Local livelihoods and vulnerabilities to climate change in the Andean Region

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Abstract

There is mounting evidence that climate change will increasingly impact large areas of Latin America, affecting people’s livelihoods and communities and important natural resources such as water. These impacts will make rural people disproportionately more vulnerable, given their dependency on natural resources and their exposure to other stressors, some of them traditional—such as restricted labour markets—and other relatively recent as those associated with globalization and neo-liberal policies. This paper focuses on the vulnerability of local rural communities in the Andean areas. Based on several empirical studies of Andean rural communities in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, the paper documents the impacts of current and past climate variability on local people and local livelihoods. In the theoretical and methodological context of a vulnerability approach, the paper discusses and compares the exposures and sensitivities of these communities to climate variability, as well as their existing adaptive capacity. Using a comparative perspective, the discussion is contextualized in the frame of the diverse regional processes of development and their role in increasing or reducing local resilience to climate. The paper pays special attention to the ways in which similar stressors and sensitivities combine differently according to the development paths of each country, and in the impact of diverse governance schemes in the building of adaptive capacities.

Keywords: Vulnerability, sensitivities, adaptive capacity, regional and national development

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