



## REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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*The forests of the Amazon are critical to preserving biodiversity, fighting climate change, and building economic opportunities for local and indigenous communities.*

### **Partners:**

*Government of Colombia, Government of Ecuador, Government of Peru, U.S. Department of State, The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.*

**Implementing Partners:** *International Resources Group (IRG), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Rainforest Alliance, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), University of Florida, U.S. Department of Interior (DOI), Higher Education Partnerships (HED), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), U.S. Forest Service (USFS).*

**T**he USAID South America Regional Environment Program (SAR-Env) administers regional environmental programs throughout South America, while also providing technical support to USAID Missions in the region. SAR-Env focuses on transnational environmental problems that cannot be solved solely at the country level. This is particularly true in the Andean Amazon where several countries share stewardship of the world's largest tropical rainforest. It is here that deforestation and forest degradation threaten the Amazon's unsurpassed biodiversity, valuable forest resources, vast supplies of freshwater, and carbon sinks critical to fighting climate change.

Globalized markets for hydrocarbons, hydropower, minerals, food commodities, timber, and illegal drug crops are driving deforestation, road and dam construction, and social conflict over resource and land use. Amazon countries are developing environmental policies to address conservation threats, largely by establishing protected areas and other zones designed to promote sustainable resource management. Civil society is playing a critical role in developing environmental policies; decision-making is increasingly taking place at local levels. New policies regulating forestry and citizen involvement are being implemented and the capacity to monitor environmental threats has improved. While significant accomplishments are being realized, continued progress is imperative to conserve biodiversity, combat climate change, and secure sustainable livelihoods for communities that depend on the richness of the Amazon.

SAR-Env administers USAID's flagship regional biodiversity program known as the Initiative for Conservation in the Andean Amazon (ICAA), as well as complementary Net Zero Deforestation Zone pilot projects under the AmAZONAS Andinas climate change initiative.

ICAA is a successful umbrella program with component projects in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru. It is a long-term commitment to conserve biodiversity and address climate change while also strengthening individual countries and institutions for region-wide impact. The second five-year phase of ICAA, known as ICAA II, began in late 2011. It will increase institutional and stakeholder capacities to conserve biodiversity, fight climate change, and improve environmental governance. ICAA will also be important in elevating the role of indigenous groups in managing natural resources throughout the region.

ICAA II is part of a longer 20-year USAID Andean Amazon program that will:

- Reduce deforestation, improve management of natural resources, and conserve biodiversity in selected landscapes
- Build the capacity of civil society and governments to manage natural resources
- Mitigate the environmental impact of unplanned infrastructure projects
- Demonstrate how to use economic incentive programs for conservation, such as Payment for Environmental Services (PES) programs
- Create more economic opportunities for those dependent on forest-based livelihoods
- Use the latest research to develop practical solutions to local environmental and economic development problems

The AmaZONAS Andinas initiative is a complementary regional partnership to slow, halt, and reverse net greenhouse gas emissions in the forests of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. SAR-Env manages two Net Zero Deforestation Zone (NZDZ) pilot projects under the AmaZONAS Andinas framework. Each project aims to mitigate climate change by focusing on the drivers of deforestation at the community level, thereby helping local stakeholders to better manage their natural resources and the livelihoods that depend on those resources. As pilots, each project will be used as a testing ground to determine the best ways to help national governments scale up other projects that fit within their national REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) strategies.

Over the life of the NZDZ projects, they will:

- Train stakeholders and civil society on REDD+
- Develop, test, and help countries to adopt a suite of REDD+ tools and methodologies, including forest monitoring
- Improve community-driven forest governance in ways that lead to sustainable economic benefits
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions on project sites

In addition to the regional programs that it administers directly, SAR-Env also supports USAID Missions throughout the region. It serves as a focal point through which Missions coordinate their bilateral activities; it provides critical oversight in managing USAID's environmental compliance regulations; and, it offers technical support in developing and implementing environmental programs, projects, and activities. SAR-Env also leads USAID's participation in interagency environmental initiatives in South America. These include programs such as the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA), Silva Carbon, and Enhancing Capacity for Low Emission Development Strategies (EC-LEDS) programs.



*The conservation of Brazil nut trees and other hardwoods is very important to both the environment and to economic growth. Such trees capture and store carbon, while also providing a valuable economic commodity - Brazil nuts - that can be sustainably harvested by local communities.*



*Tropical forests are repositories of large amounts of carbon. However, their deforestation causes 20% of greenhouse emission gases in the world.*