



# LA MINGA

Everyone Together

An Endowment to Secure Community  
Driven Conservation on Colombia's  
Pacific Coast



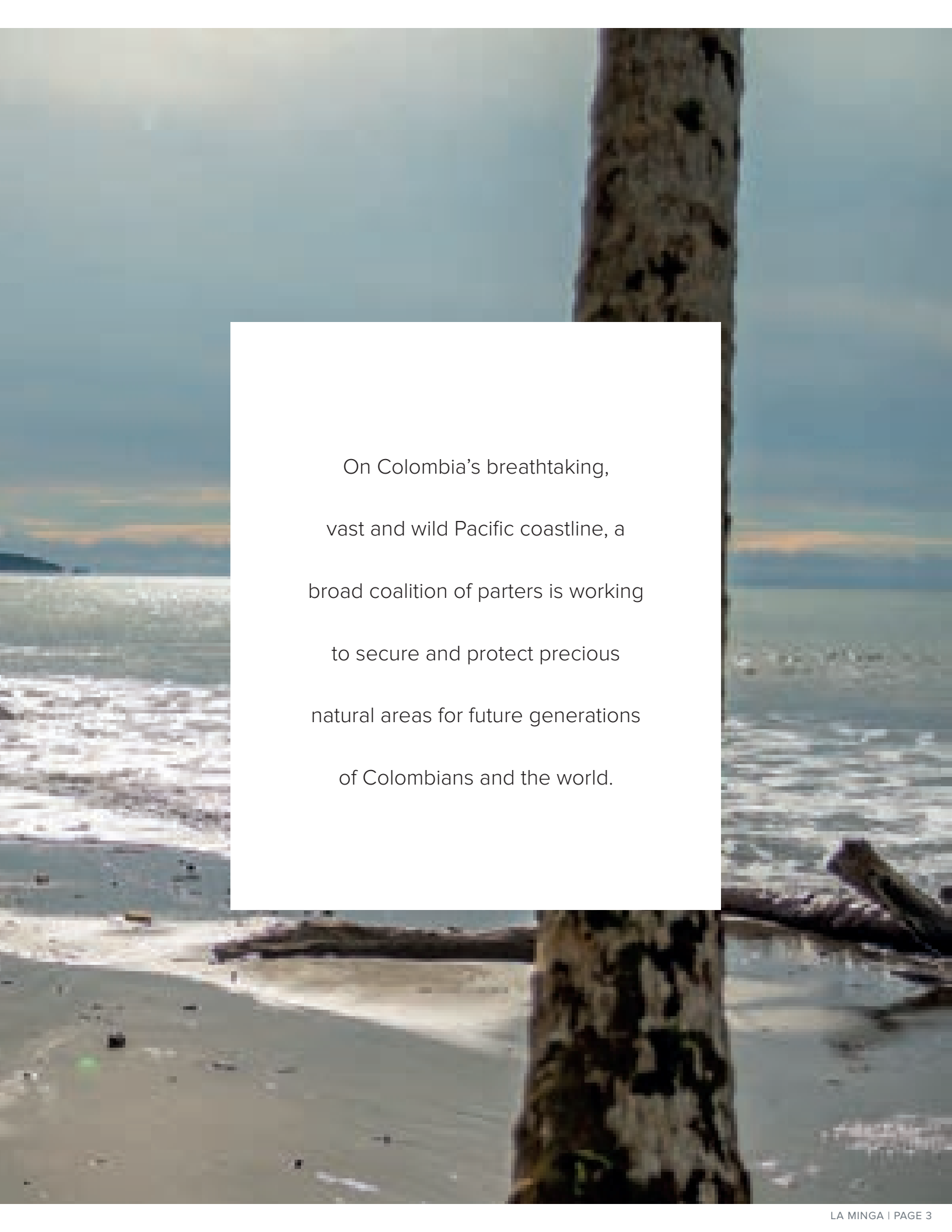
CONSERVATION  
INTERNATIONAL



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A scenic view of a beach with waves crashing onto the shore, framed by a large tree trunk in the foreground. The sky is a mix of blue and grey, suggesting an overcast day. The water is a deep blue-grey, and the waves are white and frothy as they hit the sand. The tree trunk is dark and textured, running vertically through the center of the frame. The beach is sandy and has some driftwood scattered on it.

On Colombia's breathtaking,  
vast and wild Pacific coastline, a  
broad coalition of partners is working  
to secure and protect precious  
natural areas for future generations  
of Colombians and the world.





## BACKGROUND

On the beautiful Colombian Pacific coast, one can find two networks of protected areas: Bahía Málaga and Northern Chocó. Together they cover more than 350,000 hectares (an area larger than Belgium) of pristine coastline. This land is not only home to a large number of species found nowhere else on earth, but is also home to more than 6,000 families. These communities are illustrious in their blend of cultures — which are now at risk of being lost.

Conservation International (CI) and Fondo Acción have been actively supporting and contributing to the creation, development and strengthening of these protected areas and communities. To further this work and provide continuity, Conservation International and Fondo Acción have launched “La Minga” which means “everyone together.” La Minga is an endowment fund and a sinking fund designed to guarantee the financial sustainability of this community-driven network of protected areas. Its goal is to ultimately help secure the protection of invaluable biodiversity, a deeply prized cultural heritage, and the natural capital on which the local communities depend. This is the first time in Colombia, and possibly in all of Latin America, where long-term financial sustainability for protected area management is being developed with the people who live there, who have driven this process since the very beginning.

