forest fires in the Amazon have increased significantly in intensity in recent years. According to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research, deforestation in the Amazon in 2020 was the worst since 2012, destroying an estimated 2.2 million hectares (an area the size of New Jersey), with no signs of relenting.¹¹ Fires are often associated with clearing for agriculture and have become more destructive as local climate conditions change. Led by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and USAID, the USG has been a strong ally in fighting forest fires in South America for decades and has increased support in response to the amplified threat. Responding to USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance request, USFS sent experts in fire management, suppression, and investigation to aid teams in Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru in 2019 and delivered personal protective equipment and hand tools to Bolivian firefighters.

In Peru, USAID supported the design and implementation of the first international course on fire management at Cusco's newly-inaugurated National Training Center for Forest Fire Rangers in 2019, the only specialized center in Peru. In Brazil, USAID's Program for the Conservation of Amazon Biodiversity (PCAB) tackles fire management and prevention with the USFS and the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMbio). With a core staff of about 120 and an additional 1,200 firefighters contracted annually, the partnership responds to fires within 171,000 hectares of federal conservation units. It also works with local organizations to promote community fire training and policy reforms.

¹¹ <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/11/as-2020-amazon-fire-season-winds-down-brazil-carbon-emissions-rise/>



GOAL
2

FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY ECONOMY

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Increase sustainable livelihoods
- Promote best practices to foster an environmentally friendly economy
- Strengthen forest sector governance



THE CHALLENGE

Deforestation in the Amazon is the highest in a decade.¹² Compared with North America, where deforestation is driven primarily by forestry activities and wildfires, roughly 60 percent in Latin America results from land clearance to obtain or produce commodities, especially meat, timber, minerals, and export crops.¹³ Incursions into protected territories for mining and agriculture threaten traditional ways of life, forcing local populations off their lands and into dangerous, low-wage jobs in mining or clear-cutting. Appropriating the Amazon's natural resources is a lucrative temptation for domestic and international investors, whose incentives and interests differ significantly from those of local communities. As powerful interests take root, forest-dependent communities can find it extremely difficult to make a living in ways that do not threaten the environment.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Amazonian communities are building a self-reliant future by working with USAID to generate sustainable livelihood opportunities and improve their forestry sector governance. By providing an alternative to illegal or unsustainable activities, communities can build strong local economies that work for both people and the environment.



A Cacataibo man from the Puerto Nuevo Indigenous community extracting latex from a shiringa tree. Credit: Forest Alliance

USAID is working with local communities and Indigenous groups to scale up and fund environmentally friendly commercial ventures, build capacity for business practices, and find eco-friendly and profitable innovations for traditional extractive industries. In 2020, **nearly 87,000 people derived economic benefits from USG sustainable natural resource management activities.**¹⁴ Additionally, **USAID helped mobilize nearly \$21 million in private and host government funding** for improved natural resource management, sustainable landscapes, and sustainable livelihoods.¹⁵

¹² <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-01368-x>

¹³ <https://www.wri.org/blog/2020/02/agriculture-drove-recent-record-breaking-tree-cover-loss>

¹⁴ USAID 2019 Brazil and Colombia PPR

¹⁵ Ibid.

Working with partners like the USFS, local non-governmental organizations, and government organizations such as ICMBio in Brazil and Peru's National Forest and Wildlife Service, USAID helps strengthen legal value chains and rural and Indigenous Peoples' capacity to manage their forests. By enabling the effective management of community-owned forests, vulnerable rural and Indigenous populations can lower their risk of displacement and realize complementary economic opportunities. These activities include Brazil nut harvesting, cacao production, and sustainable logging, fisheries, and tourism. In a region where cattle ranching is a significant contributor to deforestation, supporting sustainable cattle ranching through managing silvopastoral systems is helping to produce deforestation-free dairy and beef through USAID's Conservation and Governance activity.

