Latin America and the Caribbean facing Climate Change

Performance and commitments of the region’s countries at COP15

In order to be able to understand how the results of the Conference of the Parties held in Copenhagen last December affect Latin American countries, it is important to start by considering that current climate change negotiations are a key scenario, given the effect this threat has on the region. Among others, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) points out that climate variability and extreme events have affected the region; that there have been important changes in rainfall patterns; that during the past decades the average temperature has increased; that there is a significant risk of extinction of species; that by 2020 the amount of people suffering from water stress will increase between 7 and 77 million; and that the rising of the sea level, climate variability and extreme events will significantly affect coastal areas, among other impacts.

Some priority issues being discussed in these negotiations and which are relevant for the region are:

Latin America has to focus on Reducing Emissions from deforestation and Degradation (REDD) and the need to become low carbon economies through energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources. REDD has also been another discussion issue in which the region’s countries have had prominence because

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of the important extension of forests they shelter. Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that the positions of each country are different. For example, Brazil has been one of the main sponsors of national scale schemes, while Colombia has been the most important champion of a flexible mechanism and the development of a sub-national or project scale.

Regarding adaptation to climate change, the Agreement of Copenhagen recognizes that the adverse effects of climate change and the potential impacts of the response measures are a challenge being faced by all countries, but it recommends that actions should focus mainly on the most vulnerable countries. Some Latin American countries, such as Colombia, Argentina, Costa Rica and Peru, argued at the COP that this preference shouldn’t be given this way, since all countries shelter highly vulnerable ecosystems that require support for its adaptation, a position that wasn’t included in the Agreement.

Last but not least, there is the need to transfer technology and financial resources to be able to walk on the path of low carbon. Countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru highlighted the importance of diversifying resource sources, taking advantage of market mechanisms, while ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the America) countries, such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, stood up against markets, arguing that the resources should come through the increase of the investment of industrialized countries.

The Copenhagen Accord is broad enough, establishing the need of additional, predictable and accurate funding, accessible to developing countries. It establishes the creation of a fund and the commitment to provide new and additional resources through international institutions (USD 30 billion between 2010 and 2012) and to mobilize USD 100 billion / year until 2020. Also, it recognizes the opportunity to use markets aiming at improving cost-efficiency and to promote mitigation measures. Nevertheless, it does not define how additional these resources are and how much would be assigned to each subject (mitigation, adaptation, REDD and technology transfer). These definitions are fundamental for the ongoing negotiation process, as is the clarity regarding which countries participate in the Copenhagen Accord, which actually hasn’t been signed by all participating countries, and, therefore, it is not necessarily a document accepted by all parties. The decision has been made to hold the sixteenth conference of the parties on climate change (COP16) now in our region (Cancun, Mexico), and this offers an opportunity to highlight Latin America and the Caribbean’s leadership regarding climate change.

Roberto Troya
Vice-President for Latin America and the Caribbean
WWF US
Jaguars in South America and the Pantanal: its conservation is possible

Jaguars in the Americas suffer a high risk of extinction due to habitat loss and direct indiscriminate hunting of this species. This has been one of the results presented at the Symposium “The Jaguar in the 21st Century: The Continental Perspective”, held in November in Mexico City.

The resulting data of this symposium was presented to the global scientific community by Rodrigo Medellín, researcher at the Ecology Institute of the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). “Our results show that the extinction of the jaguar will only be avoided with the commitment of everyone, especially of the governments in each country and region they inhabit”, stated Medellín, and he ensured that with the studies presented we can sustain that “one of the most severe causes of jaguar mortality is direct hunting: either because they have caused some conflict by killing cattle, to sell their skin or canines as trophies, or just because they saw them”.

Several studies carried out prove that there are approximately 15,000 jaguars in South America, and, according to studies of WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society) in Bolivia, in 2005 there were more than 1,000 individuals in the country.

