



WWF

FACTSHEET

2014

WWF FOREST AND CLIMATE PROGRAMME

REDD+ Inspiring Practices

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO BUILDING REDD+ SAFEGUARDS WITH THE AFRO-COLOMBIAN COMMUNITY IN COLOMBIA'S PACIFIC REGION

SNAPSHOT

What

- » A participatory process to develop social and environmental REDD+ safeguards that incorporate the needs, rights and perspectives of the Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia's Pacific region.

Who

- » Afro-Colombian communities and their councils and leaders
- » WWF
- » Patrimonio Natural (Fund For Biodiversity and Protected Areas)
- » Patrimonio Natural's "Incentives for Conservation" project, financed by the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands
- » The Forests and Climate Change Project of WWF-Colombia and WWF-UK, financed by DFID

Where

The Pacific region of Colombia

When

2010–ongoing

Project Team

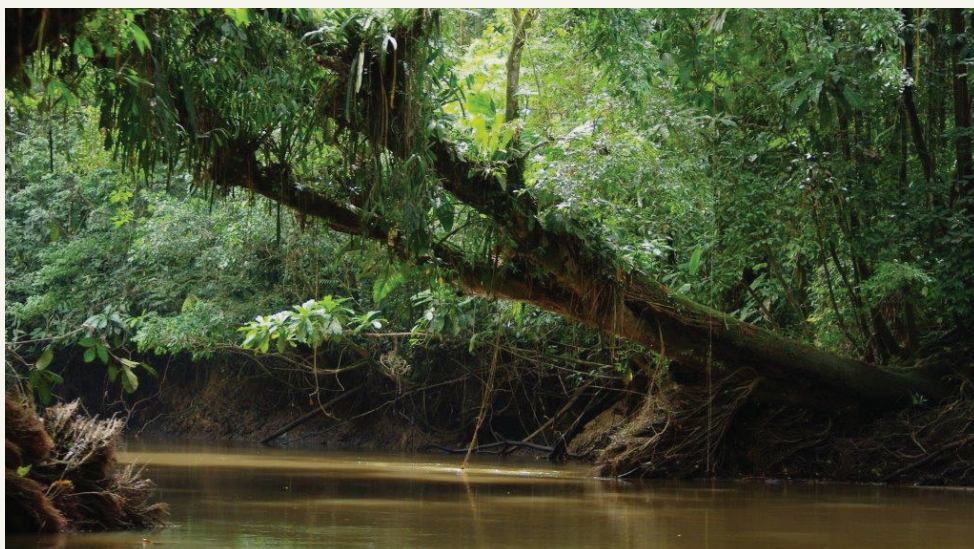
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SUMMARY

This REDD+ Inspiring Practice highlights the participatory development of social and environmental safeguards for REDD+ by Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia's Pacific region. These historically marginalized communities face significant threats to their rights and traditional ways of life from deforestation and forest degradation and from a proliferation of poorly implemented REDD+ initiatives in the region. This work sought to create an inclusive, participatory process through which Afro-Colombian communities can define their own safeguards to address the risks posed by REDD+, working from the bottom up (that is, from the local community level with the goal of influencing

national and international REDD+ strategies). The result is a set of safeguards that incorporate Afro-Colombian worldviews and perspectives, and protect the rights of the Afro-Colombian people.

CONTEXT

The Chocó-Darién moist forest ecoregion sweeps from eastern Panama to northwest Ecuador, encompassing rainforests, mountains and shorelines as it runs along the entire Colombian Pacific coast. Thousands of plant and animal species—many found nowhere else on Earth—thrive in this richly biodiverse region. Colombia's Pacific coast is also home to great cultural diversity, with numerous indigenous and Afro-descendent groups who have lived for generations in this unique landscape, creating and

THROUGH THIS PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AFRO-COLOMBIAN COMMUNITY LEADERS WERE ABLE TO DEFINE A PATHWAY TO SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL REDD+ SAFEGUARDS THAT REFLECTS THEIR NEEDS AND INTERESTS AND PROTECT THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS AND RIGHTS.

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preserving cultures and ancestral knowledge that are closely intertwined with the ecoregion's biodiversity. The region's Afro-Colombian communities recognize the territory as the "Pacific Territory-Region of Ethnic Groups," as it is considered the space for their lives, knowledge and culture.

