



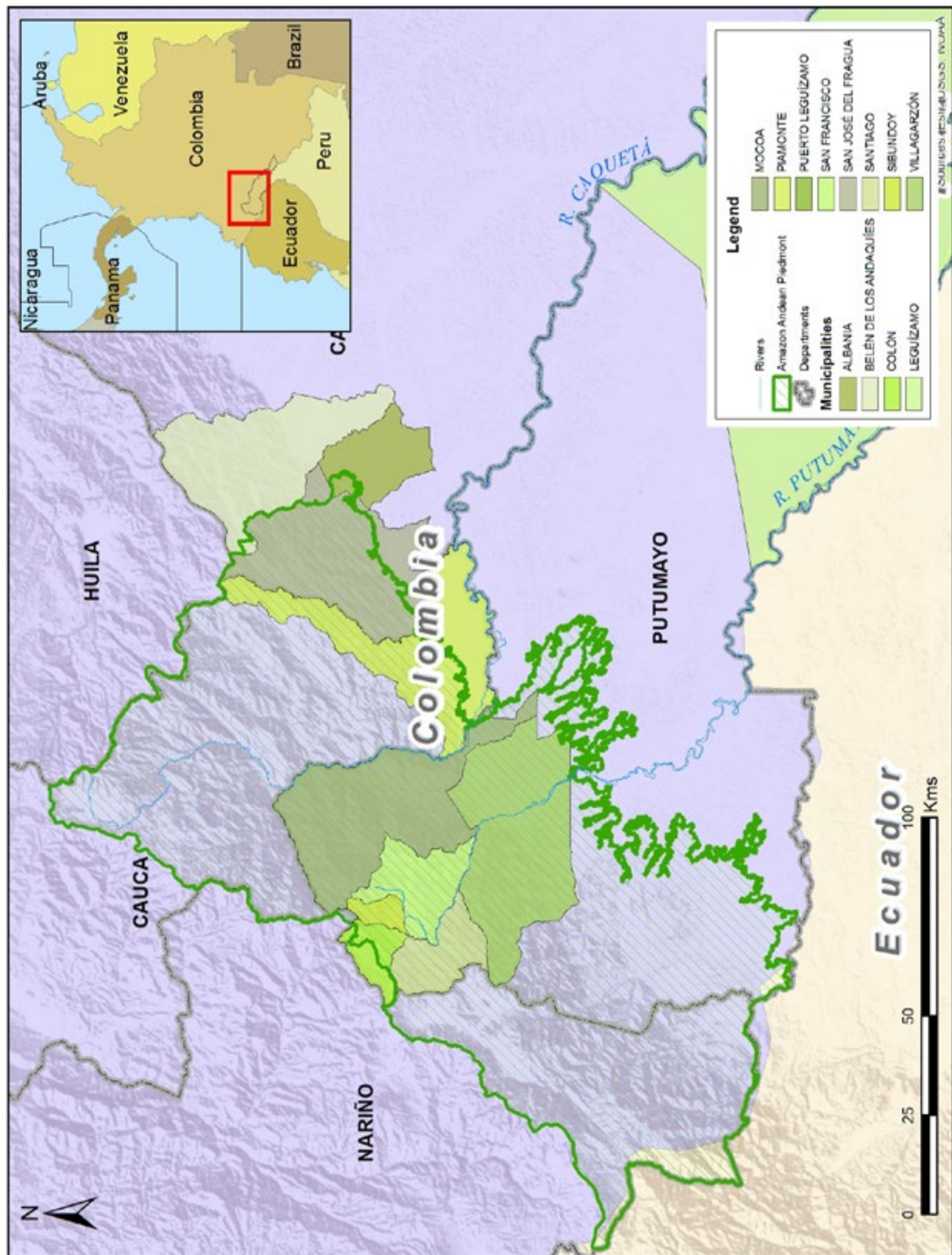
FACTSHEET

2016



SIGNIFICANT STORIES: FORGING A PATH TO SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN THE COLOMBIAN PIEDMONT

WWF FOREST AND CLIMATE PROGRAMME



SOURCE: WWF COLOMBIA / DANIEL ORTEGA

SNAPSHOT

What

- » A diverse group of stakeholders set out to address the risks and challenges of climate change in Colombia's Andean-Amazonian Piedmont Region by mobilizing local municipalities to include guidelines for climate change adaptation and mitigation in their zoning and development plans.
- » Despite their scant resources, the stakeholders surpassed their goals and successfully incorporated these guidelines into the regulatory frameworks of ten different communities in Putumayo and the neighbouring departments of Caquetá and Cauca.
- » Key lessons learned through this process illustrate the power of strengthening local capacities, cultivating one-on-one connections, and working in unconventional ways to navigate municipal decision making.
- » This process created new knowledge and partnerships, and it innovated an effective and replicable approach for incorporating climate change considerations into the laws that govern territorial planning.

