

Post-conflict Colombia

Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Landscapes

05.19.2016 | 11:00 - 12:30 EDT

Post-event notes



An opportunity for discussion

The state of Colombia's natural resources has global implications. Natural forests cover approximately 40% of Colombia's land area and give the country enormous capacity to sequester carbon. Colombia is also regarded as one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, and home to an estimated 10% of the earth's animal and plant species. However, high rates of inequality, a legacy of conflict, an illicit economy, and insecure access to land have threatened Colombia's natural resources and the well-being of its people, despite Colombia's middle-income status.

The ongoing peace process in Colombia raises new opportunities and challenges for natural resource management in the country as agreements on rural development, land tenure, illicit economic activities, and restitution unfold. Although Colombia's peace accords focus on comprehensive rural reform, there is insufficient understanding of the associated implications for sustainable forest management. Of particular concern are the tenure and usufruct rights of indigenous and afro-descendent communities living in and around the majority of Colombia's forests.

This moment in history represents a critical opportunity for Colombia to put into place policies that improve the long-term well-being of all Colombians. These policies can strengthen protection of the country's rich biological heritage. Palladium recognizes the ongoing peace process as a time for the international community to support sustainable peace in Colombia. This panel discussion sought to promote shared understandings of how the donor community and international civil society can support a newly peaceful Colombia to embark on a renewed path of sustainability for its long-term security.

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Paul Randolph

Palladium | Vice President, Governance and Moderator

Paul Randolph welcomes the panelists and audience to the discussion. He outlined that the panel will discuss the opportunities and challenges to improving sustainable landscapes in Colombia following a peace agreement. He stated that there are expected outcomes of conflict and some unexpected positive outcomes, such as:

- The known negative effect of conflict world-wide is that conflict causes large numbers of displaced persons. In Colombia, the conflict has displaced between 5.8 – 6.7 million people.
- Since 1964, the conflict in Colombia is estimated to have claimed more than 220,000 lives.
- Government of Colombia has estimated that 6.5 – 10 million hectares of land have been abandoned or illegally acquired due to the conflict (15% of the Colombia Territory).
- A net positive consequence of the abandoned land has been a measureable increased forest recovery trend from 2001-2010. The challenge will be how to preserve this trend once farmers begin to reclaim their land. How to promote more sustainable climate friendly practices.
- This net positive trend of forest recovery or preservation during conflict is not unique to Colombia. For example, in Mindanao, Philippines, during the Moro National Liberation Front rebellion (1972-1996) the MNLF protected and preserved the forest for military tactical reasons, but once the peace was negotiated forest coverage began to be significantly reduced due to access to ungoverned space, economic opportunity for MNLF villages, and lack of alternative livelihoods.

Daniel Pedraza

Embassy of Colombia | First Secretary: Information and Communication Technology, Science & Technology, and Environmental Affairs

First Secretary Pedraza joined the panel to offer his perspective and position from within the Colombian Embassy and to engage with the other panelists on how the Government of Colombia is moving forward in the context of the peace agreement.

Roger-Mark de Souza

The Woodrow Wilson Center | Director of Population, Environmental Security, and Resilience

Offering opening remarks, Roger-Mark laid the background of the Colombian conflict and issues that will have to be addressed in the post-conflict context.

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Hypothesis: Armed conflict could lead ironically to forest preservation as land lies fallow. A standing peace is believed to increase eco-tourism but Roger-Mark believes this to be overly optimistic. Stability could bring further exploitation of forest resources.

There are six dynamic areas to consider with an ongoing peace process.

- **Illicit Industries:** Illicit drug cultivation is a primary funding industry for rebel groups. The best areas for cultivation are in diverse areas with special eco-characteristics. These areas have seen an increased growth of coca in 14 of 59 national parks. 1kg cocaine-requires 1 hectare of forest. 30 years of coca production has led to contamination of soil and water because of the chemicals required for growth of cocaine. Soil remediation is now necessary.
- **Extractives:** With the demobilization of FARC, international organizations will now be able move in for oil exploration and mining. (mining accounts for 8% of economic activities in high biodiverse regions. 15-30% of these areas are gold mining)
- **Biofuel:** The palm oil industry in Colombia has been criticized for deforestation and human rights violations. The industry has forced displacement, affecting ethnic indigenous rights and transitional justice.
- **The capacity of the Colombian government to handle these issues:** The Minister of Environment has changed every 6 months under current administration leaving the government policies ineffective.
- **The government will have to be able to reintroduce former rebels into the peace process.** A big issue is who will pay for the damage to areas affected by FARC?
- **Climate Change:** Colombia can increase mega-diversity through sustainable forest management.

Sarah-Ann Lynch

USAID | Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator

Sarah-Ann shared the goals and commitment of USAID to support Colombia in post-conflict development.

- The most important ingredient for successful peace is political will, which is very strong in Colombia.
- USAID has \$1 billion of programming in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Colombia is the number one priority country in South America.
- The Colombian government has demonstrated leadership in the process and planning for funding the peace implementation, promoting local buy-in and sustainability.