Jaguars and cattle

In the Brazilian Pantanal, Fernando Azevedo, researcher of the Pro-Carnívoro Institute supported by WWF Brazil, carries out a research to get to know more about the behavior of the jaguar in the area, and, according to the researcher, “to guarantee that Panthera onca and cattle can coexist”. 

Related links

- WWF Bolivia’s Pantanal Programme
- Earth Hour in Puerto Quijarro
- Climate change impacts in the Pantanal and in Bolivia

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This research shows that the presence of wild fauna in the region—capybara and marsh deer—diminishes jaguars' attacks on cattle, confirming that, the better preserved the region is, the lesser chances for jaguars feeding from cattle. Also, the jaguar lives in the forest, and only moves away from it 200 metres at the most to attack its preys.

In order to improve the jaguar-cattle relation, cattle shouldn’t be let near the forest, and wild fauna hunting should be prohibited in the ranch, among others. Besides protecting cattle, this way the natural habitat of the jaguar is also maintained. This is also the ideal scenario to develop responsible tourism activities, which generates additional income for the ranch.

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WWF is recognized for its work in the Bolivian Pantanal

Within the celebration of the 25th anniversary of creation of the Germán Busch Province, the regional authority handed WWF Bolivia a recognition for its year-long work and support to the development of the Pantanal.

“This recognition is an award to the work carried out by WWF, who always supports the region”, stated Mr. Manuel Pérez, Sub-Governor of the Province, when handing over the recognition plaque.

Also, the Municipal Education Office of Puerto Quijarro recognized WWF Bolivia “for its valuable contribution to the education of our young students”, said Mr. Moisés Orellana, Director of this institution.

WWF, aiming at sustainable development, seeks the region’s growth and the wellbeing of its inhabitants. The Pantanal is an ecosystem on which all productive systems in the region depend.

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EcoTips

Don’t buy wild animals. The forest is their home; these animals suffer when brought to the city; also, don’t forget that wild fauna trade is illegal.

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Municipal environmental management key to sustainable development of the Pantanal and south-eastern Bolivia

**WWF supports and strengthens municipal governments in the implementation of municipal environmental management systems.**

Within the first Chiquitano Fair “Environment and Sustainable Production” held in Roboré, Bolivia, last October, WWF, the Bolivian Environmental Law Society (SBDA) and the municipal governments of Puerto Quijarro and San Matías, highlighted and promoted the experiences and accomplishments regarding municipal environmental management.

The Fair was organized by the regional governments of the provinces of Chiquitos and Germán Busch, and showcased local projects focused on sustainable development, providing goods and services aimed at improving the quality of life of local inhabitants. Within this, WWF is convinced that municipal environmental management and land use planning have become key tools for the Pantanal and the Chiquitania, in a time when regional development moves forward quickly with new initiatives –as iron extraction at Mutún hill.

Land use planning and other mechanisms allow the municipalities to move forward in an organized manner, harmonizing development and conservation of its natural surroundings.

With support from WWF and SBDA, the municipalities of Puerto Quijarro and San Matías have created and activated their Environmental Units since 2006 and 2008 respectively, aiming at promoting local development at the minimum possible negative impacts. Each of these municipalities has also designed and started implementing its own Municipal Land Use Plan (referred to as PMOT) as a tool for integrally managing their territory towards sustainable development.

Also, the municipalities of Puerto Suárez and Roboré are using planning tools and have created their own Environmental Units to implement environmental management in their jurisdiction.

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Closure of community sustainable development projects at Iténez Protected Area

Since 2004, the Institute for Man, Agriculture and Ecology (IPHAE), in collaboration with WWF Bolivia, has been promoting the sustainable development of the communities that inhabit the Iténez Protected Area in the Bolivian Amazon.

