



#ESPConf7 / Press release: 12th September 2014

## Ask them!

### Civil society is the key to solving global environmental challenges

**San José, Costa Rica.** Five European Union FP7 financed research projects present strong evidence that local communities and civil society organisations are playing a significant role in helping support the delivery of international agreements such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. This presentation took place during the last day of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Ecosystem Services Partnership Conference, held in Costa Rica and organized by ESP and Fundación Neotrópica.

Using innovative methods such as participatory action research, visual communication and community decision support modelling these ground-breaking projects have identified, adapted and shared local community best practices across the whole of Latin America empowering communities to have a voice, strengthen local governance and maintain human well-being.

These communities are the most impacted and vulnerable to climate change, inappropriate development decisions and the resulting environmental and social issues, but these communities are the very ones that are most effective at protecting the environment, using resources efficiently and delivering on low-carbon economy objectives.

The IPCC Climate Change 2014 report acknowledges this stating *"Indigenous, local, and traditional knowledge systems and practices, including indigenous people's holistic view of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change, but these have not been used consistently in existing adaptation efforts. Integrating such forms of knowledge with existing practices increases the effectiveness of adaptation."*

However, policy consistency is required as whilst there are calls for support of communities and local action, other initiatives are undermining communities by supporting destructive development, removing land rights, restricting access to resources and furthering the loss of local natural capital.

Lakeram Haynes, an Indigenous community researcher from Guyana, expressed his wish for policy makers to consider *"We should let local and international proved solutions blend to tackle emerging global challenges"*.

Results from CiVi.net, COMET-LA, EcoAdapt, COMBIOSERVE and COBRA have demonstrated that solutions delivered at a local level result in sustainable actions that protect the environment and the





wider ecosystem services and benefits they provide. By respecting the diversity of languages, lifestyle, world view and environmental context, policy actions can be adapted locally for effective delivery that not only benefits local communities but protects the environmental services we all rely on.



*Photo: Local community members using traditional and modern techniques to measure and weigh a caiman for conservation management. Photo credit: Géraud de Ville*

#### References:

- Climate Change 2014. Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Summary for policy makers. Working group II contribution to the fifth assessment report of the IPCC.
- Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity - <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals - <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>
- Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change - The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. [http://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)
- European Union FP7 - A fund to support research and innovation - <http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/>





### **About the FP7 Projects:**

**CiVi.net** <http://www.civinet.eu/espanol>

The CiVi.net project aims to analyze, transfer and disseminate successful and sustainable community based solutions with regard to ecosystem service management in Latin America. Countries involved Costa Rica, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria.

**Cobra** <http://projectcobra.org/>

Behind Project COBRA lies a very simple idea. This idea suggests that human development policies and projects need to serve primarily the people they intend to strengthen. Project COBRA aims to showcase indigenous solutions for the management of natural resources that could in turn inspire development policies and projects. Countries involved Guyana, Brazil, Surinam, United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands.

**EcoAdapt** <https://sites.google.com/site/ecoadaptproject/>

EcoAdapt is an action-research initiative working with three Latin American provinces to influence water management processes that contribute to local development and reduce vulnerability of human populations to climate change through capacity building, knowledge sharing, conflict prevention and mitigation, and promoting joint work with local and national stakeholders. Countries involved Costa Rica, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Austria, United Kingdom, France, Spain.

**COMBIOSERVE** <http://www.combioserve.org/es>

COMBIOSERVE is a consortium of ten institutions working together to assess the effectiveness of community-based management strategies for biocultural diversity. Using a multi-disciplinary and participatory research strategy, the consortium seeks to identify the conditions and principles for successful community-based conservation initiatives in selected locations in Brazil, Bolivia and Mexico. Countries involved Austria, United Kingdom, Brazil, Bolivia, Spain, Netherlands, Bolivia, México.

**COMET-LA** <http://www.comet-la.eu/index.php/es/>

The aim of the project is to identify sustainable community-based governance for the management of natural resources that could be used in different social-ecological systems in a context of climate change and increasing competition in the use of these ones. Countries involved México, Colombia, Argentina, Spain, Norway, United Kingdom, Portugal.

### **Additional Information:**

Tony Villalobos [tvillalobos@neotropica.org](mailto:tvillalobos@neotropica.org) 6108-8514

Karla Córdoba [kcordoba@neotropica.org](mailto:kcordoba@neotropica.org) 8892-5566

#ESPConf7 Official website: [www.espconference.org](http://www.espconference.org)

#ESPConf7 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EcosystemServicesPartnership>

