



**USAID**  
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**PARAGUAY**

# GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

**JULY 2008**



*USAID's activities in Paraguay have not only succeeded in increasing public participation in the process of environmental awareness, but have also significantly helped mitigate the effects of climate change. Through USAID's support for the conservation of natural resources and management of protected areas, crucial carbon stocks have been preserved, as has important biodiversity.*

## **BACKGROUND**

With a population of 6.1 million and size equal to the state of California, Paraguay has three distinct regions that have globally significant biological diversity: the Upper Parana Atlantic Forest, the Chaco Forest, and the Patanal wetlands. These regions contain more than 650 bird species, as well as many threatened and endangered species. Unfortunately, with a high deforestation rate, Paraguay's biological diversity is threatened. The Paraguayan economy is primarily dependent on agriculture exports of soybeans, cotton, grains, cattle, timber, and sugar. However, the once rich topsoil of the eastern border region has been severely eroded. Groundwater in this region is being threatened and depleted as a result of unchecked land use.

USAID/Paraguay supports a number of ongoing programs that focus on economic growth, reproductive health, environmental initiatives and the strengthening of democracy. Two major themes link these initiatives:

- 1) A vibrant, pluralistic civil society that serves as the basis for democratic governance, improved trade capacity and economic growth, improved health and provision of services and management of natural resources; and
- 2) Government responsiveness, accountability, and accessibility to citizens strengthened through the decentralization of power and authority to local levels and measures which promote honesty and transparency throughout all levels of government.

USAID is also implementing a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Threshold Country Program for Paraguay<sup>1</sup> over the next two years, targeting corruption and Paraguay's surging informal economy.

## **SECTOR-SPECIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVITIES**

### **ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH IMPROVED NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT**

Over the past four years, with USAID support, international and national partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been able to establish several protected areas (53,895 hectares) using two mechanisms – private nature reserves and conservation easements.

In 2007, USAID support primarily consisted of providing technical assistance to private owners willing to create protected areas under a

<sup>1</sup> For more information on MCC, visit: <http://www.mcc.gov/>

## PARTNERS

USAID's partners in climate change activities in Paraguay include:

- Fundacion Desdelchaco
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Because partners change as new activities arise, this list of partners is not comprehensive.

private system (but part of the national areas protected law). Two private reserves were successfully created in the Chaco Region – Riacho Florida and El Ceibo – and one in the Upper Parana Atlantic Forest named Salto Cristal. These extraordinary reserves are rich in biodiversity and vital natural resources.

The Riacho Florida Reserve is committed to conservation in perpetuity. It contains two main forests types including semi-deciduous and seasonally inundated forest. The area contains at least 64 plant species, 87 bird species, 16 mammalian species, and seven species of amphibians and reptiles. In El Ceibo, over 134 species of birds have been registered with over 72% of them under threat. This area is under a five year conservation plan. Salto Cristal is the smallest area, containing 29 hectares of forest and watersheds, but there is a 45 meter waterfall and two watersheds that serve local communities. The area has many tree species under threat of extinction and soils at risk for erosion.

USAID supported the process that allowed these areas to become official protected reserves by sponsoring the preparation of documentation required by the Paraguayan Secretariat of Environment, including a Rapid Biological Evaluation and a Technical Justification Document containing maps of the proposed areas. In the second phase, private owners will create management plans to enhance the sustainability and future biological integrity of these unique ecosystems. USAID is also co-financing scientific work to document the unique biodiversity found here. Studies include data gathering in areas of botany, mammals, birds, reptiles, soil, and socioeconomic conditions.

These activities build upon projects that have been successfully implemented in previous years. USAID has supported improvements in reserve management systems to reduce incidence of illegal logging, facilitated the signing of a debt-swap agreement under the US Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA),<sup>2</sup> and supported the preparation of pre-feasibility studies for the restoration of forest lands.

USAID has been a major player helping Paraguay achieving the minimum 10% of important ecosystems of the country under protection stated by the Convention on Biological Diversity. In fact, Paraguay currently is protecting 14% of important biological areas.

In addition to the numerous benefits garnered from protecting biodiversity and protecting valuable watersheds, these efforts are contributing to increased carbon sequestration, thereby mitigating the effects of climate change.

For more information, visit:  
<http://paraguay.usaid.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on TFCA, visit:  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/environment/forestry/intro\\_tfca.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/forestry/intro_tfca.html).