Land and Colombia’s Journey to Self-Reliance

KEY LAND ISSUES IN COLOMBIA

Grievances over land were key drivers of Colombia’s nearly 50-year internal conflict. At the onset of the conflict, land distribution was highly inequitable: less than 1% of the population owned more than 50% of the country’s best land. Since then, land ownership has become even more concentrated through displacement and illicit acquisition associated with the conflict and narcotics trade. Colombia has the second highest rate of internal displacement in the world, surpassed only by Syria, with 6 million people having fled their land. Currently, about 30% of Colombians are estimated to have insecure land rights.

1960s | Civil war begins. The fighting continues for nearly 50 years, displacing millions from their land.

2010 | USAID launches a program to support a robust land restitution effort in Colombia by providing guidance on the institutional design and legal framework.

2013 | USAID launches the Land and Rural Development Program, strengthening the capacity of national and regional government institutions to address land restitution, formalization, and rural development issues.

2016 | Colombia’s Congress ratifies a comprehensive peace agreement addressing land issues as a key part of Colombia’s peace planning.

2012 | USAID provides direct implementation support to the land restitution policy in targeted regions.

2016 | The Government of Colombia and USAID launch high-profile and ambitious massive land titling pilot in the Ovejas region. The pilot will help shape the Government’s planned national land titling campaign.

2018 | USAID is preparing to launch the Land for Prosperity program, a new 5-year activity that will be among the Agency’s largest and most important land programs


2000s | USAID programs begin addressing land issues as a strategy to mitigate conflict, support the National Consolidation Plan, and combat the narcotics trade.

2011 | The Government of Colombia (GoC) passes new law on land restitution and formalization for victims of violence that establishes a process for land restitution as part of peacebuilding efforts, but capacity constraints slow progress.

2015

IMPACTS OF USAID LAND PROGRAMS (Since 2013)

- Mobilized over $84 million in domestic resources towards implementing land restitution rulings and public private partnerships. That translates into $21 dollars mobilized from domestic sources for every $1 USAID invested.
- Supported four ethnic land restitution cases benefiting 230+ families and advancing restitution of 3400+ hectares of land.
- Supported the GoC in strengthening its capacity to resolve over 62,000 land restitution cases.
- Digitized over 5 million paper land records and helped the GoC develop a modern land administration system.
- Reduced by 92% the time required for the land restitution unit to access land records across various government agencies.

Note: gray indicates GoC context, dark blue indicates USAID activities.