Amazonian peoples are creative, enterprising, and care about their land. Remote locations without easy access to markets or technical expertise often make launching enterprises and attracting buyers a challenge. Across the Amazon, USAID is partnering with governments, the private sector, and local organizations to mobilize investments in sustainable businesses. USAID's Accelerating Inclusion and Mitigating Emissions (AIME) activity worked with dozens of small and medium enterprises to strengthen the commercialization of traditional handicrafts and gourmet products. AIME's work included establishing an online platform ("Canopy Bridge") to connect producers and buyers of Indigenous sustainable products and provide personalized trade support for Amazonian producers.¹⁶ **This five-year effort resulted in export contracts worth \$1.6 million for local producers.**¹⁷ On a larger scale, USAID is working with the Government of Brazil and private-sector partners to **mobilize a \$100 million biodiversity-focused impact-investment fund for the Amazon.**¹⁸ The Althelia Fund will leverage private-sector investment to support sustainable enterprises.¹⁹

16 <https://canopybridge.com>

17 AIME Final Performance Evaluation, 2018

18 <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/latin-american-and-caribbean/letter-intent-between-usaid-and-ministry-environment-brazil>

19 <https://althelia.com/2019/10/28/first-closing-of-the-althelia-biodiversity-fund-brazil/>

SUCCESS STORIES

Partnership Platform for the Amazon, Brazil

"In order to replace illegal or unsustainable economic models, we need to support businesses, startups, and ideas that move in that direction. And this is what this program is all about," says Ted Gehr, Director of USAID Brazil.

The Partnership Platform for the Amazon (PPA) promotes an innovative development model by supporting Amazonian entrepreneurs with a vision for a sustainable local economy. Promising startups participate in PPA's Acceleration Program, where they receive tailored assistance with technical aspects of running a successful business, such as marketing, accounting, and revenue generation. Each year's graduating class adds to a key network of like-minded social and environmental entrepreneurs in the area. Businesses in 2020's group include sustainable agriculture, forest management, environmental products and services, education for environmental conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and extractive cooperatives.

At the end of the Acceleration Program, startups have the chance to gain additional funding to scale up their enterprises. In December 2019, private investors listened to startup pitches and pledged a million dollars to invest in nine enterprises. Additionally, \$1.3 million was pledged for future investment by the Althelia Biodiversity Fund, the first Brazilian fund specifically focused on impact investing in the Amazon.

A 2019 impact assessment found the 15 accelerated businesses (67 percent run by women) created 251 direct jobs, benefitted 110 communities in 43 municipalities, and helped protect and restore 873,000 hectares of forest in the PPA's first year of operations. The future looks promising, according to Mariano Cenamo of the Institute of Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Amazon, which implements the Acceleration Program. "These are businesses and entrepreneurs that have the potential to transform the region's economy, each in its own area and specialty."

Sustainable Business Models for Greater Biodiversity Impact, Peru

The Amazon Development Entrepreneurial and Learning Alliance (ADELA) will serve to scale up proven sustainable business models and foster the growth of other promising environmentally friendly sustainable value chains in Peru. ADELA aims to generate 100 business and environmentally friendly development projects, 50 private sector and 50 public sector co-investment opportunities, and leverage \$50 to \$100 million in private-sector investments with an initial \$10 million provided by USAID. To do so, ADELA will establish a board, which will include USAID, BHP Foundation, the National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State, and Conservation International Ventures to provide leadership, vision, and guidance throughout the program. The Board members will work with like-minded companies to assist private-sector actors to develop or scale-up businesses, initially focusing on businesses whose supply chains have the greatest impact on the biodiversity within the Peruvian Amazon. The activity will start operating in Peru's Amazon regions of San Martín, Ucayali, Huanuco and Madre de Dios.

Improving Livelihoods and Conservation Through an Improved Rubber Cycle, Brazil

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a natural rubber factory in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon is paying more than double the market price to community rubber tappers using clean, sustainable technology. The certified and organic cooperative headed by Francisco Samonek is owned by rubber tappers, who share the profits from selling rubber footwear and other products. Their traditional techniques, scientific research, and patented technology have earned the group awards for innovation and social technology and attracted the PPA's attention, which selected them as one of the first startups to receive investment and join the Acceleration Program.

