



# STRATEGISING TO DECOUPLE ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM GHG EMISSIONS: THE COLOMBIAN LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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**ACTION AREA:** Mitigation

**FOCUS AREA:** Strategising

**COUNTRY:** Colombia

## SECTORS

**INVOLVED:** Cross-sectoral

**TIMEFRAME:** 2012-ongoing

**CASE SUMMARY:** The Colombian Low Carbon Development Strategy (CLCDS) is a short, medium and long-term planning initiative that aims to identify the greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation potential and the appropriate measures and projects without affecting the long-term growth of the Colombian economy. Thus, the strategy seeks to seize international financing opportunities, promote technology transfer, enhance co-benefits, prepare the country's economic sectors against potential trade barriers imposed by the carbon-intensity of its production processes and promote the country's image as a progressive and carbon-efficient nation (DNP, 2011).

The CLCDS joined efforts and support from different cooperation agencies and was developed through a multi-level participatory process. The CLCDS process has included the designing and preparing of the implementation of low carbon development policies, plans and measures, in addition to the design and construction of a monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) system for the CLCDS. Capacity building, both for government officials at all levels and for the private sector, was also an outcome of the CLCDS development process. Finally, the strategy was a key element in designing Colombia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement.

The strategy is considered good practice due to the results of the multi-stakeholder engagement process and the inter-sectoral cooperation to enhance capacity building. In addition, the political ownership of the CLCDS led to the distribution of sound mitigation measures among sectors and drew a road map for the implementation of Colombia's NDC.





## STRATEGISING TO DECOUPLE ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM GHG EMISSIONS:

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**BACKGROUND:** According to its Third National Communication from 2017, Colombia has a carbon intensive economy with total emissions of 258.8 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mton CO<sub>2</sub>eq), representing 0.42% of global emissions. The sectors with highest emissions are: land use change (63%), transport (11%) and manufacturing industries (11%) (IDEAM et al., 2017b). Furthermore the country is vulnerable to climate change, ranked as 19th in the climate risk index in the 2017 (Eckstein et al., 2018). The main impacts of climate change are the loss of water sources, public health affectations, and loss of agricultural and forestry production that could hamper the economy and regional competitiveness (IDEAM et al., 2017b).

Colombia's National Development Plan (2010-14) provided the framework for the development of the country's low carbon development strategy. National Development Plans are national planning documents that are defined every four years according to the government in office. They have a narrative level and include a list of goals and indicators over which the government has control. It identified four crosscutting priority issues, namely good governance, innovation, relevance in foreign affairs, and environmental sustainability. It included two specific goals for the country related to climate change: vulnerability reduction and a low carbon strategy. Moreover, after being merged with the Ministry of Housing for 8 years, the government re-established the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS, for its acronym in Spanish) as a way of strengthening the environmental institutional arrangements in 2011. This led to the publication of the 'Institutional strategy for the articulation of policies and actions on climate change in Colombia' by the National Economic, Political and Social Council (CONPES), wherein it was proposed to shape the National Climate Change System (SISCLIMA). SISCLIMA brings together national, private, and non-profit institutions to coordinate actions in order to tackle climate change in the country. SISCLIMA operates through an Intersectoral Commission of Climate Change, the Climate Finance Committee, the Committee of Foreign Affairs and nine regional nodes (MADS, 2016). This allowed giving importance to the split of work between sectoral, national and territorial levels towards collective and coordinated climate change management.

In this context, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the National Planning Department began the development and coordination of the CLCDS. Since the beginning, the CLCDS invited international cooperation initiatives for support. Throughout all its components it has maintained a multi-level participatory process (sectoral and territorial).

The CLCDS also identifies economic, social and environmental co-benefits of mitigation actions, illustrating opportunities to achieve development and green growth objectives in a 'carbon-efficient' way and preparing Colombia for its participation in a low carbon global economy.

Also, through the CLCDS, it is expected that the country can take advantage of international funding, technology transfer opportunities, technical cooperation, and capacity building, among others (IDEAM et al., 2017a).