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- USAID engagement under “PEACE Colombia” will exercise strategic patience and support the Government of Colombia’s peace implementation plan. Under PEACE Colombia, relations will be built at the national and local levels.
- USAID engages in Public Private Partnerships, strengthens value chains, helps indigenous better manage their own resources, and supports their ability to advocate. USAID also provides support to government to seek reconciliation, promote inclusive economic growth and mitigate devastation from flooding, and watershed degradation.
- The overarching goal is to support Colombia’s transition from conflict to durable peace by promoting economic prosperity through legal value chain development with a focus on rural areas.

Smita Malpani

Palladium | Technical Advisor

Smita Malpani brought into clear focus the populations that are most widely affected by the peace agreement and the specific issues that each of them face and recommendations for their engagement.

- Colombia is known to be one of Earth’s megadiverse countries biologically and is also diverse ethnically. Around 10% of the population are Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Colombians have many distinct cultures and communities with 70 different groups/tribes.
- 40% of Colombia is held under communal land system. This land is heavily forested and half of these forests are on land reserved for indigenous groups.
- Colombian laws regarding inclusivity and tenure look great on the books, but the actual experience for Colombians is very different. Security and rights are undermined by extractives, which disproportionately affect these communities in forested areas.
- Security is a huge issue for these populations causing the projected extinction of biologicals and an end of ethnic diversity. The UN estimates that half of Colombia’s ethnic tribes, will go extinct, as a result of displacement, migration to cities, loss of livelihoods, and insecure tenure.
- Policymakers must ensure indigenous representation at peace and REDD planning.
- They should work with these indigenous groups to build capacity to advocate for themselves, articulating their history, their experience, and how they envision their future.
- Trust building between ethnic communities will help these groups to work with government units from national to local levels to safeguard ethnic communities and rights.

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- Gender: Colombia has a strong women's rights and advocacy network. Indigenous women have organized very well but women are consistently marginalized and have to fight for their rights. Having women actively involved in NRM conversations, improves NRM outcomes. Women who benefit from economic growth and sustainable value chains invest in their families and children.
- Women rely on forests for food and medicine to meet basic needs. Synchronizing forest management with women's priorities can shift the program to a pro-poor approach to use/preserve/forests sustainably.

Laura Cordero

Fundación Capital | Project Coordinator

Laura Cordero brought the insights of an organization working to economically empower vulnerable population in Colombia.

- Fundación Capital works with vulnerable populations within Colombia and in 13 other countries in Latin America and Africa.
- Their primary goal is to seek economic inclusion for the poor. Through financial inclusion, graduation programs and digital solutions for BOP, Fundación Capital reached 4 million people in the last 7 years.
- In Colombia, they work with social protection and victims support programs to strengthen efforts of the government in preparing for post-conflict scenarios. Territorial peace will bring its own challenges as there are 8 million registered victims affected by the conflict, many displaced, including indigenous communities. Post-agreement Government investments will focus in those territories most affected by the conflict, which are also some of the most environmentally important areas.
- Many other national and international organizations are interested in taking up drug cultivation, even if FARC leaves or quits cultivating it. In Nariño, the average wage of the coca harvester is 4x that of a coffee harvester in the same position. Therefore, an emphasis should be made on generating and supporting alternatives for sustainable livelihoods.
- Recommendations:
 1. Programs should work at the family level with comprehensive livelihoods support model. These models can encourage spontaneous group formation based on common interest. They also help with value chain integration and market linkages with graduation programs for social protection programs.
 2. Promote community participation mechanisms and peer-to-peer learning strategies for natural resource management programs.
 3. Get youth involved through activities such as eco-tourism initiatives and environmental services.

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Jeffrey Hayward

Rainforest Alliance | Vice President, Design and Innovation, Global Climate Lead

Jeff Hayward relayed the experience of Rainforest Alliance in REDD programs and the specific challenges that Colombia has faced as well as the opportunities that will be present in post-conflict.

- REDD implementation in Colombia is unique as it has always been amidst conflict. For that reason, the forest emission level submitted to UNCCC only addresses the Amazon. It does not address other forest biomes, at the sub-national level, but intends to.
- Colombia is not prepared for REDD due to violence.
- It is uncertain if post-conflict activities will drive deforestation up or down. Nobody knows how the peace process and repatriation will play out.
- In Colombia, Rainforest Alliance is looking at REDD from the community perspective, including all activities to enhance forest management plans, business plans, promoting sustainably intensify productivity for dairy, cocoa, rubber, oil palm; strengthening food security and economically productive land use planning.
- In Colombia, since 2003 RA has promoted sustainable coffee production with coffee producers and in 2011 in piloted Net Zero Deforestation Zones in Caqueta with support of USAID.
- RA has been an auditor of forest carbon and REDD+ globally, evaluating 85 projects in 30 countries, representing over 4 million tons of CO2 emissions eligible for trade as carbon credits.
- On a first hand basis, RA's forest auditors had to adapt to the conflict. Forest auditing includes local/international experts doing field visits and gathering information. The audit team in Colombia uniquely required security detail, with a direct line to military intelligence for planning. The FARC presence impeded the normal course of auditing.
- Peace will bring about increased possibilities for partnerships in rural Colombia.
- Some priorities that support reducing deforestation should be: promoting sustainable land use, including the use of technology to bring about value chain improvements, strengthen land tenure and usage rights, enable certainty in land use so people can make investments in their lands, build markets in supporting sustainable agriculture and farming practices. Lastly, use carbon emission reductions to link Colombia to international finance.