Within this, the project has contributed to the following achievements:

- Training more than 200 families to produce plants in forestry nurseries
- Training productive and organizational promoters (four of them are now receiving higher education)
- Strengthening local capacities in productive, organizational, legal and social areas, based on the experiences and knowledge of local inhabitants and a team of field technicians
- Developing new capacities at individual and collective levels, aiming at establishing agro-forestry production systems
- Elaborating Brazil nut management plans
- Creating and strengthening two agro-forestry producer and one Brazil nut collectors organizations
- Building community norms in a participatory process
- Elaborating the basis for community statutes
- Building leaders, who now have assumed positions in diverse public entities
- Strengthening grassroots organizations and linking them to municipal governments.

Related links

- WWF Bolivia’s Amazon Programme
- WWF’s work at Iténez Protected Area and related to the Bolivian Amazon dolphin
- Climate change impacts in the Amazon and in Bolivia
The results of the work of various years show that this project has contributed to the sound use of natural resources through the strengthening of technical productive, economic, social and legal local capacities at Iténez Protected Area.

Committed to the inhabitants and sustainable development of this protected area, during 2009, WWF aimed at ensuring the continuity of the ongoing activities in spite of the closure of the project, supporting IPHAE in seeking funding opportunities at diverse levels.

We want to share some testimonies of men and women who were trained as community promoters. In these, the inhabitants agree on the fact that the training they received has allowed them to contribute to the development of their communities and the improvement of the quality of life of their families.

Mr. Hermes Ayala –Bella Vista Community
“I’ve seen the progress of the communities and the strengthening of their experience, thanks to the training received. That encourages me to keep on contributing to my people.”

Ms. Alicia Chávez –San Borja Community
“We learned to improve family and community orchards. I’ve worked in San Borja the first two years, where I come from, and then I went to work as a promoter with IPHAE in Bella Vista.”

Ms. Jenny Viana –Nueva Brema Community
“We’ve distributed plane tree tillers to all communities, with positive results regarding the strengthening of food security. We’ve worked in the recovery of degraded land with permanent technical assistance.”
Ms. Viana is the only woman of the first group of trained promoters.

Mr. Luis Carlos Cayami –La Soga Community
“IPHAE has taught us to work within this agro-productive system. Before, we didn’t value the wild chocolate, orange, plane or palm trees. Now we cultivate them, and we are even selling some of these products.”

Mr. José Alva –Puerto Chávez Community
Mr. Alva is 70 years old, is a carpenter and plants an area of half a hectare. “Puerto Chávez was the first community to accept support to cultivate plane trees. I started with 400 tillers, and in the last two years I’ve collected around 2,000 plane clusters. My land has allowed me to sustenance to the 20 members of my family.”
Brazil nut management in the communities of Mateguá and Versalles

Brazil nut trees in these communities have turned into a priority resource for subsistence. Twenty seven families of Mateguá and 33 of Versalles take part of the Brazil nut management activities, and they have already elaborated management plans for the traditional management areas. Also, they are starting a process of organic Brazil nut certification (with funding from WWF US and WWF Sweden).

Mr. Osman Aguilera, local authority of Mateguá, highlighted the substantial benefit and technical knowledge that IPHAE’s and WWF’s project has left in both communities. “In order to obtain long term benefits, we have to get organized”, said Mr. Aguilera. “That is why we are creating the Versalles and Mateguá Brazil Nut Producers Cooperative.”

In 2008, they collected 8,000 boxes of Brazil nut, and for 2009 the estimated amount is of 15,000 boxes (oral testimonial estimation of local communities).

Gender approach in the Iténez Protected Area communities

Ms. Raquel Duarte, inhabitant of Bahía La Salud community, currently holds the Gender Secretary position within the Itonama Indigenous Community, and is a role model of a leading peasant woman.

She started her leadership experience when acting as an organizational promoter within this project. Afterwards, her leadership skills became stronger and she consolidated as a representative of the first nine communities that took part in the activities; she also participated in the Caiman Committee.

She is 43 years old and mother of five children, and has accomplished training women in social issues, as well as playing a key role in organizational and social empowerment, highlighting the role of peasant women within sustainable development processes.