**ACTIVITIES:** The CLCDS is a short, medium and long-term development planning programme, led by the MADS through its Climate Change Division. It is being realised with the support from the National Planning Department (DNP, for its Spanish acronym), which is the national planning authority, and the line ministries of Colombia. The programme seeks to decouple the growth of GHG emissions from national economic growth (IDEAM et al., 2017a).

The general goal of the strategy is to identify, promote and implement alternatives and opportunities for low-carbon economic and social growth, taking into account the country's development priorities.

Specifics objectives (IDEAM et al., 2017a) are:

- Empower and motivate the (public and private) sectors to make decisions that reduce their emissions in the future, while achieving their growth goals and generating social, economic and environmental benefits;
- Develop Comprehensive Sectoral Climate Change Management Plans (PIGCCS for their Spanish acronym) for the main productive sectors of the country and create or promote the necessary tools for their implementation, including the political, regulatory and financial aspects in order to achieve the expected GHG emission reductions;
- Promote the management and implementation of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) in sectors and territories;
- Lead, develop and promote the implementation of Colombia's NDC;
- Generate adequate mechanisms for the monitoring progress and reporting at the national and international level and the corresponding verification of information, in accordance with national strategies for information management and international standards;
- Promote the regionalisation of mitigation actions in order to strengthen territorial capacities in the formulation of climate change plans;
- Lead and formulate the 2050 strategy as mandated by the Paris Agreement, in line with the global goal of carbon neutrality in the second half of the century

The CLCDS was divided in three stand-alone and two cross-cutting components or fields of action as indicated in Figure 1.

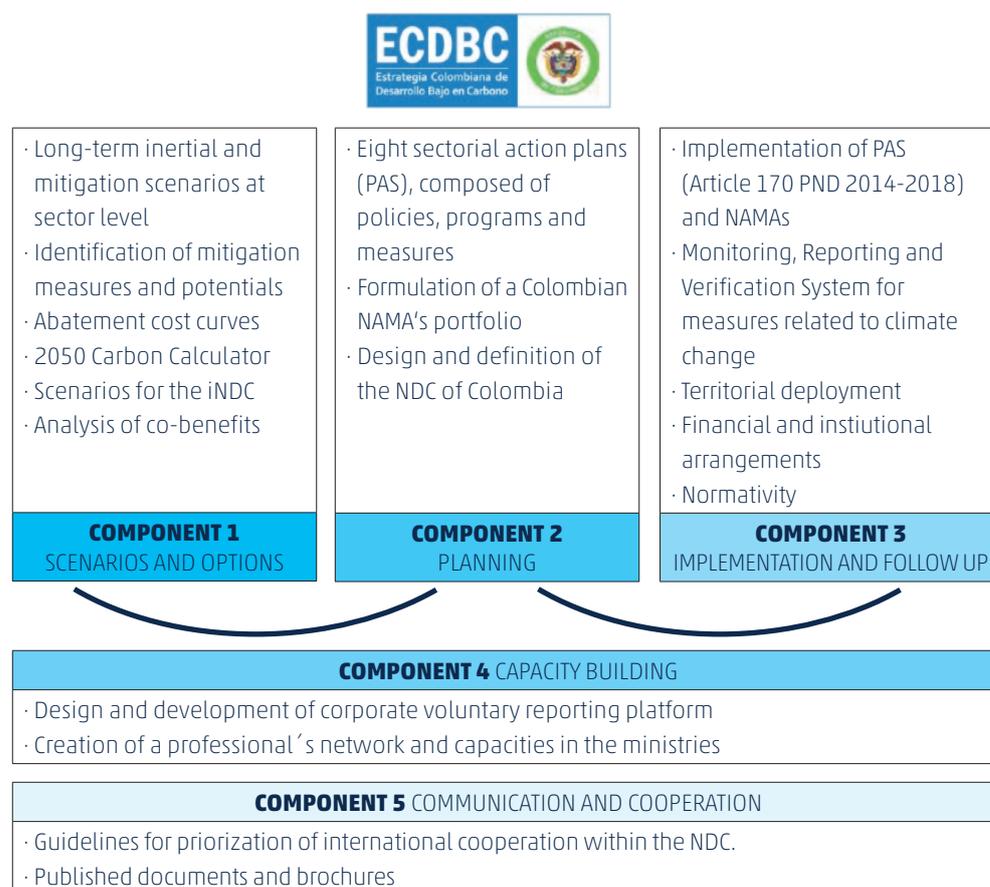


Figure 1: Fields of action of CLCDS (IDEAM et al., 2017a)



In the following, the main achievements of the CLCDS by components are described (IDEAM et al., 2017a).