Despite its cultural and environmental significance, Colombia's Pacific region faces substantial threats to its conservation. The development of mining, illicit crop cultivation, illegal logging, livestock intensification, the expansion of agro-industrial cultivation (for palm oil, among other products), and the construction of roads and ports drive deforestation and forest degradation in the region. Scant economic resources, political turmoil, lack of environmental policies or governance, mismanagement of resources and possibilities for cooperation, and frequent conflicts limit opportunities and incentives for conservation. At the same time, independent carbon credit dealers and an onslaught of REDD+ initiatives have descended on the region, offering contracts to local communities and creating confusion and conflict around efforts to conserve the forests. Facing this complex scenario, the Pacific region's indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities have voiced their concerns about the possible development of REDD+ initiatives in the territory, and have identified the need to safeguard their rights from the risks and threats that early REDD+ initiatives may pose.

In 2011, WWF and Colombia's Patrimonio Natural (Fund For Biodiversity and Protected Areas) partnered with the Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) y Agenda Común, an organization of Afro-Colombian groups, community councils and leaders. These organizations, in turn, formed alliances with the Latin American Institute for an Alternative Society and an Alternative Law (ILSA), the Bank Information Center (BIC), Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), and the communities to take on the issue of safeguards. The intention was to work with government agencies, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations to coordinate a series of workshops through which the Pacific region's Afro-Colombian communities could gain the knowledge and capacities needed to participate in REDD+ decision-making and to develop their own vision for REDD+. Through this participatory process, Afro-Colombian community leaders were able to define a pathway to social and environmental REDD+ safeguards that reflects their needs and interests and protect their ancestral lands and rights. The resulting document will serve as a powerful tool for empowering Afro-Colombian communities, protecting their rights and ensuring their voices and perspectives are heard in the national dialogue about REDD+.

*This information is drawn from http://www.wwf.org.co/donde_trabajamos/choco_darien/, the Plan de Acción del Complejo Ecorregional Chocó-Darién, published by WWF-Colombia in 2008, and interviews with the project team.

EXPECTED CHANGES

- Build knowledge and capacities needed for Afro-Colombian communities to more effectively participate in REDD+ policy development and decision making
- Empower Afro-Colombian community leaders to draft social and environmental (defined as ethnic, territorial and cultural) safeguards that guarantee the protection of their rights, traditions and ways of life, respecting their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)
- Facilitate Afro-Colombian communities' assessment of proposed REDD+ initiatives and existing or proposed social and environmental safeguards to identify potential risks and threats to Afro-Colombian rights
- Support and influence the formation of national policies to address rights, ownership of carbon stocks, and other legal issues and loopholes currently in place in relation to REDD+ implementation



STAKEHOLDERS

DIRECT STAKEHOLDERS

INVOLVED IN PROJECT DESIGN,
MAKE DECISIONS, AND RECEIVE BENEFITS

- Afro-Colombian communities and their councils and leaders, through Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) y Agenda Común
- Patrimonio Natural (Fund For Biodiversity and Protected Areas)
- WWF

STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS

PROVIDE MATERIAL, HUMAN,
AND OTHER RESOURCES

- Afro-Colombian ethnic-territorial organizations, including ONUIRA, ACONUR, ONCAPROTECA, Mina Vieja, APONURY and Palenque Regional el Congal
- Latin American Institute for an Alternative Society and an Alternative Law (ILSA)
- Association for Environment and Society (AAS)
- Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)
- Bank Information Center (BIC)
- Patrimonio Natural's "Incentives for Conservation" project, financed by the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands
- The Forests and Climate Change Project of WWF-Colombia and WWF-UK, financed by the Department for International Development (DFID)

INDIRECT STAKEHOLDERS

INFLUENCE PRACTICE WITHOUT
BEING DIRECTLY INVOLVED

- Civil society and non-governmental organizations that are members of the Civil Society REDD+ Roundtable
- Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia (MADS)
- Ombudsman's Office of Colombia

THE SAFEGUARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS HAS GIVEN RISE TO A GROUP OF COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO ARE INFORMED ABOUT AND ENGAGED WITH REDD+, AND WHO ARE NOW POSITIONED TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LEVEL REDD+ PROCESSES AND TO SAFEGUARD THE COLLECTIVE RIGHTS OF THE AFRO-COLOMBIAN PEOPLE.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

2009–2010: Development of Colombia's REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) begins. Meanwhile, independent carbon credit dealers begin offering confusing contracts with no safeguards to indigenous and local communities, creating uncertainty and concern about REDD+ issues within the government and among forest-dwelling people.