Knowledge from the factory is being shared with other communities to help build a sustainable local economy. Maria Angélica Correa was trained by Samonek's team alongside other women in Vila Franca. These women have nurtured the revival of traditional rubber tapping in their village, one

of over 70 located within the Tapajós-Arapiuns Extractive Reserve, a protected forest in the state of Pará. Tote bags made by the women even made their way to the Olympic Games as part of an official press gift pack for journalists covering the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.

“Up to two years ago, the factory was more of a lab,” says Samonek. With the PPA's support, he created a business plan and developed a better understanding of investment needs, costs, and margins. The cooperative's rebranding under the Acceleration Program attracted high-end fair-trade retailers and the largest footwear brands in the country. Samonek feels closer than ever to his dream of Amazon rubber tappers owning the factory, selling organic-certified products, partnering with big players, and promoting a new sustainable development model that ensures forest conservation for years to come.



PPA Acceleration Program products. Credit: IDESAM



GOAL
3

PROTECT KEY LANDSCAPES AND SPECIES

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Combat environmental crimes in protected areas
 - Build capacity for improved management in key landscapes
-



THE CHALLENGE

This goal focuses on strengthening the management of conservation areas and Indigenous lands to protect key landscapes and species threatened by climate change, pollution, illegal poaching and harvesting, and economic pressures. Activities such as illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and illegal mining endanger the integrity of protected areas, decimate ecosystems, and bring conflict and insecurity for local communities. In particular, confronting illegal gold mining, which attracts international criminal groups and drug traffickers and encourages systemic corruption, is a priority for U.S. national security. Land seized by land grabbers or mining groups is managed with no view to future sustainability; natural resources and topsoil are quickly degraded and the land is eventually passed on to low-productivity farmers or abandoned when stripped bare. Furthermore, the large area and remoteness of Amazonian forests pose unique challenges for management and monitoring by local stakeholders, who often lack training and resources to effectively protect conservation areas and key landscapes from illegal intrusions.

Misaligned laws create incentives for encroachment. While land and topsoil are the property of legal owners, subsoil minerals are owned by the state, and slight alterations to land (e.g., a fence or crops) create an argument that the

encroacher has made productive improvements on the land and can therefore make a claim to ownership. These legal realities increase the threat of encroachment and conflict in Indigenous and protected lands. Furthermore, environmental defenders, especially Indigenous defenders, are under threat of murder or violence for their role in speaking out against illegal activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS

USAID is partnering with Amazonian governments and stakeholders to protect key landscapes by strengthening local capacity to prevent and combat conservation crimes and manage protected areas and Indigenous territories. In 2020, USAID and its global partners **improved land management in more than 48 million hectares** and trained 15,802 people on sustainable natural resources management or biodiversity conservation, building the next cohort of ecosystem champions and strengthening self-reliance for local conservation efforts.

In Peru, where illegal mining has devastated ecosystems and brought violence and crime to local communities, USAID intergovernmental cooperative programs such as SilvaCarbon and SERVIR-Amazonia are strengthening the capacity of local authorities to use advanced satellite detection techniques to measure forest change. SilvaCarbon increases tropical countries' ability to

measure, monitor, and report on carbon in their forests and other lands, and SERVIR-Azonia works to help governments, universities, and civil society organizations use satellite information and geospatial technologies to manage climate risks and land use. Satellite technologies used by these programs can quickly spot illegal deforestation and wildfires and alert necessary enforcement authorities. Other applications of this technology include modeling carbon stored in forests to meet international reporting requirements, including REDD+. USAID, USFS, and the U.S. National Park Service are helping protected areas across the Amazon improve monitoring and enforcement capacity to prevent illegal activity before it happens. **Through its work in 2020, USAID trained 1,757 officials in Peru on procedures to better enforce illegal logging regulations, such as using open data sources to track timber sales.**²⁰ USAID continues its efforts to improve natural resource management and prevent conservation crimes through ongoing projects such as Prevent²¹ and the Forest Alliance²² in Peru. USAID is also developing upcoming regional efforts to address transnational conservation crimes and support community responses to environmental crimes.