#### **COMPONENT 1: SCENARIOS AND OPTIONS (MITIGATION MEASURES)**

Thanks to studies carried out by the Universidad de los Andes (a Colombian university), several low-carbon development alternatives at the sectoral level were identified and formulated through mathematical models, including:

- Modelling of a baseline scenario;
- Identifying mitigation measures, their GHG reduction potentials and abatement cost curves;
- Developing various scenarios to determine the NDC, and analysis of co-benefits of the measures.

This process enabled the participation of all sectors from the outset of the development of the emissions growth projections and mitigation measures. From the start, high-level meetings were held with ministers and companies' CEOs to present the work objectives and agree on commitments for the establishment of the abatement curves. Thus, scenario workshops were carried out to develop reduction scenarios for each sector, involving more than 200 representatives from private and public companies.

#### **COMPONENT 2: PLANNING**

The low carbon development variable is introduced in sectoral planning based on the measures identified by the same sectors under the framework of the CLCDS.

Five ministries designed and approved eight PIGCCS (Transportation, Energy, Hydrocarbons, Mining, Industry, Agriculture, Housing and Waste sectors), all of which include a set of actions, programmes and policies to reduce GHG emissions. These plans played an important role in allocating responsibilities for the NDC and will be transformed into 'Sectoral Mitigation Implementation Plans'. The new plans will provide more detail on specific prioritised measures to achieve the NDC target, additional action in mitigation and adaptation, responsibilities, implementation dates, etc.

The PIGCCS were prepared and approved directly by the line ministries and constitute the framework for action defined by the National Development Plan 2014 – 2018. The latter establishes that these ministries should formulate and implement sectoral adaptation plans and sectoral action plans for mitigation that should include quantitative sectoral goals of GHG reduction in both short and medium terms.

A portfolio with 14 NAMAs (including sectors such as Agriculture, Energy, Transport and Urban Development, Industry, Waste, and Housing) was created. Meanwhile, these NAMAs are in an advanced phase of their formulation. The NAMA of Cargo Transport is being implemented. Additionally, during the NAMA formulation process a series of capacity building and engagement actions were realised both with the public and private sector.

Colombia presented its iNDC which defines an unconditional GHG emission reduction goal of 20% until 2030 compared to a 'Business As Usual' scenario, based on a technical support document made by the Universidad de los Andes within the framework of the CLCDS. The starting point of the formulation and presentation of the iNDC of Colombia was to prepare a roadmap, which was developed by the MADS technical team in 2014. The roadmap was discussed in several meetings with the International Affairs Committee of SISCLIMA in order to consolidate it. From that, the terms of reference of the consultancy

### **COMPONENT 3: IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW UP (MRV)**

Component 3 has focused on MRV for the measures related to the NDC, and a voluntary corporate reporting platform, in addition to providing important elements for the MRV of NAMAs and the National Registry of Emissions Reduction.

- One part of component 3 consisted of advancing the MRV's conceptual design with support of World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Accounting Rules project of the German Development Agency (GIZ, for its German acronym). The Colombian MRV system contains three approaches: quantification of emissions, reduction of emissions and financing of mitigation and adaptation actions.
- To the end of realising the goals of the NDC, the emissions were categorised according to IPCC categories. The responsibility for addressing the respective emission categories was then distributed to ministerial portfolio sectors. In this way, both the emissions from the National Inventory of Greenhouse Gases (INGEI for its acronym in Spanish) and the prioritised mitigation measures can be monitored at the sectorial level.