Who

WWF contact

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Direct stakeholders

Involved in project design, make decisions, and receive benefits

- » Local council members and mayors
- » Municipal planning officials and departments
- » The Corporation for the Sustainable Development of Southern Amazonia (Corpoamazonia), the regional environmental authority

Strategic stakeholders

Provide material, human, and other resources

- » Municipal governments of Colón, Sibundoy, Santiago, San Francisco, Mocoa, Villa Garzón and Puerto Leguízamo (Putumayo); Piamonte (Cauca); Albania and Belén de los Andaquíes (Caquetá)
- » The Governments of Putumayo and Caquetá
- » World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Indirect stakeholders

Influence practice without being directly involved

- » Natural National Parks

Where

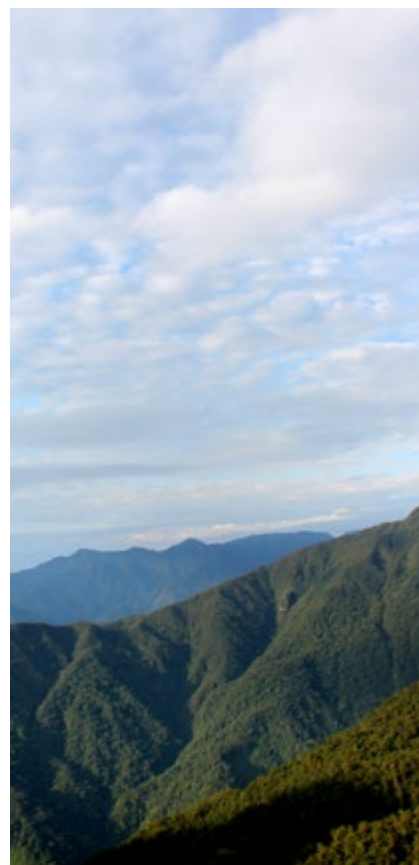
Colombia's Andean-Amazonian foothills, or Piedmont region

When

2014-ongoing

COVER PHOTO: © Kevin Schafer / WWF

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS



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SUMMARY

This Forest and Climate Significant Story describes the process through which local communities in Colombia's Andean-Amazonian Piedmont region successfully incorporated guidelines for climate change adaptation and mitigation into their legal frameworks for territorial development planning. By establishing a legal basis for factoring climate into future plans,

this important step represents an enforceable, long-term commitment to sustainable development. It also offers an opportunity to scale up local efforts through a replicable, effective approach—one that is already spreading to communities beyond the borders of the ten initial municipalities.

This process brought together municipal government leaders, the regional environmental authority, Natural

National Parks, and WWF to work toward a shared goal, strengthening their capacities and engaging them in planning the region's future in new ways. As this approach is replicated in more communities—and as the resulting plans and laws are implemented—it may help give rise to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development in Colombia's Andean-Amazonian Piedmont.

“FOSTERING AWARENESS AMONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ABOUT THE ABILITY WE ALL HAVE TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE IS A CONSIDERABLE ACHIEVEMENT.”

Luz Ángela Flórez, Piedmont Policy Officer, WWF.

INTRODUCTION TO KEY CONCEPTS

When this work began, its goal was to bring climate change mitigation and adaptation to the forefront of municipal planning. Mitigation refers to activities that reduce climate change by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions or by protecting and enhancing the “sinks”—such as forests—that capture and store these gases. Adaptation involves adjusting to the changing climate by preparing for its potential consequences, such as sea level rise, drought, or increased erosion and flooding.

The stakeholders in this process sought to incorporate strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation into the territorial planning tools used by municipalities in the Amazon Piedmont:

- **Land Use Plan (POT)**, if the municipality has more than 100,000 inhabitants;
- **Land Use Basic Plan (PBOT)**, if the municipality has between 30,000 and 100,000 inhabitants;
- **Or Land Use Scheme (EOT)**, if the municipality has fewer than 30,000 inhabitants.