Consolidating the management of protected areas is a priority area for cooperation between the USG and the Government of Brazil. Brazilians are using their parks more, with 10.7 million visitors in 2017, an increase of 30 percent from the previous year. As a country that values its unique heritage and landscapes, the U.S. is uniquely poised to help grow this burgeoning national interest. **In 2019-2020 USG agencies helped improve the management of 55 protected areas in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, representing more than**

20 USAID Peru PPR

21 The Peru PREVENT activity aims to sustainably transform the culture of rule of law and citizen stewardship when it comes to protecting Peru's environmental assets. For more information: <https://www.dai.com/our-work/projects/peru-combating-environmental-crimes-cec>

22 The Peru Forest Alliance activity provides technical assistance to Indigenous communities by fostering a Community Forest Management (CFM) approach. For more information https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Alianza_Forestal-FS-English-February_2021.pdf

34 million hectares.²³ Brazil's success presents a compelling argument for the economic benefit of protected areas tourism. USAID partner ICMBio conducted the first study of benefits in the region, estimating an overall national impact of \$2.2 billion, increased tax revenues of \$240 million, and the creation of 79,500 jobs in 2017.²⁴

SUCCESS STORIES

Anavilhanas National Park, Brazil

Named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003, Anavilhanas National Park contains the second biggest river archipelago in the world—a labyrinth of over 400 islands. Historical conflict, stemming from lack of stakeholder engagement with local communities, has hindered conservation. Under USAID's PCAB program, USFS and partner ICMBio are finding new ways to engage locals and tourists in the preservation of the park. Sites for environmental education, guide training, and community and youth engagement are helping transform the park's tourism potential. Creating strategic environmental messaging that connects individuals to what matters to them is key to gaining the support of locals and educating visitors. USFS and ICMBio are building a team of environmental interpretation specialists whose most experienced guides deliver training and share new knowledge. The group is seeing evidence of behavior change. Local guides and boat pilots who participated in the training are showing results “in the way that they engage, as well as in the messages they pass on to tourists. This has changed as a result of the training we delivered,” according to Suelene Couto, manager of the USFS Brazil program.²⁵

The success of ecotourism is transforming the local economy and creating new opportunities. Roberto Mendonça is a third-generation logger who turned to community tourism full-time

23 PCAB Annual Report, 2019, USAID Colombia and Peru PPR 2020

24 PCAB Annual Report, 2018

25 Ibid.

after a chance opportunity to lead a tour group showed him the possibility of a better life. He enjoys his new job and spending time in the forest. He says tourism has benefited and transformed his community. “I have two young men at home, my son and my nephew Giovanni. And my greatest pride is that they never had to cut a single tree to survive,” says Mendonça. “Both have completed high school and have opportunities that my grandfather, my father, or I never had.”²⁶

Zona Futuro Chiribiquete, Colombia

Colombia’s 2016 Peace Agreement created a power vacuum in the areas formerly controlled by FARC, leaving vulnerable Amazon lands open to transformation by different legal and illegal actors. Deforestation in this region is intimately linked to illicit activities (coca production, land grabbing, money laundering, illegal road construction and illegal mining). Since 2019, USAID has supported the Colombian government in defining the Zonas Futuro for the Amazon through the Natural Wealth program. Zonas Futuro is a strategy for territorial transformation by the Colombian government through state presence to promote legal entrepreneurship and social equality in the regions most affected by violence, illicit activities, lack of state presence, criminal activity and poverty. The strategy involves all institutions to gain control, guarantee civil rights, disrupt illicit economies and preserve and defend the environment.

