

Bolivian climate change adaptation experiences from the Altiplano norte and Beni department

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Research question

Climate change impacts in Bolivia are already being felt throughout the country (dry spells, droughts, floods). Climate models predict a significant increase in temperature for Bolivia of in the range of 2.2 - 7 °C until the end of this century. Thus, studying and discussing adaptation measures becomes an ever more urgent task.

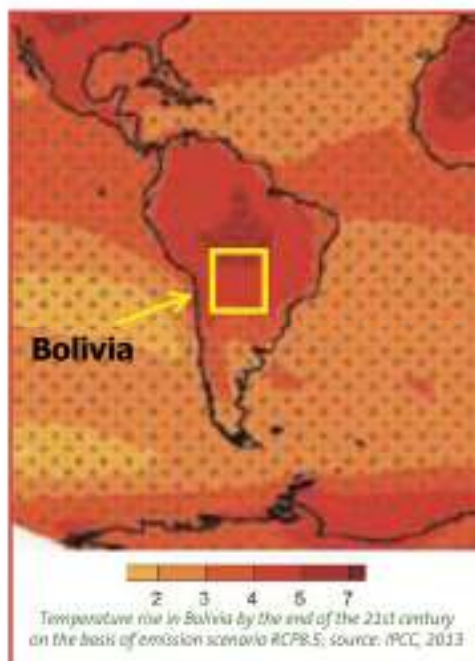
This situation led us to the formulation of our research questions: What is Bolivia doing to face the predicted impacts of this huge temperature rise, with all its associated effects other elements of the climate system? What are the politics, programs and adaptation actions that are presently being implemented by the different levels of government, from national to regional, local and the community level?

Our empirical study on climate change adaptation policies, programs, projects and initiatives can well be considered a pioneer work. It focuses on two different regions in its attempt to identify key actors, processes and experiences that will allow formulating orientation and criteria for public politics in order to help the country adapt successfully to present and future impacts of climate change.

The first region is the Northern Altiplano, giving continuity to a previous study "Bolivia in a 4 degree warmer world. Socio-political scenarios 'Bolivia in a 4 degree warmer world. Socio-political scenarios in the face of climate change for the years 2030 and 2060 in the Northern Altiplano" (Hoffmann & Requena, 2012). On the other hand is the lowland department of Beni, which experienced "historic" floods in early 2014; a region extremely vulnerable to climate change.

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Methodology

Our empirical study is based on the results of visits to the regions, field observations and in situ interviews. In total, we visited more than 35 local administrative districts and interviewed around 100 persons. Our work was then complemented by extensive literature research, including a large number of technical reports compiled during field work.



Construction of more efficient irrigation canal in The Altiplano. (Photo Dirk Hoffmann)

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Download of the publication at:
"Navegando Futuro" (only in Spanish)
<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bolivia/12100.pdf>



A Policy Paper

"Experiencias de adaptación al cambio climático en Bolivia y recomendaciones para políticas públicas" in Spanish language, summing up the main findings and conclusion is available for download at:
<http://http://cambio-climatico-bolivia.org/index-cc.php?mod=detalle&opcion=3614361>



Flood refugees camp in Guaymas after 6 months after the 2014 flood. (Photo Dirk Hoffmann)

Findings

The main conclusion we draw is that climate change adaptation in Bolivia is still in its early stages, and there is no generalized appreciation that adaptation will constitute a priority over the next couple of decades.

A second conclusion is that there exists an enormous lack of information and knowledge on climate change and its impacts, as well as on possible adaptation measures.

Third, Bolivia still does not count with a national climate change policy.



Woman harvesting bananas during the 2014 flood in Beni. (Photo Luis Hernán Mariani Cáceres, Director of the local School in Wila Abesá)

Significance for practical solutions

Based on the conclusions of our study, we have formulated recommendations to orient activities of formulating and implementing public policy on climate change adaptation.

Even though these recommendations are directed in the first place towards the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, commissioner of the study, they may also serve other actors of the public and private sectors, as well as institutions of international development cooperation, in order to help Bolivia increase its resilience to climate change.



The early warning system for river floods in the City of La Paz is in full operation. (Photo Dirk Hoffmann)

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