



## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

### A Comparative View from the Environmental Windows in Latin America

February 16 -18, 2011  
Popayán, Colombia

## 1. Introduction

The [Fund for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals \(MDG-F\)](#) is a mechanism for international cooperation to accelerate human development processes worldwide, funded by the Government of Spain for a total of 528 million euros. For this, the Government has commissioned the United Nations System (UNS) for its implementation.

In line with the recent reform of the UN System and, in particular, with efforts to promote joint and interagency cooperation, each project (called Programme) is implemented by about 6 agencies. There is an added value of working together, as there is a greater ability to analyze problems and increased technical capacity to develop proposals for a comprehensive and holistic approach.

Currently, the Fund counts 128 joint programs in 8 program areas related to the MDGs. One of these programs, "Environment and Climate Change" has 17 joint programs, of which 6 are in Latin America. This priority program looks at the achievement of MDG Goal 7 which seeks to achieve environmental sustainability, integrating sustainable development principles into public policies and programs, curbing the loss of natural resources.

In this context, and in line with the cooperative efforts, FAO is promoting an initiative for a regional systematization. As part of this initiative, the "Environmental Management Workshop: A comparative view from the windows in Latin America" was celebrated in Popayán, Colombia, from February 16 to 18 February 2011. This event constituted an important exercise for joint reflection on one of the most pressing issues in the region today: climate change adaptation. This joint reflection looks to serve the Joint Programmes in the region in the exchange of lessons learned and replicable methodologies locally.

This workshop consisted of general presentations on the main issues discussed, presentations by each country on best practices and extension strategies, as well as working groups and round tables as spaces for dialogue and exchange among participants. Also, one day of the workshop was dedicated to visiting the field, where the JP of Colombia implemented good practices for the management of natural resources in the context of climate change adaptation, giving participants the opportunity to directly observe the impacts of these good practices in local communities.

This report presents a general conclusions of the workshop. The next step in the regional feedback exercise will be the systematization of best practices and outreach strategies identified in each of the participating projects. These best practices and outreach strategies were identified during the workshop and are described in this document. Additionally, a webpage describing the initiative is under preparation, containing the presentations and the workshop report. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/68190/en/>

## 2. Conclusions

### 2.1. General Conclusions

**2.1.1. Impact and Sustainability of the *Windows*:** The *Environmental Windows* were a powerful instrument to advance the reflection applied on adaptation to climate change. Participants noted that their impacts were remarkable. However, the short duration of JPs threaten the sustainability of actions and changes achieved during the project. The continuity of the Environmental Windows as such is yet to be defined, however, these Joint Programs leave "windows" open through their exit strategies for the continuity of actions and initiatives developed. One of the main objectives should be to strengthen national capacities, to ensure sustainability through ownership of initiatives by the national counterpart. The experience of the JP in Colombia presents an interesting example, as cooperation with the Cauca University led to another kind of dialogue and allowed an appropriation by the local youth of processes and initiatives that were implemented under the project.

**2.1.2. Interagency Issues:** Difficulties in the interagency work varied from country to country and depended more on the relationships between people than on the institutional design. In the case of Colombia, it was remarkable a great approach between UNDP and FAO for the implementation of the Joint Program, which can be attributed mainly to the efforts of the General Coordinator of the project, and the Coordinator of FAO component. The difficulties lied mainly in the diversity of management approaches of the different agencies. To address this, there is a need for improvement in coordination issues in order to generate synergies and opportunities for dialogue among the various agencies to enable coordinated action and provide the project the comparative advantages that each agency can offer as part of a Joint Programme, as development problems need multidimensional and integrated responses.

**2.1.3. Workshop Opportunity:** The workshop was an important milestone in the life of Environmental Windows, since it enabled the coordinators of the FAO Components to exchange views on administrative procedures, as well as substantive aspects of project implementation. The time selected for the workshop was timely, as it will allow participants to focus the work of systematization with relative homogeneity of approach and methodology, sponsoring great advantages for comparative analysis that will generate lessons and good practices that can be validated with a regional vision.

The workshop was also highly appreciated by other agencies of the system. This satisfaction is reflected in the invitation to the Coordinator of the event by UNEP to participate in a workshop where the Regional Coordinators in 5 regions of that organization attended to discuss strategies of Knowledge Management of UNEP. The presentation of the Colombia Workshop was highly appreciated by colleagues from UNEP.

### 2.2. Technical conclusions

**2.2.1. Identification of the linking thread for the region:** In order to agree on common themes and similarities both technical and cultural, in the understanding that human beings are the main beneficiaries of natural resources, the following linking threads were identified during the workshop:

- For South America it is **water**, because of the role the Andes play as an integrator, and which go beyond the technical aspects, to encompass the cultural, natural, productive, economic and religious aspects.

- For Central America it is the **vulnerability to hydro-meteorological phenomena** (eg to hurricanes, droughts and landslides) as well as the **fight against desertification**.

Finally, the common thread linking all of Latin America is, in principle, the **vegetal cover** for protecting soil, for environmental, economic, and cultural aspects, according to the specific needs and socio-environmental contexts throughout the region.