In the Colombian Amazon, there is a concentrated arc of deforestation, including areas close to three national parks and Indigenous reserves. The Zonas Futuro strategy includes a security component to deter deforestation and a social approach to address the Development Plans with Territorial Focus (PDET in Spanish) designed by the government under the Peace Agreement. USAID supported the development of the intervention plan for the Zona Futuro Chiribiquete, and helped to facilitate, and catalyze processes to increase the coordination of efforts

from various government agencies to implement the holistic plan.

As a result, USAID is improving the capacity of the judiciary and other law enforcement agencies in Colombia on the management of deforestation as an environmental crime. Coordination among government institutions has been positive in the joint development of new guidance, defining the need for specific information, and ways to harmonize work to counteract deforestation. The Unit to Control Deforestation, for example, will be led by the Attorney General’s Office, and supported by the offices of the Inspector General and the Comptroller General to investigate crimes involving state officials or state funds. Other agencies from the Executive Branch, such as the Land Agency, the Superintendent of Finance, and the Registry of Lands will also play a role in the new coordination unit. With this work, USAID strengthened its collaboration with government partners to elevate deforestation as a security priority for Colombia, and deforestation as a critical issue for the country’s future sustainable development.



Children with charapa hatchlings near the Tiputini River, Ecuador. Photo by Julie Larsen Maher, Wildlife Conservation Society

²⁶ Ibid.

Geobosques Early-Warning Deforestation Platform, Peru

In recent years, Peru has experienced record deforestation rates, driven largely by agricultural expansion and extractive activities, such as illegal logging and gold mining. Countries need access to reliable, timely information about where deforestation is occurring to confront these illicit activities that threaten health, security, and livelihoods of local communities.

In a victory for self-sufficiency and the fight against illegal deforestation, the Government of Peru developed the GeoBosques monitoring platform. This innovative tool uses satellite imagery to detect deforestation and alert authorities to potential illegal activities.²⁷ The technology was born from a collaboration involving Peru's Ministry of the Environment, the University of Maryland,

Global Forest Watch, and the USG interagency program SilvaCarbon. Every seven days, the platform receives updated satellite data and calculates new areas of deforestation.

The GeoBosques platform is accessible to all, serving as a resource for local communities and the Peruvian government. Peruvian enforcement and prosecution officials can also use the satellite images as compelling evidence to bring criminals to justice. Local forest-dependent communities and Indigenous Peoples can aid in the fight to protect their communities from illegal activities and the degradation of their lands by accessing the data and searching for deforestation activity in their lands. This platform is a significant step for regional self-sufficiency in monitoring and fighting illegal activity.

²⁷ <http://geobosques.minam.gob.pe/geobosque/view/index.php>







GOAL
4

SECURE RIGHTS, RESOURCES, AND HEALTH OF FOREST- DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

- Increase sustainable livelihoods for forest-dependent communities
- Strengthen the rights and resource management capacity of forest-dependent communities
- Increase the capacity of forest-dependent communities to participate in conservation finance



THE CHALLENGE

This goal focuses on securing the rights, resources, and health of forest-dependent and Indigenous communities across the region. The 1.6 million Indigenous Peoples living within the Amazon basin face overwhelming threats, including the uncontrolled expansion of agricultural frontiers, large-scale infrastructure development, small- and large-scale mining, petroleum extraction, and unsustainable logging. These challenges are further compounded by climate change, resulting in increased forest fires, droughts, floods, and other natural disasters that further devastate Amazon ecosystems. These threats impede the interests or the rights of these communities to use their lands and waters to improve their livelihoods.

Since 2020, the novel coronavirus has disproportionately affected Indigenous Peoples across the Amazon, whose communities often lack access to essential services such as health care and sanitation. This pandemic is extremely challenging for remote Indigenous communities to manage alone, and for public health officials to meet. It has further threatened the well-being of communities whose livelihoods are already jeopardized by

deforestation pressure and encroachment on their lands. Compounding these threats, the deaths of elders by COVID-19 is erasing long-held knowledge about the local ecosystem, potentially losing this ancestral knowledge forever.