While acting as the Itonama Gender Secretary she has devoted herself to building family orchards, as well as the mothers club of her community, who produces handicrafts. Both activities generate income as an additional help to her family economy.

Bolivia is the leading country worldwide exporting Brazil nut (Bertholletia excelsa). Its collection and trade are the most important economic activities of the Department of Pando and of the Iturralde Province in La Paz and the Vaca Diez Province in Beni. Brazil nut generates approximately 75% of the economic activities in northern Bolivia –USD 80 million per year and around 30,000 direct jobs. The main purchaser is the United Kingdom.

Source. Brazil and the Brazil nut, Ibce, 2009

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Talking to Fernando Trujillo

Founder and scientific director of Omacha Foundation in Colombia; renowned dolphin expert.

Fernando has been baptized by some media as ‘dolphin godfather’, having received the prestigious Whitley Award in 2007 in recognition of his work towards river dolphin conservation. Within the Workshop for Building Bolivia’s Dolphin Conservation Strategy led by FaunAgua in November, we had the chance to talk to him in Trinidad.

In the context of the Workshop, what has been your general impression regarding main challenges and opportunities for the conservation of this species in Bolivia?

We are very enthusiastic about this Workshop, since the resulting Bolivian Dolphin Conservation Plan starts feeding the South American Strategy that we have developed for this species. We have already built the Colombian Plan.

The Workshop in Bolivia was attended by a wide array of actors, private and governmental at diverse levels, which without a doubt ensures the empowerment of the dolphin, enabling national efforts towards the conservation of this emblematic species. I think that Bolivia is in a privileged situation comparing to other countries, since the threat level for dolphins isn’t drastic yet, like it already is in Ecuador, Colombia or Brazil. There are some potential threats for the dolphin in Bolivia, related to the growth of fishing activities, the hydroelectric dams being built in Brazil and those planned to be built in Bolivia. Drawing a baseline on the places where the dams will be built is a priority, in order to know the current condition of aquatic communities—fish and dolphins— and to analyze the potential impacts; Bolivia is at a stage where these aspects can still be considered within decision making regarding dolphins.

In 2007, the Inia boliviensis dolphin was segregated by science as a different species, endemic for Bolivia.

Regarding this, what could the dams mean in terms of genetic evolution; what could happen there?

Well, for starters we are very concerned about the chance of connection between water bodies that used to be disconnected, and the possibility of verifying the presence of the Inia geoffrensis species in Bolivia. Eventually this species could appear with the flooding and the construction of the dams, and that could generate a chaos regarding fish and species such as dolphins. We would see humankind intervening evolution processes of thousands of years, restoring genetic connectivity between two species that were already separated. This could lead to the extinction of a fragile species such as Inia boliviensis, since it is restricted only to the Upper Madeira River Basin. This is a very reduced distribution, comparing, for example, to the 7 million km2 of the distribution of Inia geoffrensis. Any kind of intervention in the movement of the waters and the availability of food may cause a catastrophe in Bolivia with this species.
In terms of opportunities for local population and the country itself, what has been visualized in the Workshop regarding the potential of the species with touristic and recreational purposes?

Clearly Bolivia is a very attractive country worldwide, and the fact of sheltering a unique species such as Inia boliviensis makes it even more attractive. There is already touristic infrastructure in place in the main basins, and, if we manage to train operators and direct some tourism towards responsible dolphin observation, this can generate income for local population. Just as an example, dolphin and whale observation in Latin America has grown exponentially during the past years. Countries such as Argentina, just in the Valdés Peninsula area, are generating around USD 150 million yearly from whale observation. That generates an interesting economic movement that impels people to realize the economic opportunity of these species, which is an important incentive towards its conservation.

In Colombia, 28,000 to 32,000 tourists, with the main purpose of observing dolphins, arrived in 2007 and 2008, generating around USD 15 million. We could make a rough analysis: in 2008 this activity has generated more than USD 8 million, and there are 430 dolphins in this segment of the river, which means that each dolphin has a high economic value, generated by sustainable use. This means that the dolphin itself is generating income along many years, and therefore is becoming a good asset, very important for communities. We have to keep on aiming at generating sound practices all across the continent.