The POT, PBOT or EOT outlines the overall vision for the future of the municipality, including how a community will grow, how it will use and zone its land, and how it will manage risks and disasters, among other elements. These plans or schemes are approved for a period of 12 years, and then must be reviewed and revised. They may also be shaped by more powerful **municipal laws**. Municipal laws are presented to local governments as **draft agreements**, which must then be debated and approved by the city council members and mayor in order to become law. Municipal laws are often difficult to change, which provides permanence and stability to the agreements, supporting long-term green development in the region.

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“FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION ARE KEY ELEMENTS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THIS REGION; IT IS NOT ONLY A MATTER OF RISK MANAGEMENT, IT IS A MATTER OF WELLBEING FOR THE POPULATION AND HEALTH OF THE ECOSYSTEMS.”

Orlando Díaz Aguirre. Corpoamazonía.

CONTEXT

Across more than a million square kilometres, Colombia encompasses great biological and cultural diversity. Its geography is home to Andean highlands, Amazonian rainforests, and more than 3,000 kilometres of coastline along both the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, along with vibrant Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and other ethnic communities and cultures found nowhere else in the world.

The landscape where the Andean foothills meet the Amazon Basin—known as the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont—boasts some of the greatest biodiversity within Colombia. Eighty-five percent of this region's nearly 1.5 million hectares are forested, providing habitat to 977 bird species, 101 reptile species, 105 amphibian species, and 254 mammal species, including the emblematic and vulnerable spectacled bear and mountain tapir. The Andean-Amazonian Piedmont is also home to the headwaters of two major tributaries of the Amazon River, and to twelve ethnically distinct indigenous groups that live and depend on the land and its resources.

The vital forests of the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont face significant threats. It is projected that this region could lose 91,544 hectares—21.6 percent of its conserved forest—by 2040. Mining, illicit crop cultivation, illegal logging, expansion of artificial prairies linked to extensive livestock systems, the expansion of agro-industrial cultivation (for palm oil, among other products), and the construction of roads and ports all drive deforestation and forest degradation in the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont. Climate change presents an additional threat to forest health, by raising temperatures and altering rainfall patterns in the region.

Political turmoil, weak environmental governance, mismanagement of resources and possibilities for cooperation, and internal conflict ongoing since the 1950s make it difficult to combat forest loss, by limiting opportunities and incentives for conservation. Lack of knowledge and

support at the local level compounds this larger problem. Municipalities in this region have only recently adopted land use and development plans, and often lack the financial and technical resources to complete them. Climate change considerations are often omitted, because they are poorly understood by decision makers and met with confusion and suspicion.

It was within this context that stakeholders, including local leaders, the regional environmental authority Corpoamazonía, and WWF, set out to build a new understanding of climate change and a way for communities to address its potential impacts in their planning. WWF has been working in Putumayo, one of the departments within Colombia's Andean-Amazonian Piedmont, since 2007, and in the departments of Caquetá and Cauca since 2013—all the while building partnerships and trust among key local actors. It drew on this deep connection with the region as it set about facilitating the inclusion of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in local land use plans.