*Shipibo-Conibo Community member in an agroforestry plot.
Credit: Forest Alliance*

ACHIEVEMENTS

USAID aims to strengthen the capacity of forest-dependent communities to benefit from sustainable natural resource use, secure their rights, incentivize development projects to follow best management practices, and reduce deforestation. Working with local partners, USAID is increasing sustainable livelihoods for these communities, strengthening Indigenous Peoples' organizations and self-governance, and increasing access to REDD+ and other forest conservation finance mechanisms.

Helping Amazonian communities on the journey to self-reliance, USAID and its partners worked across **115 Indigenous territories (Figure 2) to improve land management and strengthen Indigenous economies.** In Brazil, the Quilombo communities of the Oriximiná municipality conducted a self-administered survey as part of socioeconomic study to develop a community management plan, enabling them to better understand and support their community's needs. USAID support also helps these communities better understand their rights and independently access funding for community needs. In Peru, USAID partnered with Althelia Funds and AIDER, a local non-governmental organization, to promote certified forest management in seven Indigenous Ucayali communities in the Amazon through the Forest Alliance. Forest management certification confirms timber and other forest products are produced in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. For these seven communities, **USAID's partnership will conserve 120,000 hectares of forests, promote a diversity of indigenous entrepreneurships while preserving cultural heritage benefiting 350 Indigenous families with improved livelihoods, and mitigate global warming by preventing 4 million tons of CO₂ equivalent from being released into the atmosphere.**

Working across the region, the Amazon Indigenous Rights and Resources (AIRR) activity is empowering Indigenous Peoples to advocate for their territorial and economic interests in the

face of large-scale infrastructure and extractive development. Building on existing Indigenous-focused activities, AIRR supports locally defined sustainable value chains and enterprises. These efforts will contribute to thriving Indigenous economies and reinforce the role of Indigenous peoples as partners in biodiversity conservation and climate mitigation across the Amazon. This outcome will sustain USAID's impact over time and help Indigenous communities on the journey to self-reliance.

SUCCESS STORIES

Escuela de Lideresas, Colombia

"I have a strength I didn't have before," said Claudia from Solano, Colombia. Claudia was one of 19 women who attended the Escuela de Lideresas Amazónicas (School of Amazonian Women Leaders) in Caquetá, Colombia. After a week of intense workshops, these women learned about leadership and environmental issues, giving them the knowledge and confidence to push beyond what they previously thought possible. Following the program, the women independently used their new skills and confidence to pursue new opportunities. Two women ran for city council, and two traveled to India to train to repair and install solar panels, sharing their experience through speeches at the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the University of Los Andes. "What this gave us was the possibility of taking risks, of facing the world as women," said Gisela from Cartagena del Chairá.

During the seven-day Lideresas program, under USAID's Connected Landscapes project, women came together from two communities in Caquetá to learn leadership skills such as teamwork, empowerment, communication, and public speaking. They discussed issues such as climate change, native plants, recycling, and project planning. Following their workshop, they shared what they learned with different community groups, including youth and teachers, focusing on the topics of most interest to them such as recycling, the care of water sources, and native

seeds. According to the community members surveyed, these women are now considered community and conservation leaders, empowered with skills important to advocate for the rights of their communities, and strengthen local capacity to manage the Amazon forest.

Strengthening the Capacity of Indigenous Organizations in the Amazon

Indigenous organizations and communities in the Amazon, under constant threat from criminal groups, encroaching agricultural expansion, and extractive or infrastructure projects, often lack the tools necessary to successfully navigate complex political landscapes. USAID’s Strengthening the Capacity of Indigenous Organizations in the Amazon (SCIOA) regional project helps these communities in Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Guyana, and Suriname build capacity to access funding to advocate for Indigenous governance of the Amazon. These efforts focus on ensuring their rights are respected and mitigating the negative environmental, social, and economic impacts of infrastructure and extractive projects on their lands.