This component also involves the territorial deployment. The CLCDS has initiated the regionalisation process, defining mitigation portfolios in 12 departments of the country, with the support of the Low Emission Capacity Building Programme (LECB), a global initiative from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support national climate change mitigation efforts. This was carried out through capacity building workshops in four regions (where 15 of Colombia's departments are grouped). The articulation of CLCDS's territorial deployment was ensured with the inclusion of climate change variables in guiding documents such as the Territorial Ordinance Plans, the National Climate Change Policy, the CONPES Document related to Payment for Environmental Services and the Document CONPES related to the Sustainable Development of Colombia.

### **COMPONENTS 4 'CAPACITY BUILDING' AND 5 'COMMUNICATION & COOPERATION' (CROSS-CUTTING IN THE CLCDS)**

With support from the international community the technical capacity in the country was increased, especially in terms of MRV capacity management, sector support and participation of the territories and the private sector.

Additionally, the socialisation of the advances of the strategy is being carried out through training and institutional strengthening in sectors and at the territorial level.

Lastly, the tool 'Carbon Calculator 2050', a public instrument for estimating GHG emissions from different sectors, was developed to identify reduction potential and mitigation measures. This tool also served to communicate and socialise the impacts that would be achieved through the implementation of mitigation measures. The general public, as well as technical and political experts can use the results of the calculator to contribute to climate action and to formulate future emission reduction strategies.

### **INSTITUTIONS**

#### **INVOLVED:**

The CLCDS planning programme was led by MADS, specifically through the Climate Change Division and with support from DNP and the following line ministries (MADS, n.n.):

- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism,
- Ministry of Housing, City and Territory,
- Ministry of Mining and Energy,
- Ministry of Transport,
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development



**COOPERATION WITH:** ——— Technical and financial support has been received from the following entities and alliances (IDEAM et al., 2017a):

Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), World Bank, Embassy of the United Kingdom, MAPS, EU-UNDP – LECB, USAID – EC LEDS (Enhancing Capacities for Low Emission Development Strategies), Partnership for Market Readiness, Global Environmental Facility, Government of Germany, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and USAID Public Policy Programmes.

Precisely, results were achieved with the collective work of the following institutions:

• **INSTITUTE OF HYDROLOGY, METEOROLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES (IDEAM):**

Contributed to GHG emission projections.

• **DNP:** Supported the process to define sectoral targets, providing inputs for decision making such as a macroeconomic analysis for assessing impacts of mitigation measures.

• **IFPRI AND CCAFS:** Modelled the baseline for the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses sector (AFOLU) and assessed measures in 2015.

• **WRI:** Oriented the construction of the iNDC narrative and guidelines for NDC transparency.

• **CCAP AND CDKN:** Gave technical inputs and feedback during the iNDC consolidation process.

• **GIZ:** Provided capacity building for GHG reduction quantification guidelines within the MRV system, and preparation of national and subnational guidelines for transparent reporting.

• **RALI (USAID):** Provided suggestions to improve the MRV system and roadmap for its implementation.

**FINANCE:** ————— Colombia's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) reports on finance received for national initiatives supported by international cooperation for the period 2015-2017. The initiative 'Moving the ECDBC towards action' is reported as executed from 2016 to 2019, with the support of the German Government with a budget of USD 4.589.492,54 (IDEAM et al., 2018).

**IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES:** — In general CLCDS had the following impacts:

· Climate change issues have been incorporated into public policies. An evidence of this is the increase of the number of goals and indicators in the corresponding National Development Plan 2014-2018 by 200% compared to the previous one (information from personal communication with Sebastian Lema). Also, some of the measures identified in the PIGCCS were incorporated into the National Development Plan 2014-2018

· The capacities of the central government were strengthened. The technical capacity within the ministries and especially within MADS increased considerably in terms of number of staff dedicated to climate change and also in the level of technical expertise. Although initially hired by the international community, consultants subsequently became part of the team of the ministries. Most of these specific positions were created to give continuity to the process by allowing specialised climate change professionals to work in the environmental affairs offices.

· The decision about the NDC ambition (target) was based on the technical information made available as part of the strategy process (specifically on the scenarios analysis).

