



Event Summary

Climate Change Adaptation in Colombia: Direction and Roles

February 19-20, 2013
Bogotá, Colombia



On February 19-20, 2013 the Wilson Center, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development and the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, hosted the inaugural series of sessions focused on climate change adaptation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The series, sponsored by USAID and organized by the Wilson Center, is an ongoing partnership that helps to bridge connections between stakeholders to discuss issues of climate change adaptation specific to the individual country. Working with local USAID Missions, seminars are developed with collaboration with local ministries and the private sector.

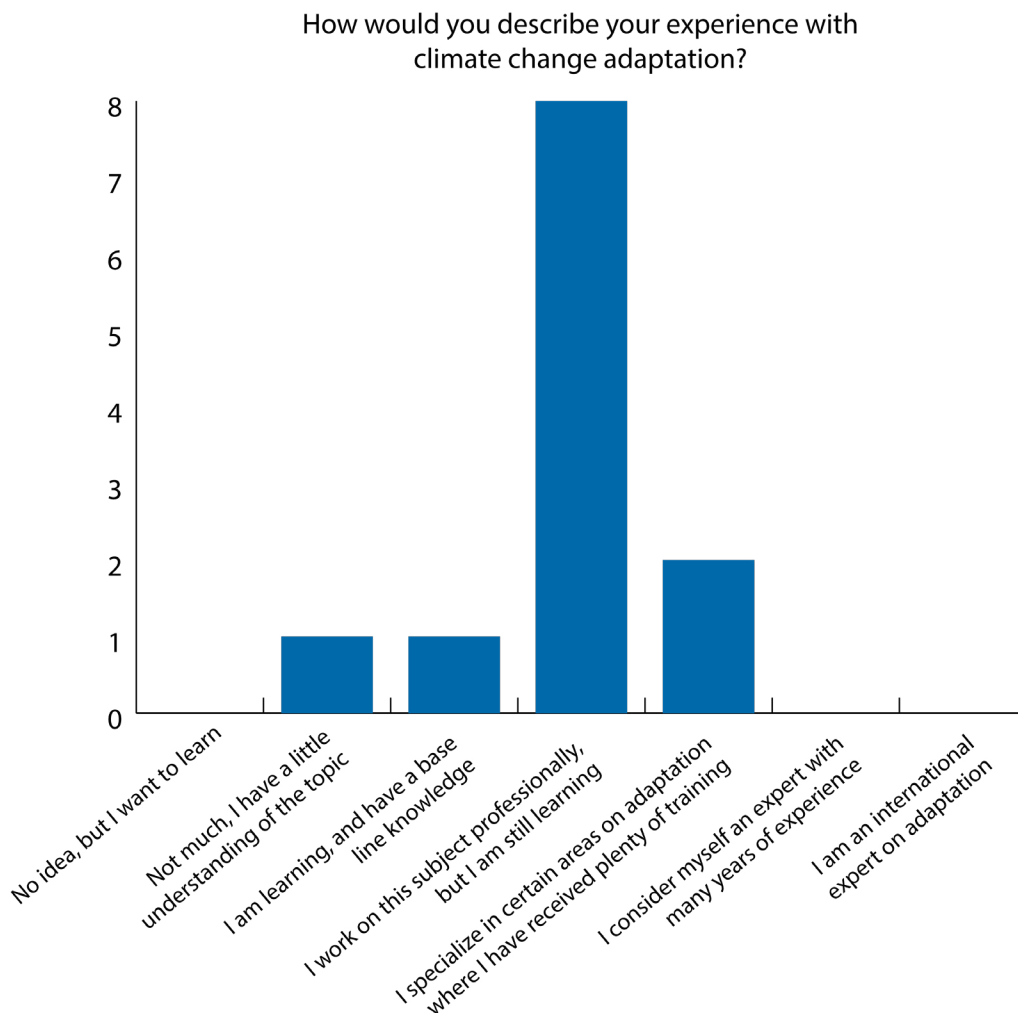
Working with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the seminar, “Climate Change Adaptation in Colombia: Direction and Roles” was developed to assess Colombia’s response to adaptation issues. Dr. Carmen Lacabra, the leading consultant for the seminar, a Colombian national and Cambridge University climate change expert, helped develop the idea with her counterparts in the Ministry with idea of gauging the level of private and public response in implementing adaptation strategies. Colombia’s climate change agenda, led by the Ministry, had been focused on mitigation and the issue of homelessness, but due to dramatic climate events between 2010 and 2012, primarily flooding’s, the Colombian government refocused their efforts to incorporate territorial and sectorial planning, and produced a [National Adaptation Strategy](#).