We started in Colombia and would like to consolidate it in Bolivia: promoting a best practice certificate for dolphin observation, issued by an entity with international credibility regarding dolphins. In each country, the Government (the national tourism authority or a regional government) could provide that certificate to responsible operators and guides.

There is something very clear about all this, and that is the fact that, in the end, a happy and alive dolphin in our rivers is worth much more that way, than through any other use that involves taking his life.

“Bolivia is in a privileged situation comparing to other countries, since the threat level for dolphins isn’t drastic yet.”

International Day of Freshwater Dolphins

Aiming at continuing creating awareness at national and international level regarding the importance of the conservation of these species, October 24th has been proposed as International Day of Freshwater Dolphins.
WWF gets recognized for its support to responsible forest trade

The Bolivian Engineer Society, celebrating its 43rd anniversary, recognized the work in 2009 of prominent institutions, companies and professionals. In this occasion, WWF was recognized by the Bolivian and Santa Cruz Forest Engineer Associations for its work promoting responsible forest trade. Wood company La Chonta (a GFTN Bolivia member) and Friends of Nature Foundation (FAN) were also recognized.

Also, tribute was paid to Mr. Gonzalo Peña, Responsible Forest Trade Officer for WWF Bolivia, for his 21 years of work as forest engineer specialized in conservation. For this he received the “Sustainability Milestone”.

“When the forest isn’t just wood. The forest is earth, soil, wildlife and people living in these areas”, said Mr. Federico Bascopé, one of the pioneers of Bolivian forest science and its teaching.

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EcoTips

When buying furniture and wood, try to verify that the wood is FSC certified.
Training in Forest Enterprises Accounting System (Sconef)

Worldwide, WWF has been developing tools to support forest management. Recently we’ve created an accounting software that is used through the Excel platform, which is why it doesn’t require sophisticated equipment.

Two workshops were held in Santa Cruz, aiming at socializing this tool: a conference for actors related to natural resource management, and a training course for last-year students of Forest Engineering at Gabriel René Moreno Autonomous University. These students will have access to the tool for their work with communities.

The Sconef is practical and user friendly, and has been designed in order to control revenue and expenses of communities dedicated to forest management, aiming at standardizing reports and control, and, fundamentally, promoting accountability within their resource management.

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Sustainable Forest Management: An opportunity to consolidate Indigenous Communal Lands in Bolivia

Currently, Indigenous Communal Lands (referred to as TCOs) cover 41.2% of the total national forest surface, and are a homogenous type of community property.

Community forest management projects aim at sustainable management and territory defense. They also generate jobs, diversify production and strengthen indigenous settlements, impelling their inclusion in the domestic productive system and enabling them to cover their basic needs. In this publication you will get to know the importance of indigenous participation in the development and conservation of forests.

Click here to access the full publication—available only in Spanish.

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Earth Hour 2010
Bolivia gets ready to participate

In 2010 we can again adhere to this global initiative, turning our unnecessary lights off on Saturday, March 27th from 8:30 to 9:30 pm.

2009 has been a very important year for the world, given the celebration of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen. The main issue to be addressed: compromise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and, even though we didn’t do quite well, the challenge remains: finding in 2010 the answers to this pushing global problem.

WWF, aiming at generating awareness regarding this issue, since 2007 has been implementing the global Earth Hour campaign on climate change. We aim at this movement reaching all Bolivians, which is why, though this newsletter, we invite all Bolivian municipalities, provinces and department, as well as companies, civil society organizations, academic sectors and general public to participate, turning this campaign into an event that calls people to action and makes us reflect on the responsible use of energy and the reduction of the causes of climate change in Bolivia, mainly deforestation.
In 2009, the cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, Trinidad, Oruro, Puerto Quijarro and Santa Cruz de la Sierra showed their commitment through events in each city, in each case hand in hand with their respective municipality and electricity generating and distributing companies, expressing their adhesion not only to the initiative, but to the commitment of saving energy and mitigating climate change.