- Concerning climate financing, the CLCDS provided support to create and strengthen the Climate Finance Management Committee of SISCLIMA, which later was leading the Colombian Climate Finance Strategy.
- The process contributed to the consolidation of the SISCLIMA space where all sectors meet to understand, correct and follow-up progress on the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.
- The strategy elaboration process has contributed to regulatory developments such as the national carbon tax and its regulations, and the National Registry of Emissions Reduction.

#### WHY IS IT

#### GOOD PRACTICE:

————— The CLCDS is considered a good practice because of:

- **INTER-SECTORAL COOPERATION:** SISCLIMA functioned as a meeting point and institutionalised space where sectors meet and discuss their ideas and concerns about the country's climate commitments. A roadmap was established for each ministry in order to prioritise mitigation measures with the aim of jointly responding to NDC targets. This partly formed the preliminary step to establish the Sectoral Mitigation Implementation Plans. The responsibilities for the emission categories among sectors were equally distributed, and, as a result, at present more than half of the emission reductions planned have been assigned.
- **TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY:** The strategy facilitated the continued presence of newly developed capacities – in terms of knowledge and staff – in national institutions and contributed to the improvement of the technical training of the different officers (mainly from sectors) with regards to climate change.
- **POLITICAL BUY-IN:** The CLCDS enjoys a high-level political ownership at the central government level – more specifically from the presidency, the planning authority and line sectorial ministries. This is reflected in legal instruments such as the National Development Plan 2014-2018, which incorporated indicators and measures from the CLCDS, thus making it binding. This shows the high-level salience of environmental issues across sectors.
- **ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS:** The environmental authority (MADS) and the planning authority (DNP) work together in order to mainstream the strategy. It is being integrated with existing national policies and platforms such as CONPES and SISCLIMA.
- **SCIENCE-BASED:** The University of Andes was in charge of developing the growth projections of the country, analysing the growth of emissions, as well as estimating the mitigation potential at a theoretical level, which was subsequently adjusted. In addition, with the collective consulting services of academics were considered, and different sectoral outlooks were taken into account in modelling scenarios.



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- SUCCESS FACTORS:**
- **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:** International cooperation resources allowed having highly skilled experts dedicated to the CLCDS process. This also helped in developing studies that provided adequate information for decision-making. One of the most important success factors was to manage these various resources available in the most effective way through careful implementation planning in order to meet the country needs.
  - **IMMEDIATE RELEVANCE AND IMPACT:** Including CLCDS in the National Development Plan ensured its continuity and a certain level of bindingness between sectors.
  - **MEASURE AND RELIABLE DATA:** Having solid technical studies on the modelling of scenarios and measures ready proved to be key inputs for the dialogue with the sectors.
  - **RELEVANT APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL COMMITMENT:** In the process of building the NDC, not only the technical inputs were important, but the approaches to address the issues were also essential. This means that in the decision-making process, a balance was sought between what 'should be' reduced and what 'can be' reduced.
  - **INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING MECHANISMS:** Another important success factor was to stop treating climate change as an exclusive matter of MADS, and introduce it into an institutionalised multi-sectorial and multi-level structure like SISCLIMA<sup>1</sup>. The latter was crucial, because it functions as a space of coordination where criteria for equitable inter-sectorial distribution of NDC were/are met.
  - **FURTHER ENHANCE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:** Having clear guidelines on climate change in political instruments or action plans has facilitated the engagement of other stakeholders (non-state actors) with climate action.

<sup>1</sup> Information gathered from interviews carried out under the UNDP – Colombia LECB Programme Impact and Results Analysis

### OVERCOMING BARRIERS / CHALLENGES:

#### WHAT WERE THE MAIN BARRIERS / CHALLENGES TO DELIVERY?

**POLITICAL:** The CLCDS is a long-term strategy, while Colombia's national planning instruments are established for a four-year period. And even when several activities from the strategy are considered in national planning, this does not assure the continuity of actions by the next elected government.

**FINANCIAL:** In general, the CLCDS needs external and internal financial support.

More specifically, there is a lack of financing to implement NAMAs and drive the interrupted process of regionalisation.