Local and Afro-descendant communities in the Colombian Pacific region are highly dependent on the services provided by nature for their livelihoods. Natural marine-coastal ecosystems are essential to the way of life and traditions of the people. These communities have played and continue to play an important role in land-use as well as conservation; however, they lack the resources and management structure to counter threats to their way of life and the mounting pressures from illegal and predatory activities and conflict.

Colombia's armed conflict is now Latin America's longest-running war in which more than 220,000 people are estimated to have been killed, 40,000 are missing and more than 5.7 million have been displaced to other areas of the country (the second-highest rate of displacement in the world, after Syria).

This conflict has also taken a toll on the country's unique ecosystems, which host 10 percent of the planet's biodiversity. Between 1990 and 2013, 58 percent of Colombia's forest loss occurred in areas where fighting was taking place. As cocaine production and gold mining expanded to fund both sides of the conflict, dangerous chemicals leached into the soils of the remaining forest, which soon became too dangerous for its former residents to inhabit.

Conservation International Colombia and Fondo Acción aim to contribute to the peace process by improving the relationship between people and nature — increasing access to nature, protecting precious natural resources and encouraging a unified Colombian pride in the spectacular biodiversity the country has to offer. La Minga is designed to empower local communities to co-manage these precious resources based on their unique and vibrant culture for now and generations to come. In fact, the areas we include in this long-term financing scheme, as well as their buffering areas, are part of the post-conflict regions prioritized for investment by the national government.

Although significant challenges remain for these areas, we are committed to being part of the solution to securing a sustainable future and a stable climate for all. A key component of this work is the creation of La Minga, a \$5 million endowment designed to secure the future of these landscapes and a sinking

fund to pay for current costs. La Minga will bring together local, national and international partners to manage and conserve these conservation mosaics in perpetuity. CI has spent the last decade working with local community councils to build management capacity and readiness to manage this funding. With local management and governance now in place, we are executing a transition, transferring responsibility to these capable, local co-management bodies and institutions, while simultaneously working to secure financial sustainability.

Specifically, La Minga will:

- Ensure the conservation values of the protected areas over time;
- Promote effective governance and financial sustainability to implement management plans;
- Enable community participation in management decision-making processes; and,
- Generate productive alternative livelihoods for local communities to reduce negative impacts on natural resources and improve human well-being.

The goal is to raise \$5 million for the endowment fund and at least \$1 million per year for the sinking fund

to cover 40% of the basic operational costs (staff, basic office supplies and equipment, park infrastructure, gasoline, etc.) and the costs of activities as specified by the landscape management plans (species management, stakeholder training and education, monitoring, territorial governance, reduction of deforestation through alternative production activities of community members and patrolling).


We hope you will join us in our quest to help secure Colombia's dream of dignity for its people and stability for its climate through La Minga Fund. Your partnership, as we build on our decades of meaningful engagement and work alongside the extraordinary people in Colombia, will protect those areas most vital to providing sustenance, security and health for the people of Colombia's Pacific coast now and for generations to come.

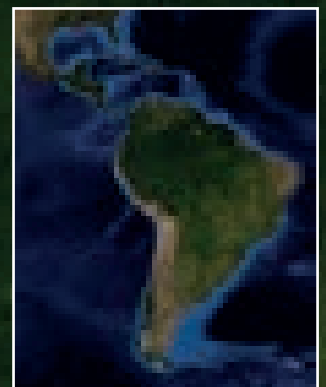


**GOLFO DE TRIBUGÁ  
- CABO CORRIENTES**

**BAHÍA MÁLAGA**

**KEY**

 La Minga Project Areas



# LA MINGA BY THE NUMBERS

La Minga will secure long-term financial sustainability to protect some of the region's richest marine ecosystems and exceptional biodiversity, as well as protect and sustain livelihoods and cultures of local and Afro-Colombian communities.



350,000 hectares

Total areas covered by La Minga



30,000+ people

6,000 families: 1,500 Bahía Málaga, 4,500 Northern Chocó



90% of population

rely on marine resources for a source of protein



\$5 million

La Minga endowment goal; \$500,000 secured



1,400 species

of flora and fauna



25%

of the best conserved mangrove area on Colombia's Pacific coast (Gulf of Tortugas)