Questions and Answers

What are some of the key USAID achievements in Colombia related to natural resource management that can be built on under the peace agreement?

Sarah-Ann: Data has shown this work has been successful and we want to build this up. Other bilateral/multi-lateral donors are working in Colombia as well. USAID brings a wealth of global experience in post-conflict settings that are relevant to the Colombia case.

What is the future of illegal mining on indigenous communities and the natural environment?

Smita: Mining is handled differently between Afro-Colombians (more restrictions) and Indigenous Colombians (sovereignty in tenure but does not include below ground tenure). There is no legal basis to stop mining on their land.

Laura: There are two sides to illegal mining: i) illegal big-scale mining conducted by illegal organizations due to lack of government, ii) small scale opportunist miners just looking for opportunities for their families.

The agreement was optimistically shooting for March. What are each of the organizations' concerns with the possible rejection of the peace agreement?

Jeff: RA would still be able to operate but will not be as positive if durable peace is not implemented.

Sarah-Ann: USAID programming has been leading up to this peace agreement for 15 years. We are positioning for a successful agreement but will not discontinue programming without the agreement.

What is the potential for ecotourism?

Laura: there are a number of eco-tourism initiatives currently in place, but the potential is much higher. This is a medium-term development strategy, but with very promising prospects.

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Our panel

MODERATOR

Paul Randolph

Palladium | Vice President, Governance

Paul Randolph leads as the Vice President of the Governance Practice at Palladium with 25 years of experience executing and overseeing regional and country-specific development, transition, and humanitarian programs in Asia, the Middle East, and Central Europe. With 23 years serving at USAID, Paul is a technical expert in democracy, rights and governance, disaster response and resilience, and conflict transition. Paul holds an M.A. in International Affairs from The American University in Washington, D.C., and a B.A. in Political Science from Iowa State University.

OPENING REMARKS

Roger-Mark de Souza

The Woodrow Wilson Center | Director of Population, Environmental Security, and Resilience

Roger-Mark De Souza is the Director of Population, Environmental Security, and Resilience for the Woodrow Wilson Center where he leads programs on climate change, environmental security, livelihoods, and reproductive and maternal health. Previously, he served as Vice President of Research at Population Action International; the Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations at the Sierra Club; and the Technical Director for Research, Communications, and Capacity-Building Projects in the USA, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean while at the Population Reference Bureau. Earlier, he worked at the World Resources Institute as Special Assistant to WRI's President.

PANEL MEMBERS

Daniel Pedraza

Embassy of Colombia | First Secretary: Information and Communication Technology, Science & Technology, and Environmental Affairs

Daniel Pedraza serves as First Secretary at the Embassy, managing the portfolio of science and technology, environmental affairs and entrepreneurship. He has worked in both the public and private sectors as treasury specialist for Bavaria, a subsidiary of SABMiller, and as advisor and speechwriter for the President of the Economic Affairs Commission. Mr. Pedraza holds a Master's of Banking and Finance from Centro de Estudios Garrigues in Madrid and a Bachelor's Degree in Law from Andes University.

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Jeffrey Hayward

Rainforest Alliance | Vice President, Design and Innovation, Global Climate Lead

Jeff Hayward, Vice President of Design and Innovation, leads a landscapes and livelihoods team responsible for the design of Rainforest Alliance's field strategies for agriculture, forestry, climate change, and other practices. He has 25 years' experience advancing sustainability through policy mechanisms that responsibly harness markets. He has an MSci in Forestry from the University of British Columbia and a Bachelor's Degree in Latin American Development from the University of Washington.

Smita Malpani

Palladium | Technical Advisor

Smita Malpani is a Technical Advisor for Environment and Natural Resources at Palladium. For 20 years, she has worked on natural resource management, local governance, community resource management, and gender equity and social inclusion (GESI). Previously, she has worked with international and village-level NGOs, the World Bank, and the University of Michigan. She holds a Bachelor's Degree from Wellesley College and a Master's Degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Laura Cordero

Fundación Capital | Project Coordinator

Laura Cordero coordinates the post conflict and territorial development area at Fundación Capital. She has 12 years of professional experience in development finance, working with several microfinance institutions and international organizations such as the World Bank and UN-Habitat. She holds a Degree in Economics from Complutense University and a Master's Degree in Foreign Service from Georgetown University.

Sarah-Ann Lynch

USAID | Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator

Sarah-Ann Lynch joined USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as the Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator in January 2015. Before joining LAC, Ms. Lynch was the Mission Director in Iraq where she oversaw a complex portfolio focused on governance, democracy, and economic growth. Ms. Lynch has been with USAID since 1993, and has received numerous awards, including USAID's Distinguished Honor Award in 2010, the Agency's highest performance award.