2010–2011: The need for participation of Afro-Colombian, indigenous and rural communities in the development of the R-PP and a National REDD+ Strategy is recognized. To support that participation, WWF and Patrimonio Natural work with the Civil Society REDD+ Roundtable to create capacity-building processes that increase awareness of REDD+ in the Amazonian and Pacific regions of Colombia.

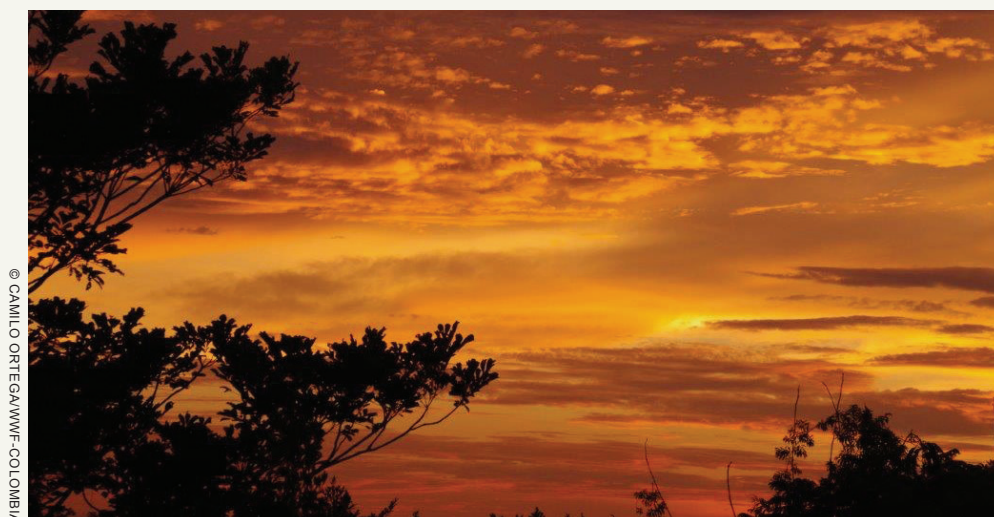
2012: WWF, Patrimonio Natural, and PCN work together to plan a participatory process through which Afro-Colombian communities may form their own requirements, frameworks and procedures for REDD+. They identify the need to develop adequate social and environmental safeguards, and undertake several exchange visits to learn about the development of such safeguards in other forest countries.

2013: In February, the participatory process of identifying social and environmental safeguards from a community perspective begins in the Pacific region's

Afro-Colombian communities. A regional workshop is held in Cali to build knowledge about REDD+ safeguards, assess existing safeguards both internationally and within the Colombian legal framework, and to share ideas and concerns about the development and implementation of safeguards. PCN, BIC, ILSA, the National Natural Parks System of Colombia, MADS, WWF and Patrimonio Natural take part in this process.

2013: In May, the first local workshop, held in the community council of Río Mayorquin, brings the process to the sub-region of Buenaventura. It brings together Afro-Colombian community councils (Cajambre, Yurumangui, Río Mayorquin, Raposo, Naya, Anchicaya, Renacer Negro Timbiquí), the ethnic-territorial organizations APONURY, MINA VIEJA, ACONUR, ODEICAN, ODINCA, JUVENTUD 500, and other stakeholders in safeguard development. In smaller work groups, participants work together to identify risks and threats posed by REDD+ and how social and environmental safeguards might address them.

2013: In June, a second local workshop in the coastal city of Buenaventura reunites the same stakeholders to identify possible strategies that address the risks and threats they discussed previously. Together they develop a plan of action to refine, validate and communicate this protocol with other Afro-Colombian communities and with national leadership. The community councils of Gloria and Plata Bahía Málaga also join in this workshop.



