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## ENVIRONMENT OFFICE (ENV)

Supporting Colombia’s transition to peace by reducing environmental threats and promoting environmentally sustainable, licit economic opportunities.

### OVERVIEW

USAID’s Environment Office (ENV) facilitates post-conflict peace building through ecosystem conservation activities and environmentally sustainable economic development. During Colombia’s 50 years of armed conflict, vast areas of the country had limited state presence and were susceptible to criminal networks. These networks generated income from illegal activities, like coca cultivation and illegal mining, both of which are key drivers of deforestation and conservation crimes. ENV seeks to combat these illegal activities by improving access to renewable energy and environmental markets like carbon credits, nature tourism, and payments for environmental services. These economic opportunities also incorporate indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities that play an important role in conserving their territories, and that often live in environmentally important areas.

## COMPONENTS

### CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY

ENV mitigates threats to Colombia's biodiversity by establishing new protected areas, strengthening the management of existing protected areas, and supporting mechanisms that reward conservation efforts. ENV also encourages biodiversity conservation by strengthening government land-use planning capacities, and by incorporating conservation priorities in local and national development strategies.

### INTEGRATING RENEWABLE ENERGY

ENV helps integrate low cost, renewable energy into the Colombian electricity market. This involves: 1) designing an energy auction program to procure renewable energy; 2) supporting the construction of local energy grids; 3) procuring cost-effective solar panels; and 4) promoting energy market investment.

### SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

ENV promotes sustainable land use and livelihoods to reduce deforestation, ecosystem degradation, and loss of environmental services. ENV also supports Colombia's greenhouse gas monitoring, reporting and verification efforts to guarantee that environmental programs are efficient and transparent.

### PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE MINING

ENV provides technical assistance to communities to develop responsible mining practices. This involves legalizing existing mines and developing alternative livelihood opportunities like honey production. ENV also works with local actors to rehabilitate mining sites through reforestation projects.

## RESULTS

- Designed a Colombian national forest inventory;
- Helped establish and register five Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCA);
- Implemented natural resources management practices on 221,000 hectares of paramos, tropical and high mountain forests;
- Supported the adoption and implementation of 84 laws, policies, strategies, plans, and regulations related to biodiversity;
- Generated 6.2 million verified carbon units, worth USD \$24 million, from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) projects;
- Connected Colombian officials with counterparts in Brazil and Peru to exchange intelligence about transnational environmental crimes; and
- Helped the Colombian Ministry of Mines and Energy design and implement a renewable energy auction model that increased Colombia's renewable energy generation and leveraged millions in private sector investment.