36% of fish species

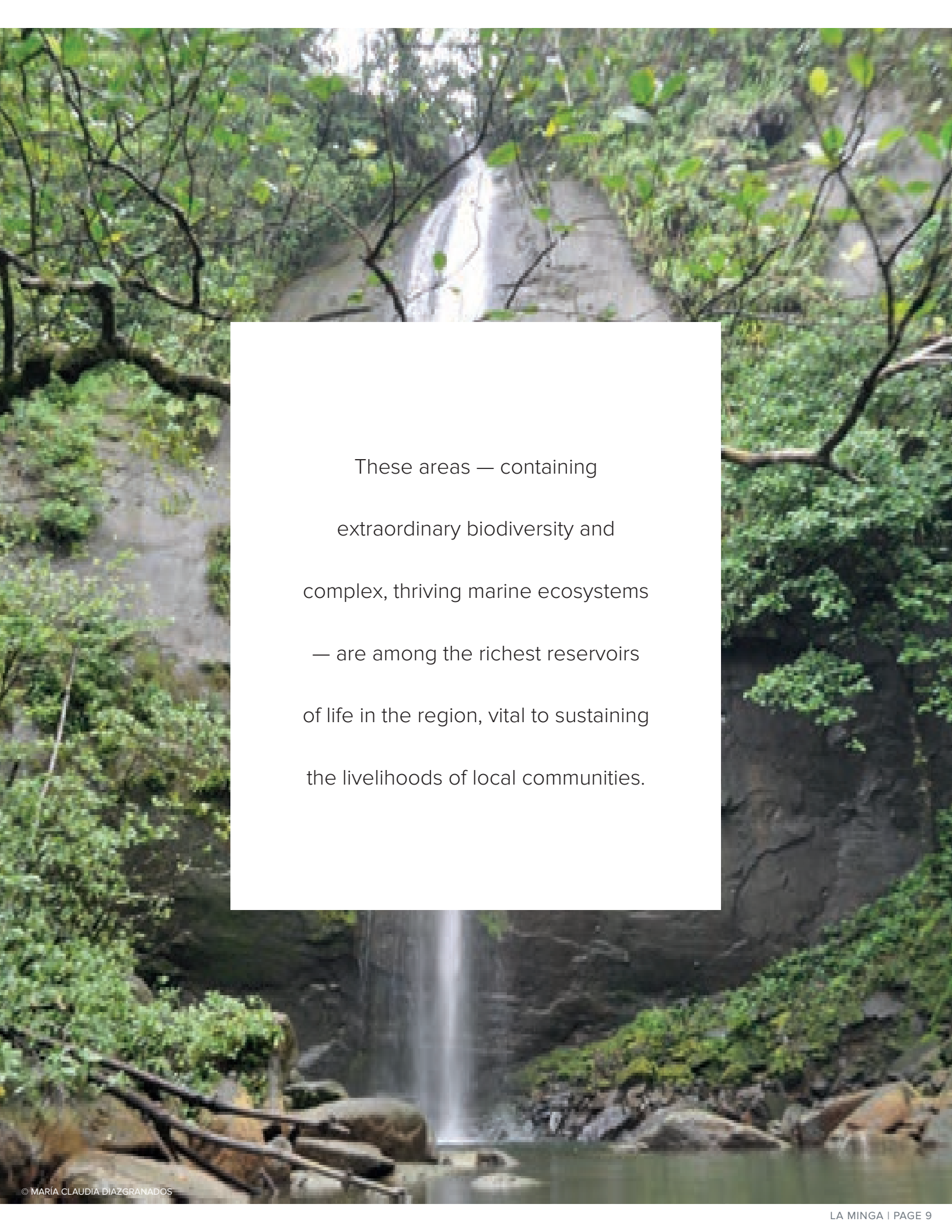
of Colombia's Pacific region



80%

of the Colombia Pacific region's humpback whale breeding grounds



A photograph of a waterfall in a dense, green forest. The water is white and foamy as it falls over dark, wet rocks. The surrounding vegetation is thick and vibrant green, with many branches and leaves visible. The scene is captured from a slightly elevated angle, looking down at the waterfall.

These areas — containing  
extraordinary biodiversity and  
complex, thriving marine ecosystems  
— are among the richest reservoirs  
of life in the region, vital to sustaining  
the livelihoods of local communities.