APPROACH

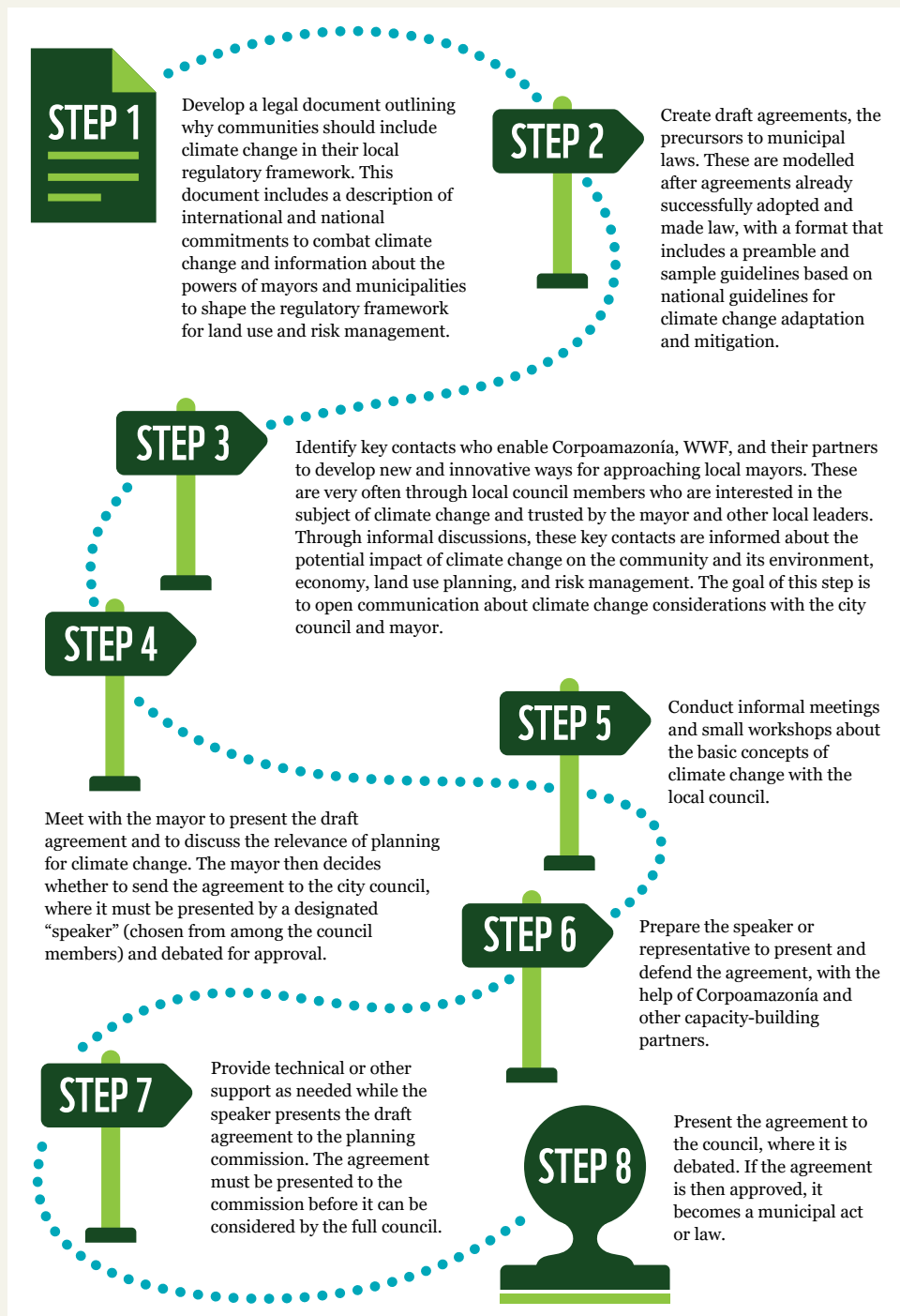
WWF initiated this process with the intention of acting as a facilitator only. It sought to ease the process of bringing guidelines and provisions for climate change adaptation and mitigation into local territorial planning. This would entail analysing the state of existing municipal land use plans (POTs, PBOTs or EOTs), assessing the needs of local communities in the face of climate change, and offering technical support to address these needs in the plans.

But as the analysis began and as WWF learned more about municipal policy- and decision-making, the need for a new and different approach emerged. It became clear that **seeking to include climate change considerations in municipal laws would affect more lasting change** than including them in POTs, PBOTs or EOTs, as these are reviewed and revised every 12 years.

"ON A TEAM LEVEL AND A PERSONAL LEVEL, I FEEL VERY PROUD THAT WE ARE LEAVING A LEGACY—IN TIME AND SPACE—FOR OUR DEPARTMENT."

*Jesús Iles, Piedmont
Policy Consultant, WWF.*

Corpoamazonia and WWF ultimately assumed a leadership role in this endeavour, and with their partners developed an eight-step process to develop and incorporate climate change considerations into municipal laws.



“IN MOCOJA, THE ADOPTION OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE GUIDELINES WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL. THIS SUCCESS WAS DUE TO THE COMMITMENT OF ALL THE INVOLVED ACTORS, FROM THE DESIGNATED SPEAKER, TO THE MAYOR, THE COUNCIL, WWF, AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITY.”

Lorena Muriel, Planning Office Secretary, Mocoja Municipality.

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This eight-step process is replicable in any community with comparable municipal policy-making procedures and government structure, and can be adapted to the specific situation of each community.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

2007: WWF begins its work in Putumayo, collaborating closely with local communities to address pressures and threats to conservation in Colombia's Andean-Amazonian Piedmont.

2010: WWF and Corpoamazonía form a partnership to validate a compensation scheme for environmental goods and services provided by local livestock producers. Through this effort and over the subsequent four years, they come to work closely with local ranchers on incorporating sustainable practices and see first-hand the importance of planning for the impacts of climate change.

2012: Corpoamazonía initiates its own project to strengthen and support local municipalities and community organizations in identifying and managing climate change-related risks.