Twelve Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations are working with USAID partners to prioritize their areas of improvement. Self-evaluations found these organizations strong in harnessing social capital and engaging stakeholders but weaker in generating and managing financial resources. Each organization developed a strengthening plan, with specific actions to address critical challenges and guide its activities. Listening closely to their needs, USAID partners held training workshops on financial reporting, organizational finances, grant management, and strategic planning.

Organizations are using these capacities and tools to independently access new financial support sources and expand their network of allies. In 2019, the Union of Indigenous Women of the Brazilian Amazon used the strengthening plan developed with SCIOA to communicate their support needs to donors, securing a grant from the Ford Foundation to support their third General Assembly. Using the capacities and plans developed with SCIOA, Indigenous organizations are realizing their goals for a secure and independent future.

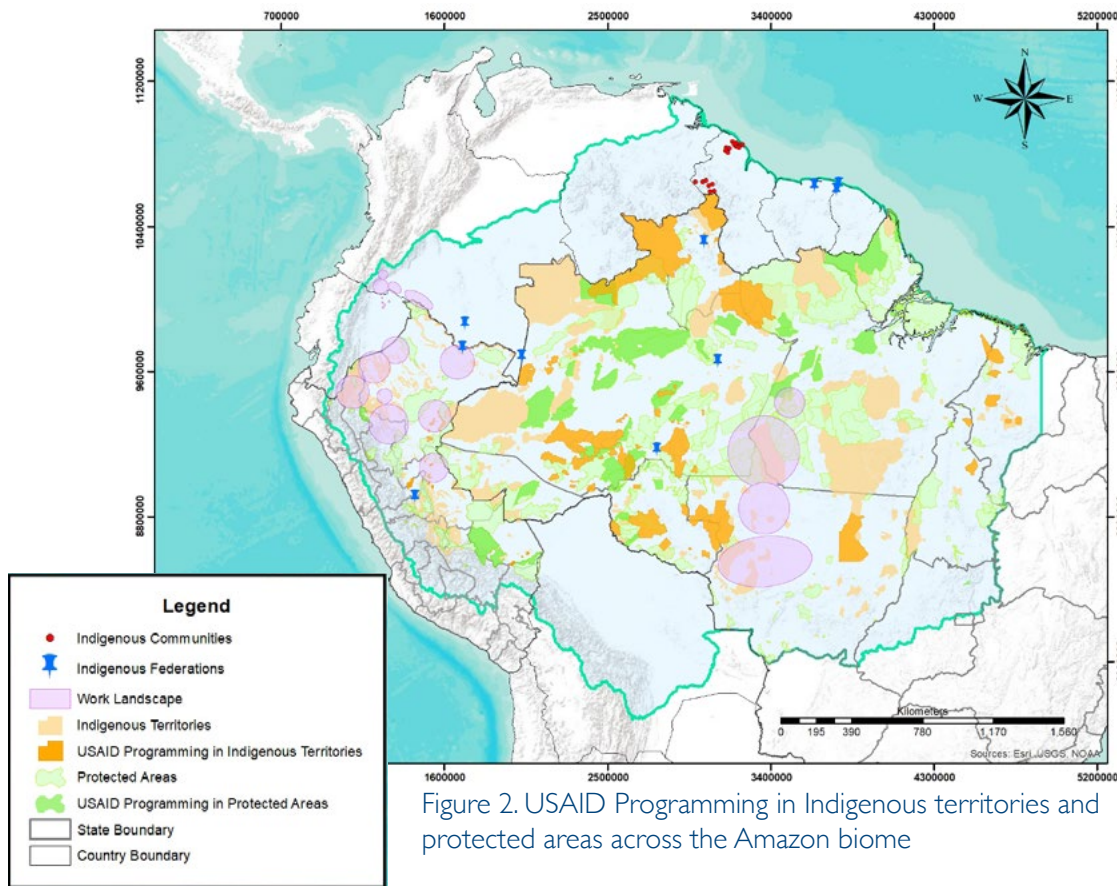


Figure 2. USAID Programming in Indigenous territories and protected areas across the Amazon biome



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