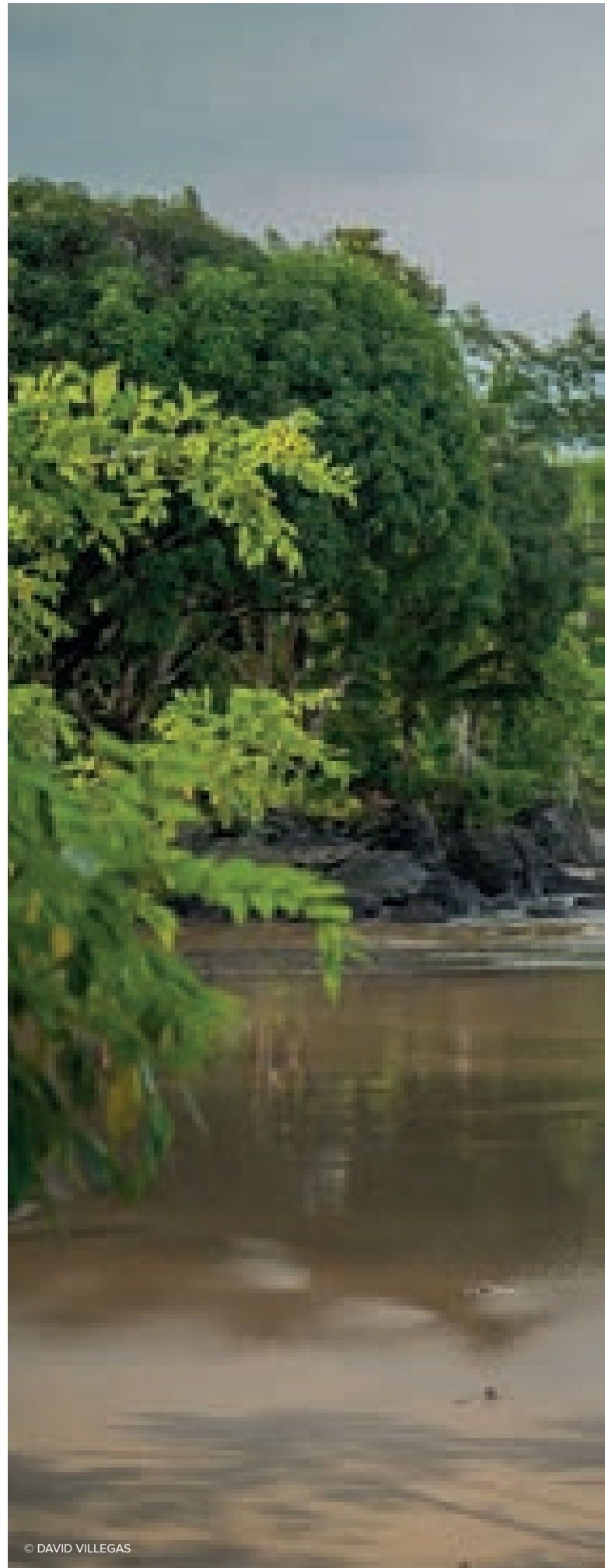
# THE PROTECTED AREAS

The Bahía Málaga conservation mosaic includes La Sierpe Regional Natural Park and La Plata Regional Integrated Management District, as well as the Bahía Málaga National Natural Park. The Northern Chocó conservation mosaic includes the Golfo de Tribugá-Cabo Corrientes Integrated Management District and Utria National Natural Park. A national park is a specific designation in Colombia that indicates nothing can be used or taken from the area. But regional parks, or management districts, can be zoned for different purposes, such as for preservation or restoration, sustainable use, or for general public use. This distinction permits the local communities to use the land in a sustainable manner.

Over the last decade, CI has worked with local communities in these areas to help them manage their fisheries effectively, to prevent overfishing. CI has boosted restoration efforts while continuing to preserve fishers' livelihoods, reducing the catch by 83 tons (two-thirds) since 2009 while maintaining the same value of the catch by having restaurants pay more for sustainably caught fish. In the protected areas, we have partnered with nine communities and more than 2,500 inhabitants, mainly fishers, to limit illegal fishing and establish both regional and national protected areas, including the recent consolidation of the Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary and Gorgona National Park marine protected areas by establishing long-term financing, training, and equipping park rangers.

CI has also supported the protection and restoration of the mangrove forests along Colombia's Pacific coast, which are among the largest in the world.

Mangroves provide crucial protection for communities during intense tropical storms, which are increasing in strength and frequency due to climate change. They also act as vital fish nurseries and sources of shellfish for local consumption and sale, and they sequester carbon at even greater rates than tropical forests. These areas are vital fisheries recovery areas — for example, the sawfish (*Pristis pristis*), a previously undocumented, but critically endangered and keystone species, was recently seen in this area.



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## BAHÍA MÁLAGA

Bahía Málaga is protecting one of the most complex and biodiverse regions on the Colombian Pacific coast (terrestrial area = 247,094 hectares (ha); marine and coastal area = 13,200 ha). Here one can see almost all continental, island and estuarine marine ecosystems that are present across the entire Pacific coast of Colombia. In Bahía Málaga we find the best conserved mangroves in the region. This land is home to nearly 1,400 species of animals and plants, including more than 60 species of amphibians, 88% of which are found only here. It is a birders paradise with more than 360 species of terrestrial birds, and at least 57 species of seabirds or shorebirds belonging to 15 families. There are four species of primates, three species of anteaters and four species of sloths in the area's forests.

Bahía Málaga is one of the most important breeding sites for humpback whales in the Eastern Pacific; in recent years, their migration which happens between July and October has become a source of income and local employment and is a leading draw for national and international tourism.

This unparalleled diversity of life and cultures is being threatened by logging, fishing and hunting of native animal species and pollution caused by human activities, in particular small-scale mining efforts, which greatly hurts the area's water sources. There is currently a lack of surveillance and enforcement activities which is addressed in the management plans.

The Afro-Colombian and local communities present in this region are socially structured and culturally rich. Their deep understanding and close relationship with the territory in which they carry out their cultural practices is an asset to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems and species in the region.