Under this context, the seminar focused on how the adaptation strategy was being implemented across the ministries and agencies and to gauge the level of communication

and collaboration between them. Members from over two dozen agencies were invited to take part in the day and half seminar which would allow them to present their work.

Prior to the start of the seminar, a survey was sent around to all confirmed attendees to measure their level of knowledge on adaptation strategies. This approach, which was used on several other occasions throughout the series, was implemented for two reasons. The first was to measure the level of knowledge amongst those implementing climate change adaptation strategies within their ministries and agencies, and the second was for internal purposes to develop a more robust agenda.

Asked “How would you describe your experience with climate change adaptation”, of the twelve responses, the majority fell into the middle category of “I work in this area professionally; however I am just beginning and developing my knowledge”.



The remaining responses leaned one either side of the middle ground, but what was evident from the pre-event survey was what Colombia is indeed transitioning their approach on how they view climate adaptation. This is evident in how officials within the ministries and agencies were beginning to develop a new understanding of how the government was implementing the national adaptation strategy but that more work and technical trainings are needed.

When asked what themes participants wanted to focus on, the majority asked for guidance on creating adaptation strategies, followed by process and vulnerability assessments. The survey was passed on to the two leading facilitators, Dr. Thomas Downing, CEO of the Global Climate Adaptation Partnerships (GCAP), based in the UK, and Fernanda Zermoglio, Senior Adaptation Specialist, based in Chile. Both experts brought a plethora of climate change adaptation experience and implementation strategies.

The format for the one and a half day conference was to allow participants from the various ministries and agencies from around Colombia to present on their climate change adaptation strategies and what was being done for implementation, with the end goal of identifying best practices for adaptation strategies. The second day focused on a workshop led by Dr. Downing and Ms. Zermoglio on case study exercises, tools and techniques. Eleven individuals provided a 10-15 minutes presentations followed by a question and answer session. The various presentations highlighted specific regional issues ranging from watershed management in the upper Magdalena River basin, the Ministry of Transport developing a network of strategies to cope with natural disasters and access (in response to the natural disasters that isolated communities in 2010 and 2012), and coastal zone management.

The half day workshop, led by Dr. Downing, mixed the group together to work on case studies with the goal of placing the small groups in a hypothetical position of authority and how they could work together to implement strategies for restoring coastal dunes, screening development policies and reengineering infrastructure.

The challenge Colombia faces in developing comprehensive adaptation strategies is outlined in these five major themes. The table below, compiled by Dr. Lacambra, was from her observations and conversations with participants throughout the sessions.

She noted that the sessions demonstrated Colombia's in-house capacity for developing adaptation policies regionally, but it "highlighted the country's needs and requirements on mainstreaming adaptation into national policies." The workshop successfully brought together a diverse group of participants that all work on related issues, but that more work needed to be done to standardize, which goes to the first challenge of institutionalizing adaptation policies and leadership.

Themes	Challenges
Institutions and Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate incorporation of adaptation into the territorial and sectorial plans • Build institutional and technical capacity • Development, planning and investment plans (local, regional and national) articulated • Generate research networks • Unite efforts • Strengthening research and methods to assess vulnerability and implement adaptation strategies within the SINA institutions
Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of information management • Information integration at the national, regional and local levels and within planning instruments
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying information gaps for decision making • Validate national research methods • Biodiversity vulnerability scenarios resulting from national prioritization • Adaptation implementation and monitoring technologies
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of risk • Increase awareness and capacity on risk management • Improving climate events risk preparation and response mechanisms • Identify local threats
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic alliances public/private/academia • Share good practices and lessons learnt • Action plans re-evaluation
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive capacity strengthening at local level • Social appropriation of the knowledge on climate change and biodiversity • Understanding Climate Change and what type of decisions need to be made in different sectors outside the environmental discussion

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