

An aerial photograph of a tropical forest. The top half of the image shows a dense, lush green forest. In the center, there is a large, irregularly shaped area where the forest has been cleared, revealing a dark, charred ground. A thick plume of white smoke or mist rises from this cleared area, drifting towards the left. The bottom half of the image shows more forest, but it is partially obscured by the title text.

THE CHALLENGE OF **DEFORESTATION** IN COLOMBIA:

POLICY BRIEF

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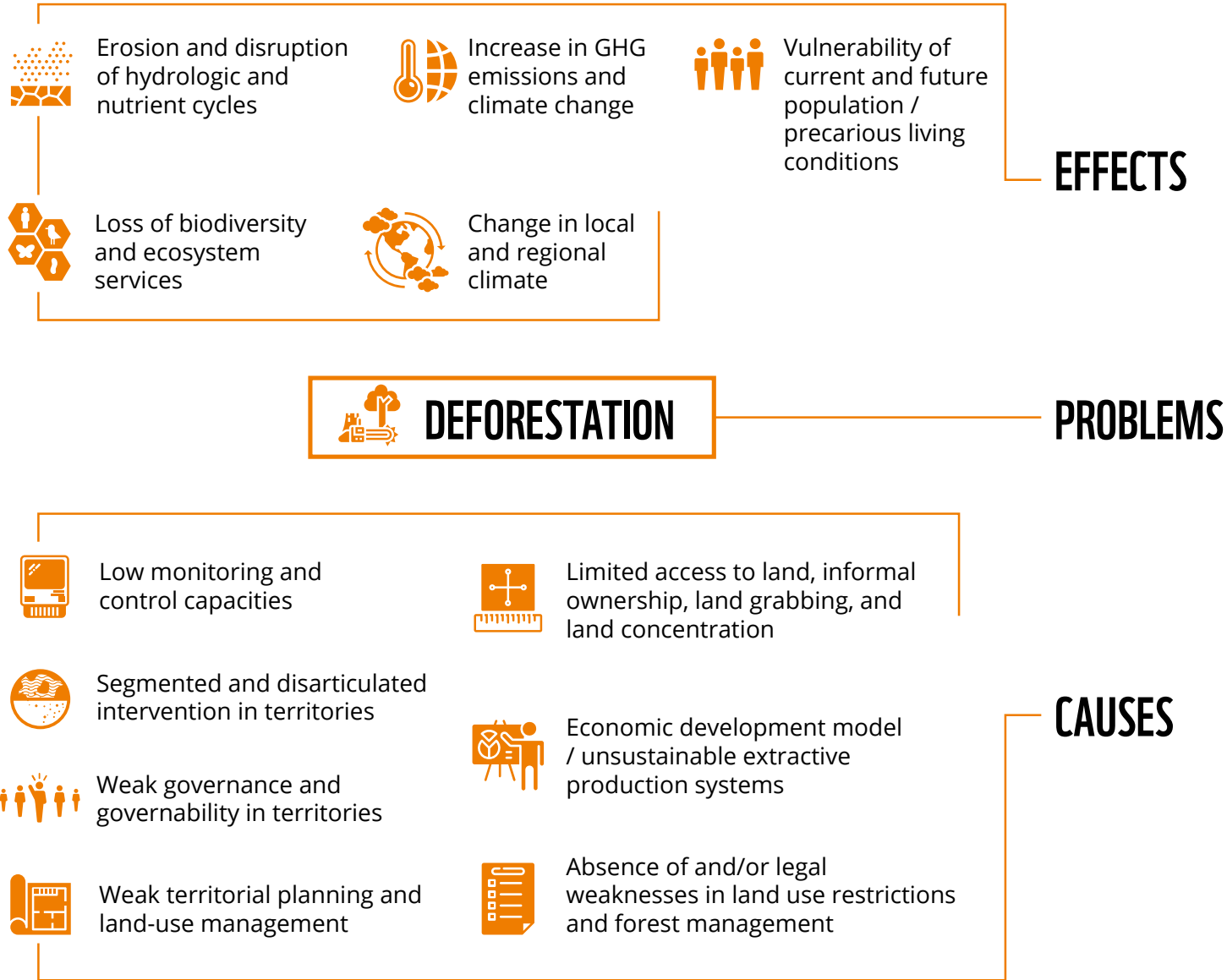
CONTEXT