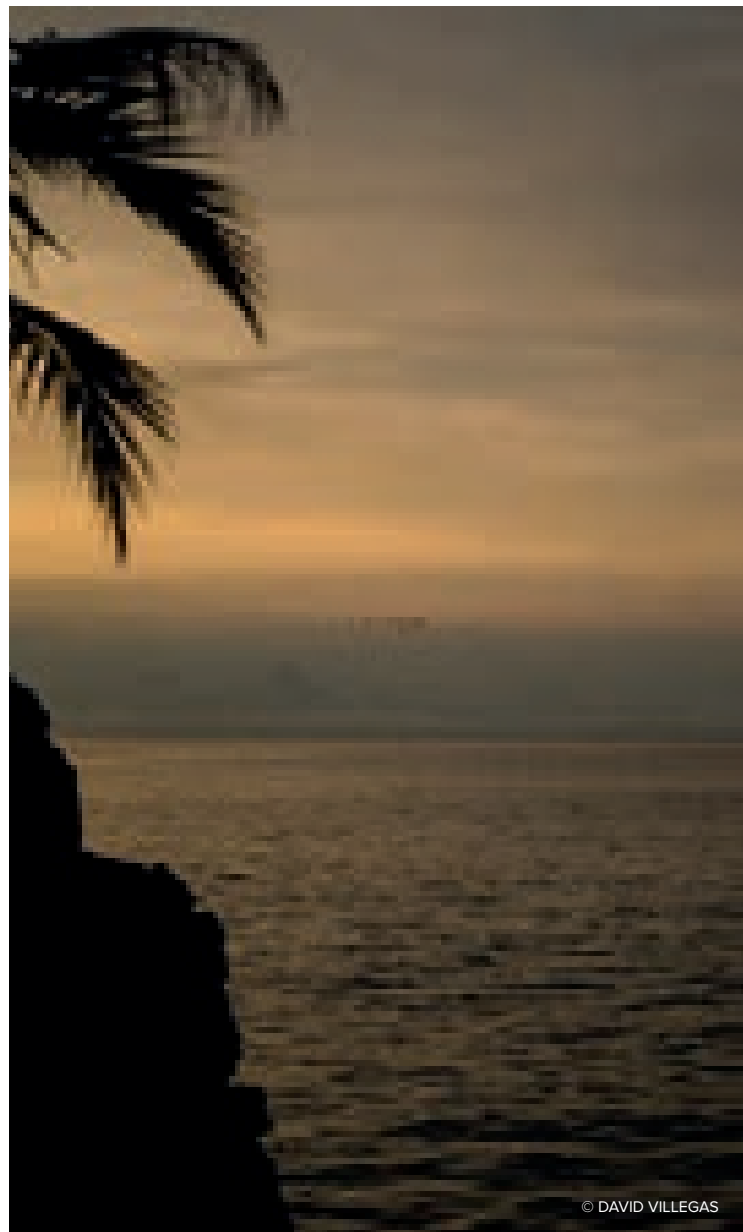
## GOLFO DE TRIBUGÁ

Along the Pacific Coast, the Golfo de Tribugá-Cabo Corrientes is part of the Northern Chocó conservation mosaic (103,110 ha). Encompassing four marine biodiversity conservation hotspots, the Golfo de Tribugá is a key conservation area for Colombia and a premier location for mangroves, estuaries, sandy and rocky beaches and stone reefs.

The Golfo de Tribugá provides essential mating, breeding and rearing habitats for humpback whales, and for other endangered or vulnerable emblematic species such as sea turtles, seabirds, and marine and estuarine fish. The amphibian diversity in the Chocó is the greatest in Colombia. Among the charismatic mammals one can find antebellum bears, jaguars, otters and tapirs. Golfo de Tribugá is home to five different species of sea turtles (Olive Ridley – *Lepidochelys olivacea*, Hawksbill – *Eretmochelys imbricata*, Leatherback – *Dermochelys coriacea*, Loggerhead – *Caretta caretta*, and Green – *Chelonia agassizii*) that benefit from 25 turtle nesting areas.

As with Bahía Málaga, the main threats in the Golfo de Tribugá region are timber extraction, and exploitation of native fauna and flora, as well as over-fishing and gold mining.

The population of the Northern Chocó is composed of 75% Afro-descendant, 10% indigenous (Emberá, Waunana, and Tule or Kuna) and 15% are mestizos emigrated from the rest of the country. Eight-five percent of this local population depend upon nature for their livelihoods (incomes and food).



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# FINANCIAL MECHANISM

La Minga includes two financial structures, 1) an endowment fund whereby a sum is deposited in a trust for a minimum period of 30 years, and 2) a sinking fund where smaller funding amounts can be deposited and used in that fiscal year.

The yearly revenues provided by La Minga Fund will also partially support the implementation of activities carried out by the local communities, as detailed in the management plans of the protected areas. (The detailed management plans for these areas can be presented upon request.) Specifically, the endowment will cover 40% of all costs covering:

- a. basic operational costs: staff, basic office supplies and equipment, cabin for park rangers (one-time only cost), and gasoline;
- b. activities in management plans: species management, stakeholder training and education, monitoring, territorial governance, reduction of deforestation through alternative productive activities by community members and patrolling.

The remaining 60% of the annual protected area budgets will be covered by the regional environmental authorities and the Colombian government.

La Minga is designed to mirror the Malpelo Endowment, which is already actively supporting protected areas in Colombia. La Minga's endowment

capital will be held in an account maintained in the United States of America. A portion of the revenues from La Minga's endowment will be transferred annually in a steady and predictable manner to a separate account, to be opened and maintained in Colombia by Fondo Acción.

*Investment Policy and Financial Performance:* These endowment funds are subject to an investment policy focused on generating annual income while simultaneously preserving and enhancing the value of endowment capital through adequate diversification of high quality instruments, balanced by an acceptable degree of risk.

*Evidence of Long-Term Sustainability:* The Central Government of Colombia provides a level of annual funding for the protected lands covered by La Minga from its central budget for the national protected area system. In addition, these protected areas are also funded through regional authorities. The volume of tourism is, and may remain, relatively low, so the area's potential to generate additional income from tourism could be limited. The total of these inputs is not enough to cover the cost of effective management of these lands, and there is no prospect of an increase in government funding in a country facing so many social and security-related demands on its budget. Several public and private donors have expressed interest in contributing to La Minga.

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# GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

The Ministry of Agriculture and the Colombian Institute for Rural Development grants communities with legal territories the collective constitutional right to the land they occupy and recognizes the traditional rights of ethnic groups in their territory. Community Councils are the authority in these ethnic collective territories. They can establish and delimit natural reserves and determine conservation and management actions involving the community, in collaboration with regional environmental authorities. All of the protected areas that will be covered by

La Minga are managed by Community Councils and the regional environmental authorities. Colombia provides a well-established banking, auditing and contracting system, including proper legislation and performance evaluation instruments. Net interests of La Minga will be transferred to community-based organizations (Community Councils) and other non-profit organizations to support the implementation of management plans for the protected areas, under the supervision of an Endowment Fund oversight structure illustrated in the diagram on the following page.



