



COMMUNITY-BASED MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA

Factsheet n° 1. Overview

THE CHALLENGE

Human development is leading to unprecedented environmental challenges, including the management of aquatic systems, biodiversity systems, forest systems and marine and coastal systems, in a context of climate change. How to respond to these challenges is a key research question. Although the problems are global, their effects are felt locally, especially by the communities that traditionally base their livelihoods on natural resources. Initiatives to increase public awareness and to put in practice measures to improve good conservation and management practices are thus best done at a local level. Research is needed to better understand local capabilities to encourage and support potential locally-owned solutions and to increase the awareness of policy makers to local-global interactions. Latin America is home to an outstanding stock of natural resources, most of them traditionally managed by local communities. But at the same time these resources are under increasing pressures. COMET-LA analyzes the community-based management of three social-ecological systems covering a broad range of environmental challenges in 3 Latin American countries (Colombia, Mexico and Argentina). Each case focuses more specifically on one environmental challenge: biodiversity and water, forest and land use and coastal and marine areas management. A partnership has been created to enable the interaction of CSOs (Civil Society Organizations), policy makers and research organizations, sharing local and scientific knowledge and contributing to a better knowledge of problems and potential solutions for current and future sustainable management of natural resources.

OBJECTIVES

COMET-LA main objective is to identify sustainable community-based governance models for the management of natural resources that could be used in different social-ecological systems in a context of climate change and increasing competition for the use of these resources.

More specifically COMET-LA aims to: a) create a partnership between CSOs, research institutes and policymakers, both at local and global levels to share scientific and local knowledge in the management of natural resources; b) apply scientific knowledge to identify opportunities for a more sustainable management of environmental problems; c) identify and analyze locally owned knowledge and develop solutions to be put in place to prevent and resolve tensions in the use of natural resources in the case studies, with the informed consent and participation of local communities; d) improve the understanding and knowledge of local governance models for the management of natural resources, through the analysis of the lessons learned in the case studies; e) develop

AT A GLANCE

Instrument: *Research for the benefit of CSOs, FP7*

Duration: *36 months*

Start Date: *15/01/2012*

Consortium: *11 partners from 7 countries*

Project Coordinator: *University of Córdoba (Spain)*

Project Web Site: *www.comet-la.eu*

Total cost: *2,473,699 Euros*

EC Contribution: *1,870,973 Euros*

Key Words: *governance, community-based management of natural resources, environmental challenges, climate change, socio-ecological systems, learning arena, partnership, Latin America*

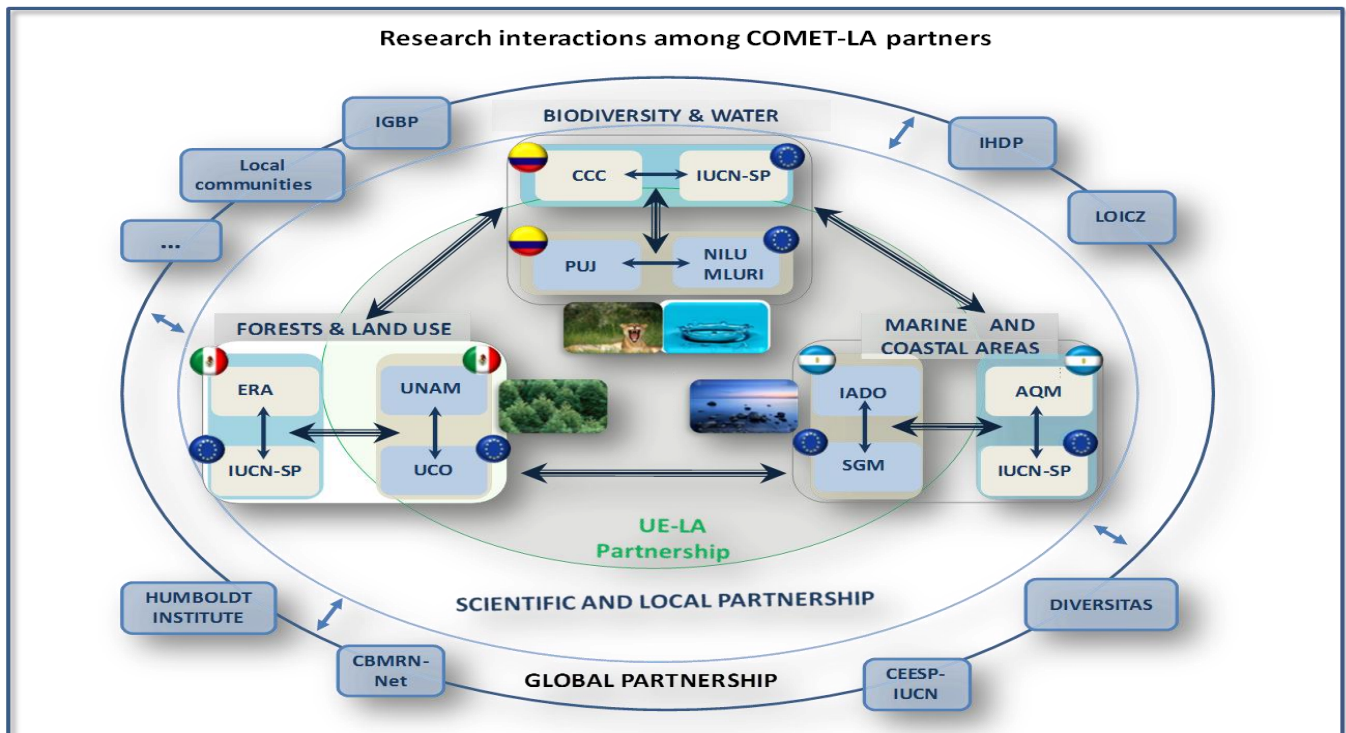
conflict transformation approaches to facilitate solving current and future problems connected to natural resources management. f) explore how local community based management systems might respond to future shocks, with the use of scenario building; g) identify the role played by women and men and their relations in the management of natural resources as well as the underlying factors involved; h) identify the obstacles to matching scientific and local knowledge and how to overcome these in order to provide scientific frameworks useful for local communities and policymakers to monitor the evolution of the ecosystems; i) scale up the results in order to be used in other social-ecological systems and to identify the obstacles to scaling-up good/best local practices to face environmental challenges; j) provide policymakers with useful tools that could guide adaptive policy making to tackle a riskier and more complex environment.

