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Case Study in Brief

“Comités de Investigación” in Ecuador: Using data to make policy change

In the Pichincha province of Ecuador, community-level “comités de investigación” (investigative committees) monitor dry season water sources and collect data on water quantity and quality that was previously un-measured. This data has informed municipal government and public utilities and triggered investment in the conservation of key recharge zones.

Introduction: Ecuador and the Páramos

In Ecuador, 70% of the nation’s water supply comes from mountain grasslands, called páramos, which have sponge-like soils that capture and retain water, feeding lakes, rivers, and groundwater that sustain downstream communities. In the Pichincha province, the water stored in the paramo is the main water source for the communities in lower altitudes, and feeds communities during the dry season when other seasonal sources dry up.

However, over-cultivation and unsustainable agriculture practices, in tandem with climate change and longer dry seasons, have affected the paramo’s ecological health and its water holding capacity. This has increased water insecurity and vulnerability in nearby communities.

Project Name: ACCRE – Climate Change Adaptation for Andean populations through the management, conservation, and restoration of páramos

Dates: 2016-2019

Project Areas: Pedro Moncayo district in the Pichincha region

Donor: Fondation Ensemble (France)

Budget: 379,500 euros

Partners: Pedro Moncayo local government

Beneficiaries: 1,000 households and 3,000 small farmers (1,500 women)

Intervention: Linking Finance and Monitoring

Through the **ACCRE program** (2016-2019), CARE sought to facilitate adaptation and resilience to climate change within high altitude communities of the Pichincha province, including management, conservation and restoration of the region's páramos. As part of the project, CARE Ecuador worked with juntas (WASH committees), local government, and public utilities over three years to negotiate the creation of a revolving water fund at the municipal level. The fund is comprised of tariffs paid to the public utility, which in turn commits to invest 5% of its yearly cost recovery into conservation activities. The goal of this fund was to encourage utilities to look beyond routine maintenance of infrastructure and focus on watershed protection and the conservation of key recharge zones that sustain water supply.



However, in order to secure commitment and investment, the utility needed rigorous data on quantity and quality of water sources. Only water sources that were routinely monitored would be eligible for conservation funds. Local governments, Juntas and communities thus needed to be able to collect and relay data on local water sources.

The Juntas, however, did not have sufficient resources (personnel and time) to monitor and collect data on water sources used exclusively for the dry season. Thus, CARE created community-level “Comités de Investigación” to be able to monitor these water sources. Each Comité is made up of

five community-members (with an average of 3 women per group), some of which are also part of the Juntas. The public utility provided initial capacity building and now supervises the Comités and consolidates monitoring data, while the Director of the Municipal Department of Environment provides technical oversight as the Technical Director of the Comité. This structure creates a strong link and accountability between communities, Juntas and local government.

Data from the “Comités de Investigación” has identified water sources in important recharge zones, thereby triggering the public utility's allocation of conservation funds and the inclusion of these water sources into the local government's Climate Adaptation Plans. This has helped to institutionalize financial commitment and ensure ongoing resources for conservation of key water sources.

To read more about this initiative (in Spanish), please visit www.care.org.ec/project/accre-2

For more information, please contact:

CARE Water+:

Kelly Alexander, Senior Technical Advisor Kelly.Alexander@care.org

CARE Ecuador:

Monica Tobar, Program Quality and Resource Mobilization, CARE Ecuador Monica.Tobar@care.org