

Evaluation Summary

Country : **Colombia**

Thematic area : **Sustainable forest management in the Colombian Pacific region**

Evaluator : **Insuco Colombia**

Evaluation date : **May 2025**

Key data on FFEM support

Project name: Union Naturelle - sustainable forest management in the Colombian Pacific region

Project number: CCO 1050.01

Amount of FFEM funding: €1.200.000

Project grant date: July 2018

Duration : 6 ans

Context

The Colombian Pacific region, predominantly populated by Afro-Colombian communities holding collective land titles to more than 5 million hectares, faces significant threats such as illegal logging and mining. These communities, affected by poverty, armed conflict, and weak institutional presence, depend heavily on forestry and subsistence agriculture. In response, the project “Union naturelle”: Sustainable Forest Management in the Colombian Pacific Region” was launched. It is an initiative that aims to preserve biodiversity, combat deforestation, and improve living conditions through the development of a sustainable, legal, and profitable forestry sector.

Participants and operating procedures

The “Union Naturelle” project was financed by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), with Fondo Acción as the beneficiary and resource manager. The project was implemented as part of a co-financing mechanism incorporating contributions from the FFEM, additional resources, and the active participation of 13 entities. It was executed by the Fund for Environmental Action and Children (Fondo Acción) and ONF Andina, the Colombian branch of ONF International.



Objectives

Assess the level of effectiveness and efficiency in the execution of project activities, taking into account its socio-environmental and economic context.

Specific objectives:

- Analyze the way it was perceived by institutional actors and civil society, and evaluate the dissemination of its results.
- Examine planning and implementation strategies for knowledge transfer and their reproducibility.
- Evaluate the functioning of the project monitoring system and the quality of the information generated.
- Identify innovative strategies implemented in terms of organization, forest management techniques, and community awareness.
- Measure the changes generated in the beneficiary communities and analyze the sustainability of continuing activities in the long term.

Performance appraisal

Relevance

The “Union Naturelle” project provides an appropriate response to the socio-environmental problems of the Colombian Pacific region, a priority area both for its forest wealth and for the vulnerability of the Afro-Colombian communities living there. Its integrated approach is relevant to the need to curb deforestation, improve living conditions, and strengthen local capacities for sustainable land management.

Coherence

There is a clear alignment between the project's objectives and its technical, social, and organizational components. It is also consistent with national and international environmental policies, FFEM guidelines, and the priorities of the beneficiary communities.

Effectiveness

The project has enabled key actions to be implemented, such as the creation of a community forestry enterprise (ASOFODEMA), the installation and commissioning of a forest cable system, the strengthening of production systems and chains, and the operation of bio-plants, demonstrating substantial progress in all three components.

Efficiency

It is worth highlighting the sound execution of the budget and the adequate administrative and technical management, despite obstacles such as public order and weather conditions. The use of appropriate technologies also contributed to optimizing resources and reducing losses in the forestry sector.

Impact

The project had positive effects on organizational autonomy, community ownership of sustainable practices, and the participation of women and youth. It also strengthened territorial governance capacities and promoted economic alternatives to illegal activities, although challenges remain due to competition from informal economies and gaps in marketing.

Viability/Sustainability

Important foundations have been laid for the sustainability of the model, such as local technical training and the creation of a community enterprise. In addition, the model represents a sustainable strategy for generating income. Similarly, the food security of communities has been supported, as well as the promotion of agricultural products as a complementary source of income.

Added value of FFEM support

The project incorporated innovative practices for low-impact timber extraction, appropriate technologies such as portable saws and a traditional drying chamber, and forms of community organization adapted to the local context, thus positioning itself as a replicable model of sustainable community forest management.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

ASOFODEMA must strengthen its board of directors in order to ensure organizational continuity in the face of changes in public administration.

It is recommended to maintain psychosocial support that promotes internal cohesion and strengthens governance in the face of conflicts and leadership turnover.

It is suggested that alliances with local actors, such as town halls and governments, be strengthened in order to explore new marketing channels for wood and agroecological products.

It is recommended to implement direct sales and digital commerce strategies, while maintaining points of sale in spaces such as the CAR's Ventanas Verdes and other existing initiatives.

The Vigía del Fuerte Town Council must establish coordination mechanisms that document the commitments made to ASOFODEMA and formally integrate itself into its initiatives.

Tax incentives should be introduced for certified producers, and forest certification processes should be simplified for small producers.

Implement an audiovisual strategy to document ancestral practices and promote their integration into educational tools.

Develop manuals of good sanitary practices and establish partnerships with universities to improve the quality and packaging of traditional foods.

Conduct market research to position products with cultural identity in niche markets composed of consumers who are highly environmentally conscious.