METHODOLOGY

COMET-LA proposes to create a participatory 'learning arena' that involves CSOs, research organizations, policymakers and other stakeholders to analyze the situation of community-based management of natural resources and to identify practices and lessons of interest. The main innovation in the *learning arena* is how knowledge is shared, applied and communicated to the local stakeholders. The objective is not to generate new knowledge, but to use existing knowledge (scientific information, practical experiences, organizational patterns...) to adapt the natural resources management

challenges in the context of climate change. COMET-LA will analyze three social-ecological systems in three Latin American countries (Colombia, Mexico and Argentina). Each case study (CS) will focus more specifically on one environmental challenge: biodiversity and water, forest and land use and coastal and marine areas management. The project will be developed in 3 phases: i) characterization of SES; ii) identification of current and future key variables using prospective analysis techniques; and iii) building of scenarios for future changes and challenges. To develop COMET-LA, in every country a research organization and a local CSO will work together with the European partners. A broader range of stakeholders will also be involved in the *learning arena* and

mutual learning is encouraged in order to increase the adaptation and mitigation capacities of the communities. In each CS, a local CSO works with scientists and local people, specifically encouraging the participation of women. All of them are fully involved in the project aiming to improve the knowledge about the situation and to disseminate ideas, understanding, good practices, etc. Knowledge sharing and communication tools are essential for the adequate functioning of the learning arena. Different participatory techniques and tools are used to perceive and learn about the different issues and problems affecting the dynamics of natural resources management at local level.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The variety of ecosystems analyzed and the diversity of institutions, communities, stakeholders and governance models involved will offer the opportunity to present a wider array of outcomes, to undertake comparisons and to share knowledge among a higher number of actors. The research developed in the different CS and the results obtained will be integrated to deliver management and governance models going beyond specific contexts. Provided that the consequences of the environmental challenges faced in all the CS lead to similar cross-cutting issues valuable information about how to handle them will also be delivered. The relevant features of the social-ecological systems, their present and future evolution, the problems they face and can face and the identified local sustainable governance and resolution of local conflicts models will be communicated, discussed and accepted in the *learning arena* before to be disseminated in the different deliverables, to ensure that the lead and end-users have a real access to the outcomes of the project and can develop matching policy instruments to support sustainable management, livelihood opportunities and ecosystem service provision.

PROJECT PARTNERS	COUNTRY
Universidad de Córdoba (UCO)	Spain
Norsk Intitutt for Luftforskning (NILU)	Norway
The James Hutton Institute LBG (JHI)	UK
Sagremarisco-Viveiros de Marisco Lda (SGM)	Portugal
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (PUJ)	Colombia
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)	Mexico
Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (IADO)	Argentina
Fundación Aquamarina-CECIM (AQM)	Argentina
Consejo Comunitario de la Comunidad Negra de la Cuenca Baja del río Calima (CCC)	Colombia
Estudios Rurales y Asesoría Campesina Asociación Civil Mexico (ERA)	Mexico
Comité Español de la UICN – Unión Internacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (CEUICN)	Spain