Concerned with increased deforestation in Colombia and its impact on ecosystems and biodiversity, the embassies of Germany and Norway, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute (IAvH), and WWF Colombia convened a multi-stakeholder event on the 29th of June 2019, applying the Chatham House rules, at the IAvH Bogotá venue². The purpose was to foster collective reflection on the causes and effects of deforestation in Colombia, to share experiences, and to identify the necessary conditions to enable greater impact of the national government's control initiatives. This document summarizes the workshop's results, analysis, and proposals to strengthen the conditions needed to implement successful strategies and actions at different scales.

The workshop formed part of the Cooperating Members Roundtable, which seeks to create spaces for dialogue around key topics related to cooperation and to provide recommendations for different stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of the guidelines offered in this document.

These organizations will carry out another event in October 2019, in hand with El Espectador newspaper, to present and discuss the guidelines and foster continuity around this process.

IDENTIFIED CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DEFORESTATION³



Based in the identification of Colombia's deforestation root causes, we identified five main enabling conditions which will be analyzed through out the document.

- Strengthening planning processes and land-use plans
- Realization of policies and initiatives to conserve forests, reduce deforestation, and promote low-carbon sustainable development.
- Strengthening Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV)
- Strengthening governance and institutions
- Public-private-community alliances to face deforestation

1. This document was produced by an editorial committee composed by GIZ, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute (IAvH), and WWF.
2. Refers to meetings in which participants can use information freely, but cannot reveal the identity or institutional affiliation of speakers or any other participant.

3. Throughout the document, policy recommendations are related to the causes identified in the graph, using different colors to label each cause. Readers can therefore identity each recommendation with its corresponding cause.

THE ISSUE

With the ratification of the peace agreement, deforestation in Colombia greatly increased becoming one of the greatest environmental and social challenges facing Colombia. While official statistics presented by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) and IDEAM in July 2019 showed a **10% reduction** in deforestation between 2017 and 2018 (*from 219,973 hectares in 2017 to 197,155 in 2018, or 22,814 fewer hectares*), these values are still very alarming. The greatest forest loss continues to occur in the Amazon region, accounting for **75%** of net deforested area at the national level in 2018.

This deforestation is concentrated in three departments: Caquetá (45.9%), Meta (13.1%), and Guaviare (9.8%). Outside of the Amazon, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (*Caribbean region*), a place known for having the greatest biologic singularity in the world, is one of the deforestation hotspots identified this year. To fully comprehend the gravity of the threat of the area of forest loss on biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services, and to identify corresponding management and control actions, it is important to also consider the relative remanence of different types of natural forest ecosystems and

to understand the transformation thresholds of natural forests . It is fundamental to differentiate direct causes⁴, or direct drivers and engines of the transformation of forests, from the underlying causes⁵ of this phenomenon, which are the factors that lead agents to transform forests. Bearing in mind that these phenomena are the root cause of deforestation, this document makes policy recommendations to address underlying causes and analyzes enabling conditions based on concrete experiences around deforestation in Colombia. The following graph shows the causes and effects identified during the workshop.



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4. Direct causes of deforestation are mainly related to extractive industries, legal or not, as well as the expansion of infrastructure, the transformation of forests into pastures, agricultural production, timber extraction, extensive cattle ranching, illegal crops, land grabbing, and the occupation of indigenous reservations.
5. The underlying causes – that is, factors that lead agents to transform forests – are more complex. At an international level they are related to markets and commodity prices, among others. At the national level, they are related to profound reasons like the current development model, population growth, domestic markets, national policies, fiscal incentives and subsidies, weak national, regional, and local governance, weak intersectoral coordination, land use conflicts and access to land and resources, and poverty.

ENABLING CONDITIONS:

Throughout this analysis, we refer to enabling conditions as the group of legal, political, institutional, social, economic, and cultural actions that allow for, and make visible, the measures needed to effectively reduce deforestation in the short, medium, and long term. In this section, we present enabling conditions rooted on a diagnosis of the issue, the identification of underlying causes, and the creation of specific recommendations based on reflections made during the workshop.