A Technical Committee for La Minga will direct and oversee the use of La Minga Endowment revenues that are channeled annually to the account opened and held by Fondo Acción. The Technical Committee will be composed of representatives from Conservation International Colombia, Fondo Acción, local environmental authorities, Community Councils with participation in the protected area management, and an academic advisor. The Technical Committee will review and approve annual investment plans presented by both Regional Environmental Authorities and Community Councils.

In October of each year, the Technical Committee will receive the annual workplan and budget request from Fondo Acción and will be responsible for ensuring that the workplan and budget are in accordance with the objectives set forth in La Minga Management Plan. The Technical Committee will make a funding recommendation and submit this to the Executive Committee for La Minga Endowment.

The Executive Committee is in charge of assigning the annual endowment revenues from the sub-account to finance the activities set forth in the workplan and budget. The Executive Committee will make the funding decision in accordance with the recommendations that it receives from the Technical Committee. The Executive Committee will contain the following members, each with one vote: a representative of Fondo Acción, Conservation International, and additional donors who wish to participate in this committee.

A yearly management effectiveness evaluation will be funded by La Minga, which will be the main tool to monitor improvement in management effectiveness. Results will help identify strengths and weaknesses of the management strategies used to achieve La Minga's objectives throughout the years. Area management efforts should have the capability of adapting and developing new strategies in order to improve the impact and extent of their management actions over time.

# PARTNERS AND EXPERIENCE



## CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

For three decades (established in 1987), Conservation International (CI) has been a leader in global conservation. We work with communities, governments and businesses throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific Ocean to tackle the biggest threats to natural capital, the parts of nature that have the greatest value to people. By supporting local groups and partners with upwards of \$50 million annually in grants, we also build capacity and leverage our impact in the countries where we work.

Capitalizing on our historic achievements — including securing more than 480 million hectares in over 580 protected areas and 38 countries, creating groundbreaking sustainable financing mechanisms such as conservation trust funds and the first-ever debt for nature swap, working with key industry leaders from Walmart to Starbucks to “green” their supply chains, and advising national governments on the economic benefits of conserving natural resources — CI is poised to help nations around the world pivot towards securing nature’s benefits for the billions of people on earth.

CI’s work with sustainable financing and trust funds is unparalleled. CI has created more than 20 trust funds in various jurisdictions and leveraged more than \$200 million in public and private sector funding through these innovative mechanisms to ensure long-term financial sustainability. Developing a sustainable financing mechanism with local communities will be key to ensuring long-term success.

CI will be part of both the Executive Committee and the Technical Committee of La Minga.



## FONDO PARA LA ACCIÓN AMBIENTAL Y LA NIÑEZ (FONDO ACCIÓN)

Fondo Acción is a Colombian non-governmental organization that knows and believes in the power and creativity of local communities and community organizations. Experience shows that, with the necessary support and technical and financial accompaniment, these ideas can transform the way we inhabit this planet.

Fondo Acción was established in 2000 under the Bilateral Agreement for the Americas Initiative, signed between the governments of Colombia and the United States of America, as the first debt-for-nature swap in Colombia. Fondo Acción also manages resources from a second debt swap under the Agreement for the Conservation of Tropical Forests (TFCA). Fondo Acción has grown to manage resources from approximately 25 different accounts.

Fondo Acción knows that investments in environment and childhood produce the best returns for society’s well-being. It has invested all its efforts in building innovative and high-value solutions to vital issues such as sustainable rural development, biodiversity conservation, climate change, protection and development of children and adolescents. Fondo Acción invested \$19.1 million between 2013 and 2016; 82% of these resources went directly to programs and projects in the field.

Fondo Acción is affiliated with the Network of Environmental Funds in Latin America and the Caribbean, a learning community made up of more than 20 environmental funds in the region.



# LOCAL COALITION



## RISCALES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Golfo de Tribugá and Baudó River delta in the Department of Chocó are characterized by high cultural diversity. To protect this diversity and the cultural conservation of Afro-descendant communities in the Pacific, the Riscales General Community Council was legally recognized in 2002. This General Community Council is one of the most important community organizations in the Pacific. It covers an area of 31,000 ha of ancestral lands held as a private community property (“Tierras de Comunidades Negras”) and represents various collective territories located in the Nuquí municipality (Jurubirá, Tribugá, Nuquí, Panguí, Joví, Coquí, Termales, Partadó and Arusí).



## LA PLATA BAHÍA MÁLAGA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

La Plata Bahía Málaga Afro Colombian Community Council received its 7,000 ha land title in 2003 and increased to 32,000 ha in 2012. The Community Council has an organized governance system, with an internal operations manual, a natural resources action plan and an office in Buenaventura. They are officially part of the co-management scheme of both the La Plata Regional Integrated Management District and La Sierpe Regional Natural Park, covering four small, local communities in the area called La Plata, La Sierpe, Miramar and Mangaña.



## CHUCHEROS-TIGER COVE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

This Community Council was recognized as an ethnic territorial authority in 2010 and currently covers nearly 5,300 ha. They include one small local community called Chucheros (56 families), located in the external border of Bahía Malaga. Chucheros Community Council is part of the administrative board of La Sierpe Regional Natural Park, but it has its own legal and administrative structure.

# SUPPORTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development is a plan of action for the people, the planet and prosperity developed by the United Nations. It recognizes that eradicating poverty in the world in all its forms could lead to significant global change and is a requirement for sustainable development.

We strongly believe that our La Minga strategy is key to helping Colombia in advancing on, and contributing to, 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by stimulating progress on human rights, gender equality and nature conservation.



## NO POVERTY

La Minga will reduce poverty by creating small business opportunities, promoting sustainable solutions focused on small-scale fisheries and demonstrate positive livelihood benefits (SDG 1).



## ZERO HUNGER

La Minga will support social programs to promote sustainable fishing activities, food security, and local ecotourism opportunities, as a way to accomplish the zero hunger goal (SDG 2).



## QUALITY EDUCATION

La Minga will support training for community-based organizations and provide scholarship alternatives (as detailed in the management plans) to support quality education (SDG 4).



## GENDER EQUALITY

La Minga will empower women on the Colombian Pacific coast by promoting women's associations and small business opportunities, strengthening female leadership as part of the Gender Equality Strategy (SDG 5).



## DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The direct implementation of the management plans in the three protected areas and their buffer zones will provide direct local employment and will encourage business development, generating decent work and economic growth in the region (SDG 8).



## REDUCE INEQUALITIES

La Minga will provide opportunities currently not available to local communities and will elevate their status and reduce their inequalities by increasing their participation in decision-making (SDG 10).



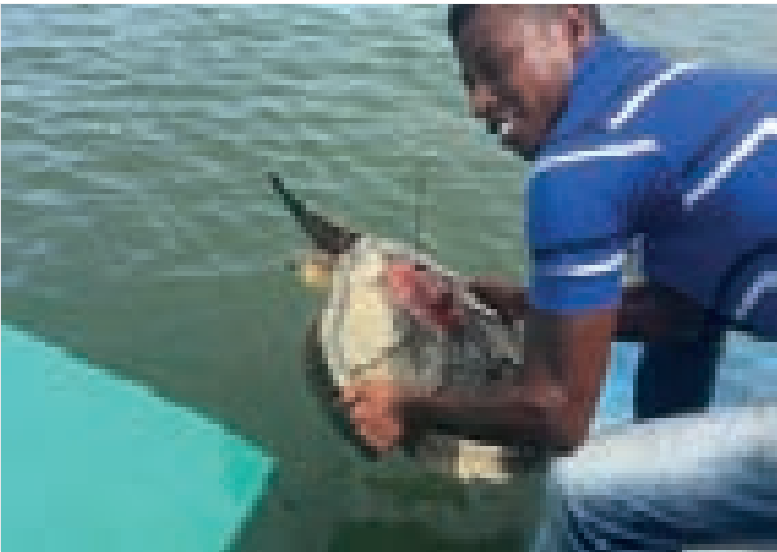
## RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

The responsible consumption and production goal will be addressed by promoting a model of sustainable small-scale fisheries, increasing sustainable tourism options and the implementation of best practices (SDG 12).



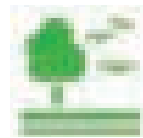
## CLIMATE ACTION

Knowing the importance of strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity of local communities against the negative impacts of climate change, La Minga will work with communities to build biodiversity resilience and evaluate the adaptive capacity of the human population over time (SDG 13).



## LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserving the oceans, seas and marine resources is part of the Life Below Water goal (SDG 14) and La Minga will promote the implementation of management plans for existing coastal and marine protected areas and strengthen management and regulation schemes, thus reducing negative impacts on coastal and marine natural resources.



## LIFE ON LAND

Concurrently, the protection of forest and coastal ecosystems, as well as the reduction of land degradation through green solutions, will allow La Minga to support Colombia's pursuit of the Life on Land goal (SDG 15).



## PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) will be a core aspect of La Minga by promoting community participatory processes to conserve key coastal ecosystems, enhancing local law enforcement and compliance efforts, including local expertise on all activities, creating economic alternatives, and strengthening local institutions.



