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NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WATER SECURITY (NIWS)

Climate change is intensifying Peru's water crisis, as evidenced by extreme droughts, floods, wildfires, and landslides in recent years. Natural infrastructure (such as forests and wetlands) increases water security for both upstream rural communities and downstream water users. Through NIWS, USAID is working to expand public and private sector efforts to protect and restore natural infrastructure for water security and climate resilience, while also helping to close gender gaps in natural resource management.

In the last decade, Peru has captured international attention for leading a paradigm shift that incorporates natural infrastructure as a central solution to addressing water risks. Scaling up this new approach has faced numerous challenges, such as a lack of a solid portfolio of quality projects, a lack of tools and information, and severe social and gender inequities. NIWS, a collaboration led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Government of Canada, and Forest Trends, has supported this shift since it began in 2017. In May 2023, NIWS was expanded to continue implementation until December 2027.

HOW DOES THE ACTIVITY WORK?

NIWS works in collaboration with natural infrastructure investors, including regional governments, water and sanitation service providers, national agencies (including the National Infrastructure Authority), and private companies, to mobilize investments in natural infrastructure for water security. NIWS works to increase and diversify a portfolio of public and private investments in natural infrastructure, and to move an existing portfolio of projects toward implementation, strengthen the capacities of implementers to manage risks and document the multiple benefits generated by these projects. NIWS also works with national and subnational authorities, project developers and implementers, local communities, universities, and civil society to strengthen governance and the enabling environment for investments in natural infrastructure.

RESULTS TO DATE

In its first phase (2017-2023) NIWS achieved the following:

- Developed a portfolio of over 80 natural infrastructure projects valued at over US \$440 million with local funders and over 240 local communities, with \$20 million of investments from that portfolio already invested.
- Strengthened capacities of more than 5,000 professionals to develop, manage, monitor, and communicate investments in natural infrastructure for water security.
- Increased credibility and clarity for decision-makers regarding the water benefits of natural infrastructure interventions, including original research and a series of systematic reviews.
- Developed a suite of new tools to guide the identification, design, and management of effective, equitable and sustainable interventions in natural infrastructure.
- Strengthened a common, multi-sectoral vision for natural infrastructure for water security in Peru, which contributed to improvements to over a dozen policies, plans, and regulations and recommendations from the OECD Water Governance Initiative for strengthening financing for NI.
- Strengthened the capacity of institutions to develop and implement natural infrastructure projects, such as reducing the time from idea to agreement for these projects by Lima's water utility by 73%.

- Secured the first institutional commitments and policy changes from the leading authorities in Peru’s water sector to address gender gaps in water management.
- Recognized, trained, and connected over 100 women leaders through the Leadership Program for Women in Water Management.

RESULTS EXPECTED

- At least US \$120 millions of planned natural infrastructure investments, including at least US \$15 million from the private sector. Mobilized investments have finalized all technical documents, received all relevant approvals, and confirmed budget allocation for imminent implementation.
- Tangible benefits of natural infrastructure investments are documented, including: 1) At least 150,000 people (50% women) supported in adapting to the effects of climate change; and 2) at least 20,000 hectares of priority natural water infrastructure under improved management.
- At least 19 institutions show improved performance on nature-based solutions for water security and climate resilience, including at least 14 on closing gender gaps.
- Improved knowledge and capacities on nature-based solutions for water security and climate resilience in over 2250 professionals, including at least 1225 women.
- Three to four local partners will have strengthened organizational functions and meet criteria for a Transition Award with USAID.

PROJECT INFORMATION

IMPLEMENTER: Forest Trends

PARTNERS: Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA), Descosur and Imperial College London

DURATION: December 2017 to December 2027

USAID FUNDING: \$29,877,731

REGIONS: Arequipa, Cusco, Lima, Moquegua, Piura, and San Martín

COORDINATOR: Alison Macalady

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (51-1) 958-049-313

EMAIL: amacalady@usaid.gov