Strengthening planning processes and land-use plans

Land use conflicts and land access are underlying causes of deforestation in Colombia because they are linked to direct causes like illicit crops, natural resources extraction and road construction, as well as interethnic conflict and weak territorial governance. A unique and differentiated development model for each region should be defined, taking into account:

- **A shared vision for development supported by differentiated processes that set goals and strategies related to the territorial reality and dynamics of each region.** For this, the National Planning Department (DNP) and the Territorial Renewal Agency (ART) should create collective local settings for governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to build and realize this vision through the implementation of Points 1 and 4 of the Peace Agreement for Integral Rural Development and Environmental Zoning, Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (PDET), and the National Integral Substitution Plan (PNIS) in coordination with Strategic Zones for Integral Intervention (ZEII)⁶.
- Agustín Codazzi, with support from the DNP, IDEAM, and the National Land Agency, among other relevant territorial entities, should **update**

and create cadastral information for land in Colombia to characterize the dynamics of land ownership in the country. Information should be created with local actors to guarantee their empowerment and effective ownership of the process.

- **Strengthen the presence and capability of institutions like the Land Restitution Unit, the Direction for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, the Agency for Rural Development, the National Land Agency, and other relevant territorial entities** to reduce informality and illegality. Specifically, the Direction for the Substitution of Illicit Crops should establish a roadmap for coordination between the PNIS and relevant territorial entities to overcome the conditions that for years have strengthened the development of the illicit economy.
- **The Sub-directorate for Territorial Planning and Development of the National Planning Department⁷ must guarantee participatory and coordinated management of territorial planning instruments (POT, EOT, PBOT, and municipal and departmental development plans), providing sectoral guidelines at the national level.** Indigenous life plans and ethno-development plans of black communities should also be articulated to other territorial planning instruments in order to recognize their ancestral knowledge and territorial management strategies. Likewise, MADS must analyze the relationship between sectoral planning at the national level and public policy, as well as the need to articulate planning and legal instruments, institutions and sectors, with backing from stakeholders at the territorial level.
- **The Ministry of Finance, the DNP, and the Restitution Agency must define a clear and viable roadmap to finance the PDET agreements and other projects with sustainability criteria** and develop clear and efficient procedures

6. These zones will be established in regions affected by criminality that pose a risk to national security, will have special plans to strengthen the presence of the State, priority for the provision of social services and reinforced measures for the protection of the population.
7. The Sub-directorate for Territorial Planning and Development's mission is to analyze planning and land use topics for territories at the regional level. It directs and enables the coordination and integration of national public actions and those of departments and municipalities related to shared, long-term territorial development objectives and goals that promote capabilities for internally-driven local and regional development.

to launch concurrence and cooperation mechanisms with the National Land Agency, the Victims Service Unit, the Land Restitution Unit, and other entities in a single interinstitutional strategy.

- **The Ministry of Environment should create mechanisms to strengthen community governance as a strategy to exercise territoriality and protect natural ecosystems** through actions like the creation of a legal framework that improves land access and use by rural communities in forest reserves, without violating land-use restrictions. Therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture should regulate and promote the adoption of community land management schemes within the framework of the Rural, Family, and Community Agriculture policy, while also regulating and promoting the adoption of schemes for community control of the social and ecological functions of land ownership.



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Realization of policies and initiatives to conserve forests, reduce deforestation, and promote low-carbon sustainable development.

Implementation of the Integrated Strategy for Deforestation Control and Forest Management (EICDGB) – “Forests, Territories of Life” and the development of programs like Amazon Vision, GEF Heart of the Amazon, the Joint Declaration of Intent (DCI)⁸, the Sustainable Forest Landscapes initiative, among others, should be strengthened. Institutional capacities has been one of the main challenges, and strengthening **strengthen institutional capacities** to guarantee effective, differentiated, articulated, and coherent action should be a top priority. Articulated and integra-

ted institutions for the conservation and protection of forests should be promoted:

- **Expedite compliance with Sentence 4360-2018, by means of which the Supreme Court ordered**, among other things, the creation of a “short, medium, and long-term plan to halt deforestation in the Amazon” and the ratification of an “inter-generational pact for the life of the Amazon” in order to adopt measures aimed at completely reducing deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions.

- **The Ministry of Environment should regulate the use of timber and non-timber species**, including the development of agile procedures that result in timely responses. Likewise, incentives for complementary compensation and restoration strategies are key for the accomplishment of policies and initiatives aimed at forest conservation.

