

# Knowledge Management Strengthens Decision Making: The Case of the “Knowledge Center for Assessing Vulnerability to and Impact of Climate Change on the Andes of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru”

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## Introduction

Under the REGATTA Initiative (Regional Portal for Technology Transfer and Action against Climate Change in Latin America and Caribbean) the project seeks to develop actions towards vulnerability and adaptation to climate change assessment in agriculture and water resources in the Andes of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. The project was implemented by UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean (UNEP-ROLAC) and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). The clear knowledge focus of this project led to the successful creation of an on-line Community of Practice (COP-Andes) through which key project stakeholders of public and private sectors gathered with civil society in order to discuss recommendations and promote debates on local issues and alternatives, using online dialogues and virtual discussion forums.

## What's is CoP-Andes?



The primary objective of the Virtual Forum of the Andes Community of Practice (CoP-Andes) is to provide a venue for discussions of problems, solutions, lessons learned and best practices on adaptation to climate change in agriculture and water resources of the Andes. The discussions were mainly conducted via the Virtual Forums of the CoP-Andes through Webinars and online dialogues.

Link:  
[www.pnuma.org/regatta](http://www.pnuma.org/regatta) (>Andes) or

[www.copandes.org](http://www.copandes.org)

## Virtual Forums CoP-Andes: Some figures



First Virtual Forum: Construction of Climate Change Scenarios in the Andes



Second Virtual Forum: Impacts of Climate Change on Crops in the Andes



Third Virtual Forum: Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources of the Andes



Fourth Virtual Forum: Social Vulnerability in relation to Climate Change in the Andes



Fifth Virtual Forum: Adaptation Measures to Climate Change in the Andes

Photos: Neil Palmer (CIAT)

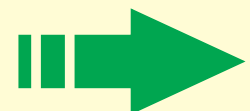
- **01 semester** of the project was dedicated to strategic planning and approaching key institutions in climate change in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.
- **01 year** of conducting the Forums (April/2013 to May/2014).
- **100 people** on average participated in each Forum
- **740 people** registered to the discussion list (Dgroups).
- **3,350 friends** on Facebook.
- **19 exclusive video** presentations
- **182 links and publications** related to the topic of the Forums.

## KM Strategic Plan

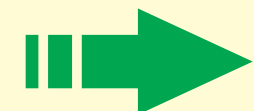
The activities and strategic actions of CoP-Andes resulted from a Participatory Impact Pathway Analysis and can be summarized in three steps:



Detailed Mapping of actors: participatory establishment of a multi-sector database of contacts related to climate change subjects.



Participatory workshops: mostly virtual and some local technical meetings with experts from the three countries generated feedback previously raised about adaptation actions.



Reaching out to decision-makers: the project team identified policy briefs and infographics and presented them to decision-makers. The study's technical leader considered this activity the most suitable product to illustrate the findings and recommendations of the project.

## Regarding Implementers

The primary objective of REGATTA initiative (Regional Portal for Technology Transfer and Action against Climate Change in Latin America and Caribbean) is to strengthen capacity and promote exchange of knowledge on technologies and experiences related to climate change, within the scope of mitigation and adaptation, for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. [www.pnuma.org/regatta](http://www.pnuma.org/regatta)

The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), through the area of Decision and Policy Analysis (DAPA), <http://dapa.ciat.cgiar.org>, is the Center leading the Research Program of CGIAR on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), begun in December 2010. CCAFS gathers the best researchers in the world in agricultural sciences, development research, climate change and Earth System science, to identify and address the most important interactions, synergies and trade-offs regarding climate change, agriculture and food security. [www.ccafs.cgiar.org](http://www.ccafs.cgiar.org).

CIAT recently developed a Theory of Change for knowledge management so that researchers can design KM interventions along their project's impact pathways. [www.ciat.cgiar.org](http://www.ciat.cgiar.org).