**2.2.2. Local Governance:** The governance depends on the relations between civil society organizations, the market and effective institutions of public governance. Locally, this means developing partnerships between government initiatives (top-down) and local institutions and policies (bottom-up). In the Andean context, municipalities tend to be the framework within which local governance is focused. Empower citizens and community organizations in decision-making, not only increases efficiency but also offers a real opportunity for individuals or groups to transform their dreams and ideas into action and results. For this, a fundamental prerequisite is to encourage the emergence of new leaders, possible through the strengthening of local structures such as community development committees and the distribution of responsibilities, creating a database of local leaders. The Coexistence Pact signed in Popayan, among different social organizations in the Colombian Massif in 2002, constitutes a strategy for conflict prevention, demonstrating how the strengthening of community management capacities and ownership strengthens local governance spaces.

**2.2.3. Traditional Knowledge:** At the local level, local communities are already taking actions to adapt to climate change. These actions are based largely on local knowledge, which generally derive from ancestral knowledge. It is necessary, however, to generate synergies between this knowledge, specific to the local conditions and the expertise derived from the application of scientific methods under general conditions. This is achieved by “giving back” the science to the traditional knowledge, lost at some point in history, to provide it with the capacity to react.

**2.2.4. Need for Cultural Change:** In recent years, various conceptual shifts are taking place in rural development projects/programs:

- from working with the farmer, to working with the family, considered as the social unit.
- farmers are empowered to be considered more as partners in project/programme implementation, rather than passive recipients, allowing for an appropriation process from the beginning, and potentially improving sustainability of actions
- Children are playing an increasingly important role in family dynamics. For example, the use of accessible technologies like cell phones, which already play key roles in communication for decision making in view of a changing climate.

**2.2.5. Intervention Phases:** These changes must be reflected both, in the planning as well as in the implementation of programs and projects. The process of building trust with people takes time, generally incompatible with implementation timing. Once the link is established, the program is in its final phase. In general, it is necessary to build trust and a common language to accelerate these processes.

**2.2.6. Safety Factor:** In a context of volatile markets and difficult access to them, achievement of security becomes a priority for small farmers linked to markets. This, in general, is the cause for the loss of a longer-term vision. Interventions related to climate change adaptation need to prioritize the achievement of security of actors, before aiming at medium and longer term objectives.

**2.2.7. Systematization:** This exercise needs to go beyond description, to include an analysis of the consequences and implications of actions, as it should produce useful lessons for other processes, whether at local, national or supranational level.

One of the lessons learned from the Colombian experience is the operational systematization processes for adaptation to climate change, which is based on two dimensions: a) territorial b) temporal. In the time frame, information is systematized in the short term (early warning systems) and in the medium term (implications of climate impacts on people). On the other hand, the territorial horizon needs a practical approach even if tools are not widely available, based also on ancestral knowledge, the optimization of the network and not only its intensification. Communication and information is essential, as the better this subject is known, the better the response will be. Real-time information through innovative approaches, such as cell phones or Internet access need to be further developed.

**Transversal themes:** the following were identified as crosscutting themes that should be considered in the systematization:

- **Community Approach**
- **Capacity building for communities (for ACC)**
- **Communication strategies**
- **Inter-agency cooperation**
- **Sustainability**

**2.2.8. Payment for Environmental Services:** It was agreed that the name should be changed to "incentives and disincentives for ecosystem services" to include not only payment but also the collection, which should include both goods and intangible services.

It is important that these initiatives are direct transactions without intervention costs. It is also important to avoid any perverse incentives and equity that could jeopardize the credibility of the exercise. Moreover, the principle of responsibility must be highlighted as payment mechanisms so far have resulted only in perverse incentives, where developed countries pay to continue polluting, and as long as poverty exists, any sustainable solution can be developed.

**2.2.9. Extension:** Extension services are aimed at the improvement of the individual as subject and object of development. That is why the new extension approaches should emphasize not only the increase of agricultural production but also environmental and social sustainability.

**2.2.10. Natural Resource Management and Governance:** An example is the management of watersheds. What is the achievement of collective action among the interests of stakeholders in the upper basin (where water flow is generated), the stakeholders in the middle (which generally fall farmers), and stakeholders in the bottom (i.e. inhabitants of cities).

## Agreements & Next Steps

During the meetings held with participant projects, the good practices and extension strategies to be systematized were jointly agreed.

Country	Good Practices	Extension Strategies
Colombia	✓ Piedras River Watershed	✓ Farmer Field School
Ecuador	✓ Chackra Kichwa ✓ Management of Minor Species in integrated farms ✓ Interinstitutional cooperation	✓ Municipal Farm ✓ Demonstrative Farm
El Salvador	✓ Management of maize and beans ✓ Entailment to market ✓ Production of Productive Associations	✓ Demonstrating and Irradiating Families
Guatemala	✓ Agroforestry ✓ Stubble Management ✓ Zompopo fertilizer	
Honduras	✓ Payment for Environmental Services ✓ Milpa system	
Panama	✓ Watershed Management Committee ✓ Indigenous Congress ✓ Traditional Chants	✓ Traditional Chants
Peru		✓ Farmer Field Schools
Others	✓ A visit was agreed whereby colleague from Ecuador would go to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to systematize maize management	