- **National and territorial environmental authorities must create a roadmap for unified planning to define a territorial scope, where to intervene, and how to invest resources for compensation in an aggregated and articu-**

lated manner. This could result from regulating public-private agreements in different areas of the country, in close collaboration with entities like SINCHI, PNN, and IAvH, among others.

- **The national government, under the lead of DNP, must guarantee the capability and articulation of relevant entities and non-governmental stakeholders** to carry out territorial investments in a coordinated and effective manner and to expand support to other threatened biodiverse and ecologically sensitive areas, making use of incentives to fund sustainable production initiatives that generate income in the long run.

8. Ratified by the government of Colombia and the governments of Norway, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Strengthening Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV)

Monitoring is effective when it is based on scientific knowledge, allows for the incorporation of other forms of knowledge, is strengthened by participation from local stakeholders, creates a coherent story about change and intervention, and generates reliable and timely information for decision making. We recommend:

- ❑ **•Articulating local, regional (subnational), and national information** with IDEAM's *System for Forest and Carbon Monitoring*, thus guaranteeing the transfer of information from the local to the national level, and vice versa. This process should result in the development of a multiscale-multistakeholder system that improves the country's forests and carbon monitoring system and strengthens decision making for forest management and conservation.
- ❑ **Advance towards an integrated monitoring system** to ensure that current state and forests trends monitoring includes variables on the social and cultural conditions of inhabitants and their livelihoods to develop and implement management measures based on the realities and needs of local communities.
- ❑ **Promote and strengthen the development of a Community-Based Monitoring system at the landscape level** that creates periodic data and information as well as processes for learning and reflection. More than 86 initiatives of community based monitoring in Colombia were identified in 2018. Many of these are currently undergoing processes to strengthen capacity at the local level.



| Cesar David Martinez

Strengthening governance and institutions

Studies have shown the important role that collective territories play in forest protection and prevention of deforestation. Similarly, some existing regional bodies (e.g. departmental forest roundtables, regional climate change nodes, etc.) are fundamental to reach agreements in the management of forests at the regional level. We recommend:

- ❑ **Designing and strengthening governance processes and governability in indigenous, black, and campesino communities to guarantee full and effective participation and decision making in existing spaces for negotiation.** This would help strengthen control in territories and foster the development of local businesses and environmentally based value chains, concrete actions to reduce deforestation, and management capabilities for more sustainable and transparent financing.
- ❑ **Build principles aimed at providing permanent knowledge to all stakeholders in the territory** through pedagogical processes, advising, co-management aimed at improving capacities to create critical, analytical, and proactive settings for participation.
- ❑ **Safeguarding and protecting human rights of threatened leaders and environmental organizations** to make their efforts visible by including them in global networks and support organizations, strengthening their internal processes, developing risk management skills, and creating collective protection measures, among others.
- ❑ **Territorial control must go beyond unidirectional action in the fight against environmental crimes and deforestation** and instead result in greater understanding of new institutions and their scope of action at the territorial level, seeking mechanisms to strengthen institutional coordination at different levels and for different priority topics (e.g. human rights, security, environment) and strengthening spaces for participation and decision making at the local level. This approach can generate more trust among institutions and communities and create a greater sense of co-responsibility.

It is urgent to sign and ratify the Escazú Agreement, the first regional treaty to create a pioneering platform for Latin American states and societies to move towards full access to information, participation beyond consultation, and promotion of

environmental justice. This agreement seeks to guarantee the rights of present and future generations to enjoy a healthy environment, sustainable development, and capacity building through greater cooperation among countries in the region.



| Luis Barreto - WWF Colombia

Public-private-community alliances to face deforestation

These alliances are particularly important since they promote alternative agro-environmental models that effectively help reduce deforestation. These alliances should be collective action processes accompanied by actions like rural extension⁹ with environmental criteria, green incentives, and conservation and/or zero deforestation agreements, among others. We recommend:

Strengthening productive alliances that promote value chains aimed at reducing deforestation and closing existing gaps between the sustainability of productive and/or extractive processes and their technical and financial requirements¹⁰.