## Bibliographical References

Staiger-Rivas, S., Alvarez, S., Arana, J.A., Howland, F., Cunha, F., Valencia, B., Muñoz, L.A., Feijóo, K. Diseño de intervenciones de gestión de conocimiento en la investigación agrícola para el desarrollo: Metodología, experiencias y lecciones aprendidas. Knowledge Management for Development Journal 10(1): in press <http://journal.km4dev.org/>

Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis Wiki, <http://pipamethodology.pbworks.com/w/page/70283575/FrontPage>, accessed in May 2014.

## Context

One challenge of formulating public policies on adaptation to climate change is policy effectiveness, implying access to decision makers and creating awareness among them under time pressure. Effective policy influence requires understanding of the local context and realities, as well as the broad participation and dedication of many actors to the dialogue. Participation creates positive attitudes in society, thereby favoring the adoption of such policies.

The Knowledge Center opted to consolidate a community of practice (CoP) to facilitate mainly online gatherings of “opinion makers” from the public sector, civil society and the private sector. Those provided opportunities to debate on alternative solutions to local problems with respect to adaptation to climate change.

## Lessons Learned: Factors Contributing to the Success of the KM Strategy

- **The Facilitator – Expertise in KM and with a High Quality Relationships with the Project's Stakeholders:** the community must generate its own learning for a CoP to fulfill its mission. We found that the role of the facilitator was fundamental in coordinating and moderating activities. The success of the moderator's actions was due to a good relationship with the broad and committed interdisciplinary research team. Moreover, the exclusively virtual interaction of the facilitator with the project team (the facilitator lives in another country) enabled an experience in what is necessary to provide virtual service to the public.

- **Technical Leader:** having an expert-leader responsible for approving thematic proposals of activities is fundamental, who also guides discussions underway to maintain their focus, in order to ensure the quality of the scientific information that will be used as elements for dialogues. It is important that the person is a recognized professional and enjoys credibility within the community.

- **A Quality List of Key Contacts:** key participants mapping helped bring together the right stakeholders with true interest and possibility to act upon the discussed information. It allowed the discussion, formulation and agreement on key recommendations, prepared in a genuinely participatory manner.

- **Online Tools – These are a Means and Not an End:** virtual tools should be chosen according to the target users. A contextual analysis and a proper evaluation of available and free solutions are necessary, especially when the project does not have funds and development of tools is not included in the project timetable. The project was able to choose solutions that enabled collection of statistical usage data, facilitating interaction of participants and providing easy dissemination of information.

- **Core Group – Persons Identified and Committed to the CoP:** the project was able to involve individuals with extensive knowledge and recognition in a core group that was highly committed and experienced on the topic and the task. This enabled the project to increase the number of participants and provided an analysis of their professional context.

- **Knowledge Management Contributes to Institutional Strengthening and Improves Relations with Members:** the knowledge management component of this project enabled a series of activities that added value: for example, thematic meetings among facilitators, where facilitation techniques and technology issues for virtual knowledge sharing could be analyzed. This optimized the interaction among project members and their learning on the knowledge management.

## How does KM and CoPs Support Decision-Making?

Shared experiences in a venue such as the one provided in a Community of Practice, where professionals from different sectors and students can present their opinions, not only as representatives of an institution, but especially as citizens, in a spontaneous fashion, increases the proximity of scientists to the realities in their areas of study, which can render the applicability of their policy recommendations more factual. Therefore, we consider that a CoP supports decision-making for more effective public policies, although it is obvious that this is not a means of direct access to decision-makers and their advisors.

Knowledge Management (KM) methodologies enable an analysis for understanding the context, profile, interests and needs of a given target public for basing decisions on a strategy to have a positive effect on that community. This strategy is submitted to a periodical monitoring and evaluation process in order to provide constant feedback from the public which continuously changes, as do their surroundings.