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2013: In the second half of the year, workshop participants draw from their discussions to create a draft set of social and environmental safeguards that reflect Afro-Colombian perspectives and protect Afro-Colombian lands and rights. This preliminary document requires additional work in the other sub-regions of Colombia's Pacific area (Chocó, Nariño y Cauca) so that it can be enriched by their perspectives and validated by their community members in a regional workshop.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Afro-Colombian community leaders, councils and ethnic-territorial organizations have drafted their own social and environmental safeguards to protect their collective territories and rights, and have in the process created a document that can serve as a tool to protect and strengthen their voice in REDD+ implementation.
- The safeguards development process brought together stakeholders of different ages, genders and perspectives, and created a space for open discussion and a rich exchange of ideas. This has strengthened community ties and forged new partnerships and trust between community members and other stakeholders in the REDD+ process.
- Because they were built from the bottom up and reflect the needs and concerns identified by community members, these safeguards serve as a tool to empower the Pacific region's Afro-descendent peoples and give them a more powerful voice in regional, national and international REDD+ dialogues.
- The safeguards development process has given rise to a group of community leaders who are informed about and engaged with REDD+, and who are now positioned to support community-level REDD+ processes and to safeguard the collective rights of the Afro-Colombian people.

CHALLENGES

- Lack of time, human and financial resources, and accessibility limited the reach of these participatory processes. In Colombia's Pacific region, rivers and dense jungles separate remote communities and roads are few, which makes travel time-consuming, costly and difficult; frequent conflicts in the region and concerns about safety also lead to logistical challenges. Local communities and their organizations, in collaboration with WWF, ILSA, AAS, BIC and Patrimonio Natural, are seeking additional resources to bring similar participatory processes to communities throughout the region.
- Building the knowledge needed to take part in the safeguards development process was challenging, especially as new participants joined the process. It became necessary to revisit the context of REDD+ and re-establish certain concepts in each workshop, which took additional time and slowed progress.
- Communicating the principles of REDD+ and safeguards development was difficult. Before each workshop, facilitators talked and planned with community members about which topics to address and how to address them. They also used creative approaches, such as posters and other visual aids as well as practical exercises, to translate technical terms into ideas that are accessible to all stakeholders.
- In order to ultimately develop autonomous participatory processes, local communities and their organizations require greater resources of their own, which would enable them to initiate and lead their efforts with less reliance on other partners and NGOs. Finding more autonomy to develop their own participatory processes and tools could afford communities a greater voice in national and international dialogues about REDD+.

THE BASIS FOR REDD+ AND ITS SAFEGUARDS MUST START AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, BUT IT CANNOT STAY THERE. ONCE LOCAL COMMUNITIES FORM THEIR OWN VISION FOR REDD+ SAFEGUARDS AND POLICIES, THESE MUST BECOME PART OF THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUES ABOUT REDD+.

100%
RECYCLED

OUR VISION

WWF's Forest and Climate Programme works to ensure that the conservation of tropical forests as carbon stores is secured by green economic development that benefits people, the climate and biodiversity in transformational ways.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- **Communities must lead the way in developing social and environmental safeguards.** Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia's Pacific region know their landscape best, and have the greatest stake in its health and survival. They stand to be most strongly affected by—or to benefit most strongly from—REDD+ initiatives in the region. Therefore, developing appropriate environmental and social safeguards must start with them. WWF and its partners worked to assist Afro-Colombian community leaders in the safeguards development process without interfering or shaping the process, and as a result, community leaders took ownership of the process and created safeguards that fully reflect their values and worldview.
- **A bottom-up approach takes time and trust, but it creates lasting change.** WWF, RRI, ILSA, AAS, BIC and Patrimonio Natural have worked closely with the Pacific region's communities for years, and have sought to maintain transparency and respect for the communities' own vision throughout. That has fostered a level of trust that enabled this process to be productive, open, inclusive and sustainable.
- **Strong partnerships are crucial.** WWF's strong partnerships with Patrimonio Natural, Afro-Colombian community leaders, councils and ethnic-territorial organizations, and its other partners in the Pacific region were critical to the success of this process.
- **The basis for REDD+ and its safeguards must start at the local level, but it cannot stay there.** Once local communities form their own vision for REDD+ safeguards and policies, these must become part of the national and international dialogues about REDD+. For the Pacific region's Afro-Colombian communities, developing safeguards is not a one-time project—it is part of an ongoing process that will continue as they assert their rights and traditions on the national and international levels.



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