

Amazon Catalyst for Forest Communities programme

CLEAN Helpdesk Case Study

Key Takeaways

- The CLEAN Helpdesk has delivered two requests to support the Forest Governance and Markets team within the International Forests Unit to design a new programme, the Amazon Catalyst for Forest Communities (AMCAT).
- The technical assistance has been instrumental in designing the six-year regional programme to be participatory, inclusive and co-designed with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs).
- Key results of the technical assistance include:
 - The design of a demand-led programme, responsive to the priorities of IPLCs.
 - Strengthened capability on IPLCs and forest governance within UK government.
 - High quality analysis and design inputs enabling the programme concept note and business case to be approved within a tight timeline.
 - A strong focus on GEDSI transformative and locally led design.
- The CLEAN Helpdesk's approach was valued for being efficient, easy to use, flexible, and able to resource an expert with specific in-depth expertise to support the request within a short timeframe, with continued support for a second request, supporting continuity and value for money.

Introduction

The CLEAN Helpdesk is a flexible, on-demand technical assistance mechanism providing expertise to UK government officials on climate, environment, and nature. The programme aims to enhance the capacity of officials to integrate inclusive and equitable climate outcomes into their work.

This case study highlights the role of the CLEAN Helpdesk in supporting the Forest Governance and Markets team in FCDO in the design phase of a new programme in the Amazon basin, with a focus on how the support received from the CLEAN Helpdesk has helped to design a programme with the potential to deliver co-benefits, including for local forest communities.¹

This case study will be used to report against Outcome indicator 1.2b in the CLEAN Helpdesk's results framework, for internal programmatic purposes.²

Context

At COP26 in November 2021, the UK government made a commitment to support the protection of forests in the Amazon basin. As part of this commitment, FCDO began design of a new programme, starting with an options analysis. At the time, working more directly with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) on forest protection in the Amazon was a relatively niche area of specialism within the UK government, and naturally also complex and sensitive. UK government expertise needed to be quickly scaled up in order to deliver on the commitment.

The Technical Assistance

Two requests were delivered to support the Forest Governance and Markets team within the International Forests Unit.

The first request

The first request was supported by the Climate Mainstreaming Facility (CMF), the predecessor programme to the CLEAN Helpdesk. The request was for support to the early scoping and design of a new programme related to the COP26 commitment to

¹ The CLEAN Helpdesk defines "positive co-benefits, including for communities" as "Positive outcomes, beyond climate mitigation or adaptation, which are felt by local people. For example, a climate policy might have the main aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but might also create new (green) jobs, improve health, reduce fuel poverty etc.". This definition is included in the CLEAN Helpdesk MEL Plan.

² Outcome indicator 1.2b in the CLEAN Helpdesk logframe is: CLEAN HD users can demonstrate how the support received from CLEAN HD has helped them to design a programme/policy with potential to deliver co-benefits.

protecting forests in the Amazon basin. A regional expert in IPLCs and forests was hired as a consultant. Subsequently, the expert, along with FCDO colleagues, undertook a scoping and programme design mission– based on both desk review and visits to five Amazon countries (note that the scoping mission itself was not funded by CMF).

This initial scoping involved organising and facilitating thematic focus group discussions involving about 50 experts on the Amazon from across the region and globally, and in three languages - English, Spanish and Portuguese. The discussions focused on four themes – (1) climate finance, (2) community forest governance and land tenure security, (3) strengthening the capacity of Amazonian IPLC organisations, and (4) regional coordination. It identified 15 key IPLC grassroots organisations to be consulted and involved in a next stage of participatory programme design.

Prior to the first request to the CMF, FCDO had some initial thinking around how to work with IPLCs in the new programme, but the precise approach had yet to be defined. The technical assistance provided helped FCDO to explore a range of different options for programme design, and ultimately make the decision to frame the programme around partnering with IPLC organisations with a core focus on strengthening their forest governance and land tenure security. The technical assistance was instrumental in refining and shaping the programme’s direction, enabling FCDO to move from early-stage ideas to a well-developed initial concept.

The second request

The second request was delivered by the CLEAN Helpdesk and involved supporting the development of a high-quality Theory of Change for the programme Business Case, which is an essential part of the approvals process. The CLEAN Helpdesk contracted the same consultant again in order to support the Forest Governance and Markets team with this follow-up request, allowing for continuity. The consultant facilitated a workshop with ten FCDO staff from different teams and professions in order to co-create the Theory of Change.

The outcome of this second request was a robust programme Theory of Change, with causal links between inputs, outputs and outcomes underpinned by a solid evidence base. This was integral in getting the Business Case approved promptly.

Results and Impact

The support from the CLEAN Helpdesk (and CMF) has been instrumental in designing a new six-year programme supporting efforts to protect forests and support IPLCs across the Amazon basin. The AMCAT programme has strong potential to leverage greater flows of finance from other sources. The programme is supporting IPLC organisations based across the Amazon basin to strengthen their forest governance and land tenure security. There is also an exchange and convening element to the programme, bringing together IPLC organisations, policymakers, donors and other stakeholders across the various countries to elevate IPLC's voices, improve knowledge and understanding of key issues, and to attract more direct funding to IPLC organisations

Key results

- **Delivering demand-led, grounded approaches:** The technical assistance ensured the delivery of a genuinely demand-led programme - one that responded directly to IPLC priorities on the ground and was shaped through extensive consultation with regional experts. This helped avoid designing interventions disconnected from local realities and needs.
- **Capacity building of the UK government:** The technical assistance from the CLEAN Helpdesk has built a robust expertise base on IPLCs in the Amazon within the UK government. While the individual leading this work has since left their role, the process resulted in a well-documented foundation that successors could build on. This has been particularly important and timely as the support has helped to match the UK government's ambition of providing more support to IPLC, as [highlighted by the Foreign Secretary at COP29](#).
- **Speeding up a complex process:** The quick turnaround time for support was particularly appreciated for the second request. The team was running slightly behind schedule on finalising the concept note, but the efficient support from the CLEAN Helpdesk enabled them to go from a broad thematic framing which did not yet have key parameters fully agreed, to having a concept note ready to take to Ministers. Within only three months, the concept note had a much more in-depth level of technical expertise and evidence base to support it than most concept notes do given much more time.

Enablers of success

- **Choice of deep expertise:** The Forest and Markets Governance team emphasised the importance of hiring the right expert for this highly specialised area. Given the complexity of the topic, which would represent a steep learning curve for most consultants, securing someone with decades of experience was essential to ensure effective delivery and strong value for money. Other technical assistance facilities can sometimes restrict users to an established pool of experts, but the CLEAN Helpdesk is open to bringing in new experts and recommendations of experts.³
- **Continuity:** The CLEAN Helpdesk contracted the same expert for the second request, ensuring that this work was carried out efficiently, with continuity and good value for money.
- **Efficient and easy to use:** The CLEAN Helpdesk has a quick and simple procurement process, enabling requests to start quickly.
- **Flexibility:** The CLEAN Helpdesk uses clear Terms of Reference for each request, but there is also flexibility to shift the direction of the request whilst its ongoing, when necessary.

Delivering positive co-benefits for local people and raising the GEDSI ambition

The technical assistance delivered through the CLEAN Helpdesk included strong gender equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) expertise, with a focus on delivering benefits to some of the most marginalised and poorest communities in the Amazon basin region. The support given went beyond complying with basic standards of GEDSI sensitivity, but gave in-depth support on how to build intersectionality intentionally into the programme design and how to co-design the programme with IPLCs in a participatory, inclusive and locally-led manner.

Based on advice via the CLEAN Helpdesk, a core element of designing the AMCAT programme was to co-design the programme with IPLCs as much as possible. On this basis, FCDO invested in a 6-week scoping mission to consult directly with 18 different IPLC groups to identify how the programme should be designed in order to benefit their communities as much as possible.

³ The recommended expert is still expected to complete the appropriate expression of interest and their CVs and profile analysed for their suitability to respond to the request. This ensures that while experts may be recommended, there is a level of rigour and confidence by the CLEAN Helpdesk to appoint the expert.

Key results:

- **Co-designing and partnering with Women's Rights Organisations:** As part of the scoping mission, IPLC women's groups were intentionally consulted with to understand their views. Gender equality and inclusion became an important priority of the programme.
- **An innovative internship scheme for IPLCs:** Based on advice from the CLEAN Helpdesk, the programme Business Case proposes an internship scheme for early stage professionals of IPLC backgrounds, including IPLC women, to work alongside partner organisations. This intends to ensure that IPLC are involved in all parts of programme delivery, and to foster the capacity of future IPLC leaders to advocate more effectively for their groups' interests.
- **A GEDSI transformative programme:** The expertise from the CLEAN Helpdesk supported FCDO to design a programme that seeks to establish meaningful and sustainable change, which goes beyond minimum requirements to be GEDSI aware, to the most ambitious level, of being GEDSI transformative.

Conclusion

The support provided by the CMF and CLEAN Helpdesk was instrumental in helping FCDO design and develop this innovative, GEDSI-transformative programme to support IPLCs in the Amazon.

The CLEAN Helpdesk brings deep, targeted expertise to support requests and a flexible, demand driven process providing short-term tailored technical assistance. This approach in the context of the AMCAT request demonstrates the value of accessing external technical assistance in developing high-quality climate, environment and nature programming. The Helpdesk's contribution supported FCDO in designing a demand-driven programme and importantly, embedded the principles of GEDSI, intersectionality and local leadership into the programme's core design, which makes it more likely to deliver meaningful, long-term impact to IPLCs in the Amazon basin beyond the programme duration.