## Acknowledgments

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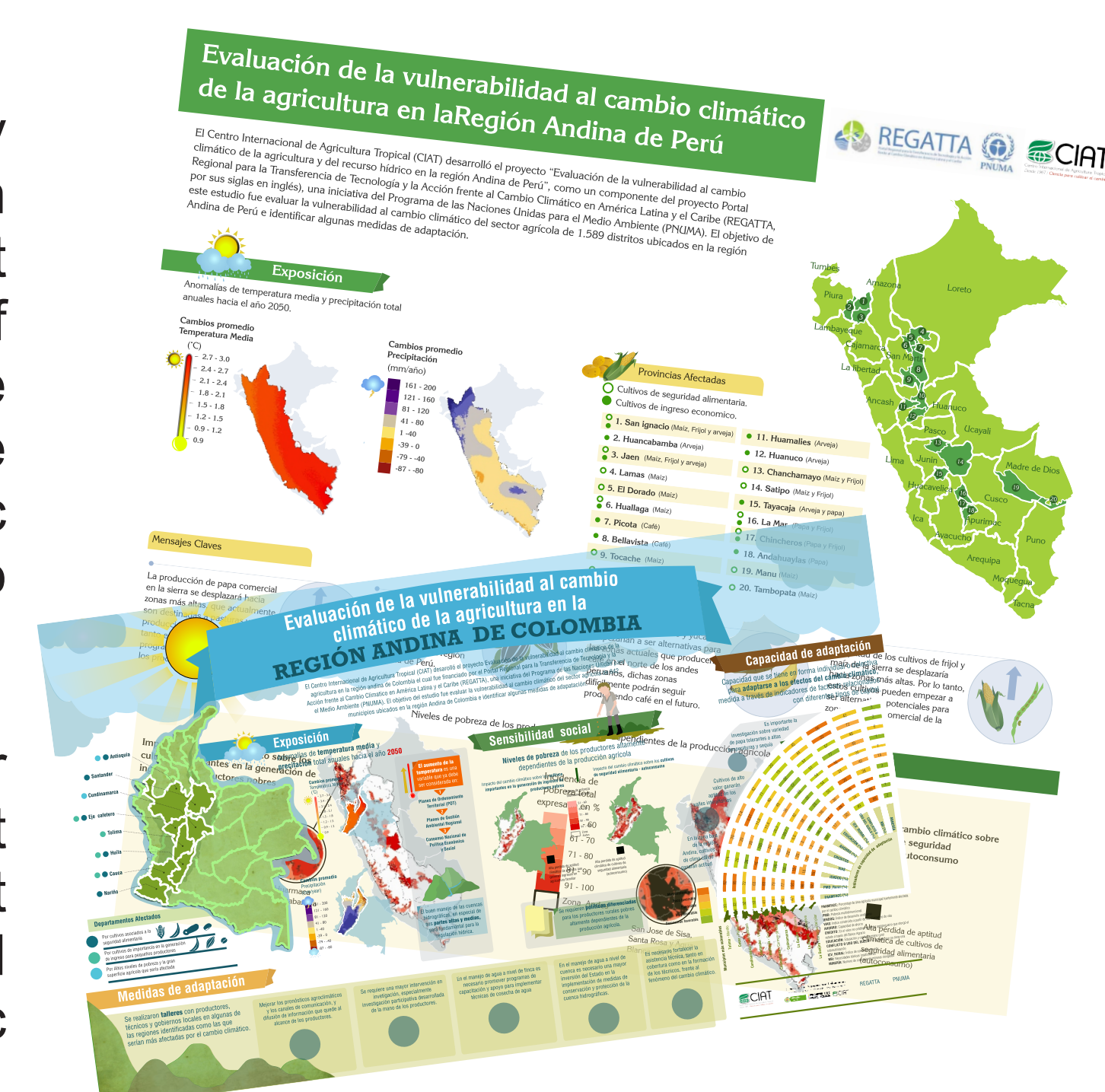


Image: Infographics available at [www.pnuma.org/regatta](http://www.pnuma.org/regatta) (> Information > Vulnerability, Impact and Adaptation).

