

COLOMBIA MAKES MAJOR STRIDES IN LOW EMISSION DEVELOPMENT

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Colombia has emerged as an international leader and “early mover” in low emission development and is addressing both climate change mitigation and adaptation in a manner that support long-term sustainable economic growth. Over the past four years, the U.S. Enhancing Capacity for Low Emission Development Strategies Program (EC-LEDS) has helped the Government of Colombia develop eight Sectoral Mitigation Action Plans (SMAPs), leverage \$20 million for transit-oriented development, and supported the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Law that was passed last year. This progressive approach has allowed Colombia – with U.S. support – to enter into tri-lateral relationships with Jamaica to share its country model for addressing the climate challenge.

EC-LEDS has assisted the Colombian Government in designing eight SMAPs—all of them already officially approved and signed: transport, mines, energy, agriculture, industry, hydrocarbons, housing, and solid and water waste. Together these SMAPs are projected to mitigate nearly 830 million tons of CO₂ by 2040. Sandra Garavito, director of USAID’s Low Carbon Resilient Development (LCRD) Program stated: “These plans were designed with a development-first approach. They embrace the priorities of each sector and push them toward a low carbon path.” Alexander Martinez Montero from Colombia’s National Department of Planning added, “The sectoral agendas are the first steps in the green growth model that comprises the base of the 2014-2018 National Development Plan.” The National Development Plan was officially approved by law in June 2015, including a green growth chapter mandating Ministries to implement the SMAPs.

EC-LEDS also helped Colombia leverage \$20 million in international funding for transit-oriented development. Colombia’s transit sector represents about 12 percent of its total greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. Focused on mitigation action and finance at the national level and implementation at city level, this work will shift where public and private investments are made to increase environmental, economic, and social returns on Colombia’s transit and social housing development.

Garavito stated, “It is expected that transit oriented development will enhance the benefits of major national investments in public transit – increasing use of different modes



EC-LEDS is helping Colombia leverage transit-oriented investment to build on major national investments in public transit. Photo: Transmilenio Bus Rapid Transit System in Bogotá, Colombia. Credit: EMBARQ Brasil.

in public transport and financial sustainability – and even leverage funding for low-income housing.”

Finally, EC-LEDS supported the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Law. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos signed the law on May 14, 2014. Key components include: promoting the integration of renewable energy resources in off-grid areas, increasing financial and tax incentives, and supporting the creation of the Non-Conventional Energies and Energy Efficiency Fund. The enactment of this law is also a critical step in stimulating private sector investment in renewable energy.

Though Colombia is not a major emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG), Montero stated, “One must look beyond national GHG reductions to the benefits that mitigation brings to Colombian society, allowing it to implement the most efficient practices and use of resources.” When it comes to low emission development, Colombia has quickly defined itself as a country worth emulating.

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