#### HOW WERE THESE BARRIERS / CHALLENGES OVERCOME?

Despite certain risks, the increase in technical capacities and qualified staff within ministries has generated technical knowledge and awareness of the salience of climate change, which will persist even after changes in government have taken place.

Although the lack of financing is still a challenge for the implementation of the CLCDS, certain measures have been carried out to overcome it.

For example, due to goals set into the PIGCCS, public budget (from ministries) has been assigned to attend them.

Also, a National Strategy on Climate Financing led by DNP is being developed.

- LESSONS LEARNED:** ———
- **DEVELOP BINDING MECHANISMS IN EXISTING POLICY INSTRUMENTS:** Including climate change in national, sectoral and territorial planning instruments such as the National Development Plan is key to making the action and engagement binding at sectoral and regional levels.
  - **MAKE USE OF EXISTING MECHANISMS FOR INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION:** Use existing national mechanisms such as SISCLIMA, which serves as coordination space between sectorial ministries. This facilitates active participation of all ministries.
  - **SELECT A SINGLE COORDINATOR OF THE STRATEGY WHO IS ALSO THE MANAGER OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FUNDS:** The CLCDS pooled efforts from different cooperation agencies in order to attend its own specific needs. This type of management avoided duplication and made resources allocation more efficient. Also, in this way, the cooperation process was not imposed but a coordinated collaboration with other programmes<sup>2</sup>.
  - **CONSOLIDATE A TECHNICAL TEAM OF CONSULTANTS WITHIN THE MINISTRIES:** Having local consultants in the process, who are working within the ministries, helps to give continuity to the measures and actions already implemented. Also, instead of having the 'know-how' in external consulting firms, this knowledge remains with the same practitioners. In the long term, ownership of the strategy is promoted.
  - **INVOLVE THE STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE BEGINNING:** Including all relevant parties (government, private sector, academy and civil society in general) in the mitigation action formulation process is of great importance for the formulation itself, for the credibility of the CLCDS, and to help ensure compliance of Colombian NDC MADS (n.n.). The importance of high-level meetings at the beginning of the process can also be highlighted here.
  - **DEPLOY ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION TO ENSURE EMPOWERMENT OF CITIZENS:** There is still a need to improve the communication and dissemination of the CLCDS to citizens. This is particularly important because they will be able to do civic monitoring of the whole process and the CLCDS's result in the future.
  - **SYSTEMATISE WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT AND USEFUL:** Be prepared for the possibility that a strategy such as CLCDS is evolving continuously and changes may occur at any time, especially with change of government. For that, publications and reports could easily become obsolete, so it is important to pay attention as to what and how components of the strategy should be systematised without expending unnecessary efforts in the future.

<sup>2</sup> Information gathered from interviews carried out under the UNDP - Colombia LECB Programme Impact and Results Analysis

## HOW TO REPLICATE

- THIS PRACTICE:** ———
- **ENSURE AN ADEQUATE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION FROM THE CONSULTANCIES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS AND DEVELOP THE TECHNICAL CAPACITIES IN-HOUSE:** It is key that technical information and analysis - such as economic modelling, emissions calculations, among others - are available and managed inside national departments so that further updates do not have to depend on external consulting firms.
  - **PRIORITISE COOPERATION SUPPORT IN STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITIES:** It is crucial to invest in developing capacities internally - in the central government, sectors and regional governments.
  - **SYSTEMATISE WHAT COULD BE USEFUL FOR FURTHER LEARNING EXCHANGE:** Consider that tools, approaches, instruments and methodologies could be replicated: for example, the development of mitigation action curves or the elaboration of baseline scenarios.



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### FURTHER KEY

**RESOURCES:** ————— MADS (n.n.). Colombian Low Carbon Development Strategy. Available at: [https://www.transparency-partnership.net/sites/default/files/u1300/060312\\_ecdbc\\_cambio\\_climatico.pdf](https://www.transparency-partnership.net/sites/default/files/u1300/060312_ecdbc_cambio_climatico.pdf)

### WEBSITE:

————— · Colombian Low Carbon Development Strategy on MADS website:  
<http://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/estrategia-colombiana-de-desarrollo-bajo-en-carbono>

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### CASE STUDY

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