- Implementing rural extension services that promote the incorporation of good agricultural and ranching practices, building local capacities for the implementation of sustainable production systems. Even though there have been rural extension experiences in the country for decades, their implementation in some regions like the Amazon has been limited.
- Integrating sustainable forest management of forest goods and services, as specified in Law 1876 of 2017, which creates the National System for Agricultural Innovation (SNIA), as an additional measure to stop the advancement of the agricultural frontier, developing integrated capacity building models for rural extensionists in the forest and

9. According to FAO, rural extension promotes joint creation in innovation, a broad and participatory creation process for stakeholders who benefit from innovation and who can help develop solutions. These participatory approaches allow for the construction of innovation and extension agendas that are multisectoral and built on consensual agreements.

agricultural sectors so that a forestry and agroforestry vision complements the more traditional production vision.

- Consider land planning processes with an environmental approach, credit planning and management, traditional knowledge dialogues (e.g. exchange programs at agricultural schools), specialized technical assistance, market analysis, transformation and added value, and food security, among others, in a new vision for rural extension that transcends traditional technical assistance.
- Strengthen rural extensionists' knowledge and an integrated production-environmental vision beyond their technical and/or professional training. Alliances among different programs and projects in a single region for the development of rural extension will ease operation, economic optimization, and criteria standardization, helping implement Departmental Agricultural Extension Plans (PDEA).

- Advance in the establishment of minimum conditions for sustainable production projects promoted by different public and/or private organizations, at least by taking into account environmental supply, environmental impacts, and land use restrictions.
- Revise perverse incentives easing the development of unsustainable productive activities from an economic, environmental, and social perspective (e.g. poor practices in extensive cattle ranching funded by easily accessible credit in environmentally fragile areas).
- Develop new credit lines for alternative productive initiatives like sustainable forest management, agroforestry systems, bio-businesses, etc. whose cash flows and income generation operate differently from those of traditional businesses and can have financial benefits in the longer term. These developments become more relevant in contexts where urgent measures must be taken to stop the advance of the agricultural frontier.



| Daiana Gonzalez - WWF Colombia

10. Examples: promotion of sustainable agribusinesses with environmental management commitments or initiatives for timber or non-timber forest products, always identifying key public, private, and social stakeholders in the value chain who are committed to improving competitiveness, environmental performance, and the well-being and income stability of producers.

- **Strengthen two-way learning processes, recognizing technological innovation, local knowledge dialogues, resources exchange, and traditional knowledge of ethnic peoples and rural communities**, seeking tailor-made solutions to production problems that are in harmony with nature.
- **Where deforestation is taking place, differentiated national and regional strategies based on the conditions of each region of the country should be set forth.** The debate needs to be decentralized, the dialogue strengthened and concrete actions in territories through a differentiated approach (region, type of stakeholder) should be developed.to face deforestation (region, type of stakeholder).

CALL TO ACTION

- To confront the issue of deforestation, it is necessary to **differentiate direct causes from underlying causes** and design corresponding policy actions. .
- Urgent actions are needed related to the dynamics of land ownership in the country and to **guarantee participatory management that is well articulated to planning instruments at the territorial level**, since these dynamics are the main underlying cause of deforestation in Colombia.
- **Sustainable forest management is a central axis of regional and national development as well as an opportunity to build peace.** The current development model has a direct relationship with deforestation; if we do not rethink this model, we will not be able to successfully tackle deforestation.
- **Deforestation is not only the loss of forests and associated plant and animal species, but also the loss of key ecosystem services** like hydrologic regulation, soil protection, and carbon capture and storage, thus increasing risks from climate change in local communities – and society in general – and reducing the capacity to adapt. Thus, a country-wide vision is important that transcends the Amazon and considers all the remaining natural forests in different regions.
- The discussion on deforestation should be broadened to include other emphases like incentives for **integrated management of ecosystems and biodiversity** and strengthening governance in local communities.

- **Strengthening governance in territories and the inclusion of sustainability criteria in the use of forest resources based on joint work with communities, civil society, and the public and private sectors** will make more viable the design and success of strategies to fight deforestation.
- **The responsibility to adopt measures to reduce deforestation transcends** the interests of conservation or the intent to provide greater access to resources; it also **involves principles of inter-generational equity, solidarity, and participation in the management of natural capital in our country***.





| Luis Barreto - WWF Colombia

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