## SUPPORTING THE AICHI BIODIVERSITY TARGETS

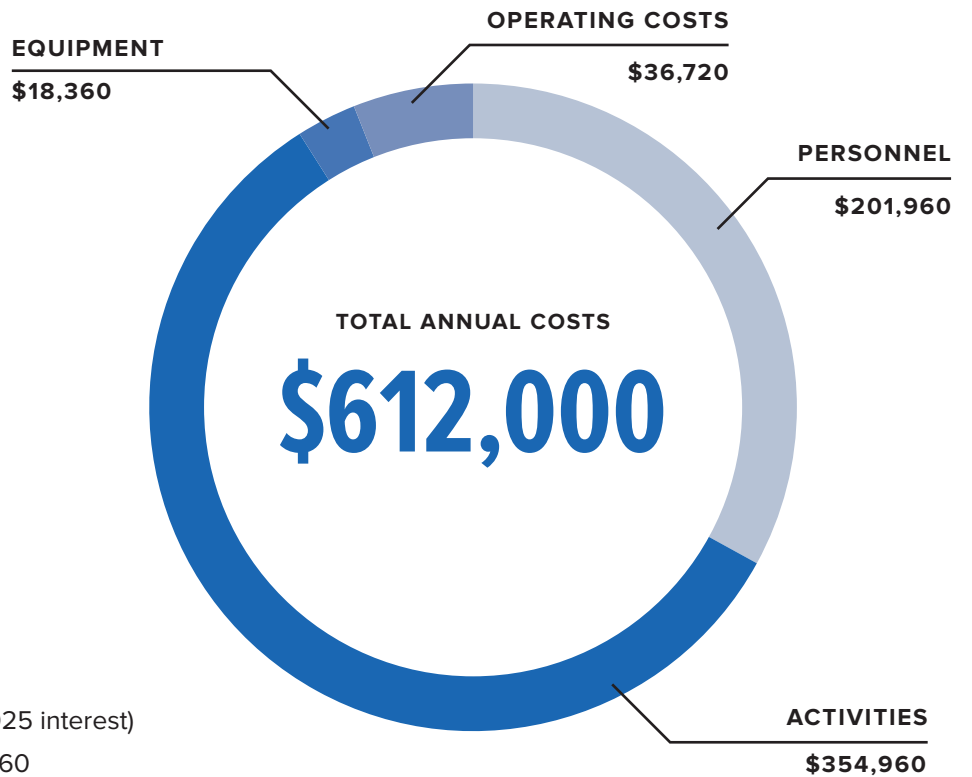
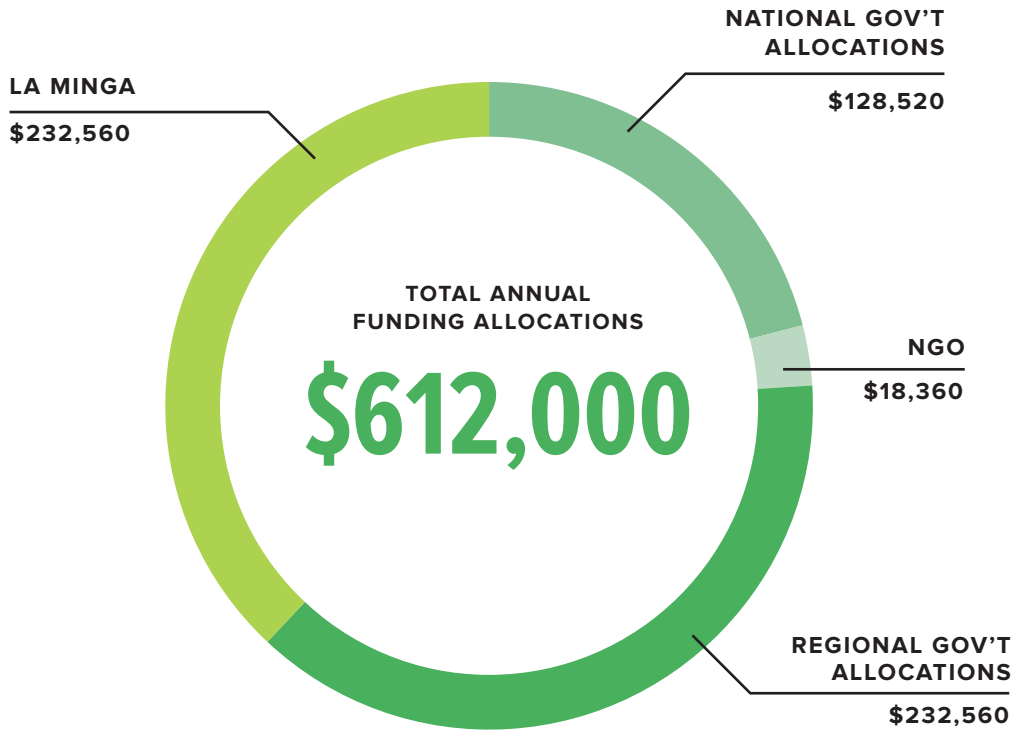
In compliance with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Strategic Goal C, Target 11), which aims at improving the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity, Colombia has determined that by 2020 at least 10 percent of its coastal and marine areas will be under formal protection. Reaching this goal will require large investments in financial and human resources and the mere legal declaration of protection does not guarantee the effective conservation of its biodiversity. Experience indicates that the establishment of sustainable management strategies is a necessary condition to guarantee the conservation and regulation of these areas. Colombia has embraced the design of such conservation strategies to safeguard the permanence of protected areas.







# COSTS



**La Minga Endowment:** \$5,000,000  
**Expected annual return:** \$125,000 (.025 interest)  
**Annual need for sinking fund:** \$107,560



## **WE NEED YOU**

Investing in La Minga will secure the financial sustainability of the area, providing the local communities the resources they need to sustainably manage their extraordinary resources well into the future.



## CONCLUSION

The stakes have never been higher. We have a unique opportunity to scale up our impact in Colombia; to help fortify food, job and climate security along the Pacific coast through mangrove restoration, fisheries recovery and opening new fisheries markets.

The timing could not be more opportune to intensify our efforts to help Colombia demonstrate nature's value to the long-term security of its people. The stage is set for transformative conservation actions that will make Colombia an example for the region and the world.

We will champion the role of local communities, many of whom are directly dependent on nature for their food and livelihoods and most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Importantly, these communities are already good stewards of their lands and willing partners. With dedicated technical and financial assistance, these communities can better participate in the sustainable management of their resources for the benefit of all.

La Minga will enable us to capitalize on our strong partnerships and decades of experience in Colombia to accelerate our conservation actions along the Pacific coast and provide a needed sustainability model for Colombia, the region and hopefully the world to emulate.



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