2013: WWF begins its work in the Piedmont zones of the Departments of Cauca and Caquetá.

2014: WWF, Corpoamazonía, and other stakeholders discuss the need for “climate-smart” territorial planning, but are not sure where to begin. A series of serendipitous conversations raises the possibility of using the land use plans required of municipalities to address climate change adaptation and mitigation.

November 2014: The municipality of Colón adopts the climate change adaptation and mitigation guidelines as part of the adjustment of its territorial planning instrument.

December 2014 through early 2015: Corpoamazonía and WWF set out to bring climate change considerations into POTs and EOTs, but soon shift their focus to municipal laws. Key contacts are identified and the process of connecting and capacity building begins.

May 2015: The city council of Mocoa (Putumayo) unanimously approves the proposed agreement, incorporating guidelines for climate change adaptation and mitigation into municipal law. The city councils of Villa Garzón (Putumayo) and Piamonte (Cauca) followed Mocoa's example.

June 2015: An agreement to include climate change guidelines is approved and signed into law in Sibundoy, Santiago and San Francisco (Putumayo).

August 2015: The municipalities of Leguízamo (Putumayo), Albania and Belén de los Andaquíes (Caquetá) adopt the climate change guidelines as law.

October 2015: Popular election of new mayors, municipal councils, and departmental governments.

December 2015: Policy-changing work continues, with 7 municipalities in Putumayo and 3 in the neighbouring departments of Caquetá and Cauca approving agreements to incorporate climate change guidelines into municipal law.

January 2016: New municipal and departmental governments come into office. Corpoamazonía and WWF begin working with the new governments to foster understanding of these new municipal laws and their importance.

“WWF GAVE US A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION ABOUT THE CLIMATE CHANGE GUIDELINES, THE IMPLICATIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOCOA. I WAS ABLE TO PRESENT TO THE MAYOR, AND FINALLY HE SAID: YES, THIS IS VERY INTERESTING FOR OUR MUNICIPALITY, LET'S DO IT.”

Lorena Muriel, Planning Office Secretary, Mocoa Municipality.

“THESE MUNICIPAL LAWS HAVE BEEN A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT. BUT WE BELIEVE THIS IS THE FIRST STEP; WE HAVE LEARNED MANY THINGS, BUT WE HAVE ALSO GENERATED MANY EXPECTATIONS.”

Ilvia Niño, Piedmont Program Officer, WWF-Colombia

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EXPECTED RESULTS

- Incorporate climate change considerations into territorial planning in Putumayo, through municipal land use plans (POTs, PBOTs or EOTs).
- Implement those plans on the ground, so communities are prepared and empowered to confront climate change.
- Create or strengthen capacities among mayors, council members, and other local leaders so they can become key stakeholders and proponents of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Despite limited resources and support, the partners in this process surpassed their goals. They successfully incorporated climate change considerations into territorial planning – not through POTs, PBOTs or EOTs with limited terms, but through permanent municipal laws that must be reflected in all land use plans. **These laws represent a long-term commitment to climate change adaptation and mitigation**, and have been adopted

by ten different communities in Putumayo and the neighbouring departments of Caquetá and Cauca.

- An agreement is already in place with the regional environmental authority, Corpoamazonía, to replicate the process throughout Putumayo. This process has forged a new path to municipal policy change, one developed by the region's key stakeholders in a participatory way and rooted in the region's realities. It is an effective, replicable approach that can be adapted to the needs of many communities facing similar risks and challenges.
- Community leaders have become more knowledgeable about climate change and more invested in addressing it at the local level as a result of their involvement in this process and their pride in its results.
- Municipalities have become more empowered and aware of the role they can play in confronting climate change. Before this work, environmental challenges were seen as the domain of Corpoamazonía. The capacity-building and policy-changing process described here reaffirmed that local governments can and must take action to address environmental challenges for themselves.

CHALLENGES

- Myths and misinformation about climate change abound in the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont, even among council members and other local government officials, and this makes it difficult to help local governments understand the importance of planning for potential climate change impacts. Building capacities and providing support—particularly through the participation of Corpoamazonía—is essential for the success and survival of climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.
- The capacity building required by this process is expensive in terms of space, resources, and materials, and in terms of the time the team must dedicate to the effort for it to succeed. That need for support and resources will continue to grow as the process shifts its focus from policy making to implementation on the ground.
- Political change through the election of new mayors, municipal council members, governors and other local leaders creates uncertainty. These new leaders may seek to develop new plans for development and growth without awareness of the recently adopted municipal laws and their

guidelines for climate change adaptation and mitigation. If the new leaders are not engaged in the process too and if their capacities are not developed, the progress made so far could be lost.

OPPORTUNITIES

- If the relationship that has developed between WWF, Corpoamazonía, local governments and other stakeholders remains strong, then the policy making engine they have formed together can continue to effect change. That presents the possibility of making a visible, tangible difference on the ground—in the municipality's development over time, for example—as the laws are implemented.
- The agreement forged with Corpoamazonía to replicate this process in other municipalities can extend climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts to the whole Andean-Amazonian Piedmont region.
- The lessons learned and the local process developed here could be scaled up to help inform regional and national programs. Some of the stakeholders have already established contacts with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development to see how they might seize this opportunity.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **In order for an initiative to succeed, it must belong to its stakeholders.** One key element in the success of this process was its deep roots in the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont region. From the WWF and Corpoamazonía team members who helped spearhead the process to the local leaders who embraced it and adopted new laws as a result, all the stakeholders involved in this process

had strong ties to the region and understood its realities. That helped guide their approach, which included using unconventional channels to gain access to mayors and other leaders. And this approach in turn created new connections and capacities that empowered local leaders to get behind the laws they were proposing, which strengthened their personal commitment to the initiative as well.

- **Successful initiatives are not checklists.** In a complex process, everyone—from individual team members to the community at large—must be flexible and patient. Ticking off achievements on a to-do list won't lead to lasting change, but an openness to unexpected opportunities and a willingness to look beyond the immediate to the bigger picture will go a long way.
- **Focusing on relevance and lived experience can make complex concepts more compelling and accessible.** Climate change mitigation and adaptation are not always easy or politically attractive concepts to understand. But the right approach can make all the difference. For example, local community leaders may find it difficult to understand complex climate science, but they do know the intense droughts, altered crop conditions, and increasing floods their communities have experienced first-hand. They also know their powers and responsibilities as leaders. These realms of experience offer two different approaches to engage local government officials. By appealing to what they know and what they are responsible for, it is possible to make them care about climate change risk management, mitigation, and adaptation.
- **Details matter.** When using unofficial channels for access to

municipal leaders and working to build capacities and trust, every detail becomes important. Remembering names (for example, the name of a community's municipal council president), observing and identifying council members who clearly have an interest in the subject and will serve as strong allies, and making time to meet with them one on one were all small actions that significantly contributed to the success of the process.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INNOVATIONS

- This process has created an innovative and unconventional eight-step approach for building capacities and connections with local leaders and working with them to pass new laws. This approach can be replicated in other communities that have similar local government policies and structures and that face similar challenges, anywhere in the world.
- Undertaking this process forced the WWF team to strengthen its relationship with governors, mayors and other local leaders, and to learn more about local governments and policy-making than it ever did before. By assembling a committed and capable group of staff members and fellow stakeholders, the team was able to effect change even as it ventured into new territory.
- The success of this local/regional endeavour has positioned WWF as a key actor in the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont, with the potential to bring its innovations to national policies and processes.

NEXT STEPS

- With an agreement to replicate this process throughout and beyond Putumayo now in place, Corpoamazonía, WWF and their partners in the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont aim to keep the process going. They are working to ensure that more municipalities incorporate guidelines for climate change mitigation and adaptation into municipal law, and that any development and zoning plans proposed in the coming years comply with the law and address the potential impacts of climate change.
- This process must move from policy advocacy to implementation on the ground in order to effect real change. To that end, the stakeholders are seeking additional resources and funding to create pilot activities that put the newly adopted guidelines for climate change mitigation and adaptation into action in the region.
- The approach and lessons learned that emerged from this process must be consolidated and shared so that other communities—and even regional and national processes within Colombia—can benefit.

CONCLUSION

In Colombia's Putumayo Department, stakeholders with diverse and different backgrounds have come together to carve out a new path. The approach they have pioneered has built new capacities and partnerships in a still-growing number of communities, and it has resulted in the passage of municipal laws that for the first time incorporate guidelines for climate change mitigation and adaptation. But the stakeholders' work has only just begun. Addressing climate change in the Andean-Amazonian Piedmont is a process, not a project, and it must now be implemented on the ground and put into real action to ensure that the region can face the risks and challenges of climate change in an effective, inclusive and sustainable way.



100%
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WWF's Forest and Climate team works to ensure that the conservation of tropical forests as carbon stores is secured by green economic development that benefits people, the climate and biodiversity in transformational ways.

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**Why we are here**

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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