

CONDESAN's commitment up to 2010 Mobilizing the Wealth of the Andes to Overcome Poverty and Social Exclusion

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Mobilizing the Wealth of the Andes to Overcome Poverty and Social Exclusion



Introduction

Based on an intensive participatory process, the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN) has developed a road map for the next 5 years. The purpose of this road map is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the work of CONDESAN's partners, through alliances and interchanges. This will harness the social management of Andean natural resources and their rational and sustainable use, and promote productive transformation and institutional changes that help to overcome conditions of poverty, exclusion and inequality.

To achieve this objective, CONDESAN will stimulate and support learning and relationships among its partners, who will work throughout the Andes to generate, synthesize and integrate knowledge, strengthen multi-player networks and platforms, foster communication and information, strengthen the capabilities of local players, promote dialogue with citizens, and affect policies on the following two issues:

1. Integrated management of water resources with respect to watersheds, ecosystems, and political units; and
2. Innovations in agrarian systems that take advantage of the wealth contained in the diversity of the Andes.

The Andes

The Andes are home to extraordinary ecological and cultural diversity. About 40 million people, many of them descended from the original cultures that developed in this environment, live in this region and its 7 countries.

Geographically, the Andes include a great variety of land-

scapes, dominated by mountains of volcanic and tectonic origin—cut by interandean valleys, rivers, streams, and lakes. As with all mountain chains, the variety of the landscape results in an incredible richness of species and genetic diversity. Unique to the Andes is their north–south orientation that further enriches environmental diversity with changes in latitude.

The rural economy is based on the ingenuity and creativity of men and women in thousands of small towns and farming communities engaged in very diverse forms of agriculture, small-scale business and services, and manufacturing. Two hallmarks of many Andean villages are their creative use of a very diverse environment, and complex local management of water. In recent years, however, there have been challenges to these traditional systems in the form of expanding business relationships between rural communities and cities, resulting in different markets, new knowledge, and new opportunities, as well as rapidly increasing demands for water from industry and urban centers within the communities themselves.

Integrated management of water resources

CONDESAN's vision of integrated management of water resources includes the following issues:

- Interdependence of management at different levels (ecosystems, watersheds, political units);
- Social organization and collective action to manage water resources;
- Preservation and management of Andean biodiversity related to water regulation;
- Gender relationships in water resource management;
- Mechanisms for resolving conflicts regarding access to and use of water resources;
- Standards and regulations that structure the control of water resources;
- Access and rights of use of various social sectors;
- Protection and respect of the standards, ways, and customs of indigenous populations and small farming communities and their traditional rights.

Expected results

Over the next 5 years CONDESAN will support learning and practice teams in order to obtain the following results in relation to the above-mentioned themes:

- Diagnosis of the current water resource situation in pilot watersheds (quantity, allocation);
- Rigorous analysis of the policies, institutions, local organizational arrangements, and investments that are affecting resource allocation, with the goal of using this analysis to allow real benefits to accrue for the Andean poor;
- Analysis of water resource management trends in the Andes and their determining factors and implications;
- Proposals for institutional innovations, forms of organization, and mechanisms for dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation that are needed to improve water resource control;
- A regional, multi-player platform for dialogue, exchange, and learning about integrated water management and how to use it to create well-being and inclusion;
- Building up the capacities of professionals dedicated to the management of water; and
- Applying the set of expected results to policy decision-making at local, national and regional levels.

Innovation in agrarian systems that take advantage of the wealth contained in Andean diversity

The current model for development focuses on energizing small-holder agriculture that produces non-differentiated goods. In this context, the unique diversity of the Andes is seen as an obstacle and not as a source of wealth for the region's development. Our vision is rather to use this natural diversity to create wealth. Exotic high-value products, environmental and agro-tourism services, value chain integration, new types of institutional partnerships and arrangements, clean products, and new technologies are some examples of the types of innovations we will work with. However, for these activities to be expanded in scope, various issues and ideas must be addressed, such as:

- The relationship between the environment and agricultural production;
- Attaining the product quality needed to participate in dynamic markets;
- New technical and financial services needed by rural players;
- Options for diversifying production and including more (agro)biodiversity in agrarian systems;
- Ways to organize producers and value chains;
- Changes in gender relationships related to changes in agrarian systems;
- Institutions (contracts, quality standards, certifications);
- Domestic and international policies regarding trade, intellectual property rights, regulation and control of genetic resources, agricultural subsidies, and exports to developed countries.

Expected results

Over the next 5 years CONDESAN proposes to support learning and practice teams in order to obtain the following results:

- Comparative analysis of processes of innovation in Andean agrarian systems;
- Proposals for institutional innovations, forms of organization, and mechanisms for cooperation needed to develop and expand innovation processes in agrarian systems;
- Mechanisms for dialogue among professional training institutions in the Andes;
- An exchange system for young rural entrepreneurs, with explicit mechanisms to guarantee participation by women;
- Incorporation of the results of this work in policy instances.

How does CONDESAN work?

The Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion is a diverse and dynamic group of partners from the public and private sectors who have been working together since 1993. CONDESAN's approach is an *ecoregional approach*. This recognizes the absolute interdependence among ecological, social, economic, institutional, and political factors. CONDESAN's role is to conduct *synthesis, integration, and value-adding activities on an ecoregional scale*, based on the results, knowledge, networks, and capabilities built and accumulated by its partners.

The instruments that CONDESAN is developing to implement these activities include:

- **Ecoregional synthesis projects** that will integrate existing knowledge to strengthen local partners' capabilities, and promote

citizen dialogue and political involvement;

- **Sponsoring exchanges, workshops, and learning teams**, aiding collaboration between CONDESAN partners;
- Electronic and conventional **publications** targeting diverse populations to disseminate results;
- **InfoAndina** (Andean information) takes advantage of information and communication technologies in order to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among partners;
- **Forum for Sustainable Development in the Andean Ecoregion** will provide a space for periodic encounters and exchanges among multiple players in the area of Andean development. This forum permits information generation and exchange as well as dialogue and political involvement.

Progress toward meeting the goals of this workplan and insuring that the agenda's relevance to Andean societies will be permanently monitored and evaluated externally at the beginning of the third year. Workplan adjustments are expected at that time.

The present article is a summary of the CONDESAN road map approved by the CONDESAN Board of Directors in February 2006.

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