Up to date, we are coordinating with San Ignacio de Velasco, towards its participation in this global event. This town is the capital of the municipality that shelters the largest climate change project worldwide: the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project (PAC-NKM).

Oxígeno Music Group adheres to WWF’s Earth Hour

It’s one of the ambassadors of the campaign in Bolivia

This year this music group joins Earth Hour as ambassador. It is made up by five brothers who love music. “We learned to sing even before we learned to speak”, they confess. Their adhesion to this initiative will allow them to disseminate their commitment with a living planet. Since September they have been performing concerts across Bolivia showing Earth Hour’s graphics, bringing the message of this WWF climate change campaign across.
Climate Change Forum: Effects, Impacts, Opportunities and Challenges for Bolivia

The event concluded successfully with more than 200 participants, surpassing the expectations of its organizers and showing a general concern for the serious threats presented by climate change globally, and especially regarding the consequences that could occur in Bolivia due to an increase in temperature and imbalance of rainfall, which would severely impact food production and health.

**Potential impacts of climate change in Bolivia as of the year 2030**

- The majority of the glaciers of the Bolivian portion of the Andean Mountain Range will have disappeared.
- The mythical Titicaca Lake will have been reduced and divided in three parts.
- The increased scarcity of water in the metropolitan area of La Paz and El Alto will reduce its growth in population.
- Agricultural production in the highlands will be affected by unfavorable climate.
- The productive potential in the lowlands will be greatly reduced due to an increase in wind speeds, drought, flooding and soil degradation.
- The productive supply of the valleys will become unfeasible due to negative climate effects.
- The major cities in the eastern part of the country will be the target of severe changes and restrictions as a result of constant flooding and pollution.

**EcoTips**

60% of the freshwater available on our planet is destined to producing food. Thus, plant fruit and vegetables in your own yard or in community orchards, watering them without wasting. It also helps if at the market or supermarket you rather buy products made close to where you live; this way you reduce the ecological footprint generated by its transportation.
Copenhagen Accord: half-baked text and unclear substance

The UN climate talks in Copenhagen were inches away from total failure and ended with an outcome far too weak to tackle dangerous climate change, WWF said today.

“Copenhagen was at the brink of failure due to poor leadership combined with an unconvincing level of ambition”, said Kim Carstensen, Leader of WWF’s Global Climate Initiative.

“Well meant but half-hearted pledges to protect our planet from dangerous climate change are simply not sufficient to address a crisis that calls for completely new ways of collaboration across rich and poor countries.”

To read the full story, click here.

EcoTips

Don’t buy orchids or other plants sold on the side of roads, since they could have been taken from the forest in a predatory manner. Choose plants that are sold at nurseries or reproduce plants you already have in your garden (or in gardens of friends, family or neighbours) through its segments or seeds.

When buying furniture and wood, try to verify that the wood is FSC certified.
Mobilize more people at your home and neighbourhood:
• Do your ecological footprint test
• Preserve green areas where you live
• Help creating a garbage sorting system
• Organize cleaning volunteer activities to embellish your city
• Participate in the ecological activities of schools and municipalities.
Living finances

WWF Bolivia Budget Execution
–by Programmes

*Fiscal year 2009 (July 1st, 2008 to June 30th, 2009). In USD*

- Amazon Programme: 1,290,939
- Forest Programme: 903,399
- Pantanal Programme: 514,315
- Institutional: 485,231

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About WWF
The objective of WWF Bolivia, the conservation organization, is to contribute to the conservation of the Amazon and the Pantanal, promote and generate sustainable economic opportunities for its inhabitants and Bolivia in general.

WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature by:

- Conserving the world’s biological diversity
- Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- Promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption