



Building bridges for wildfires prevention and response in Guarayos, Bolivia

Romero L¹, Ascarrunz N², Mendoza K³, Baldiviezo JP⁴.



The occurrence of forest fires is increasing due to rising temperatures, prolonged droughts and greater wind intensity, combined with deforestation and land use changes among other factors. Between 2001 and 2020, an average of 3.7 million hectares in Bolivia were affected by forest fires annually, increasing to 4.8 million hectares between 2019 and 2021 with 60% the Department of Santa Cruz alone. In Guarayos in 2020, 366,000 hectares were affected. Municipal governments have responsibilities conferred by national regulations on risk management, legislation on integrated management of forests and natural resources, and they have the power to search for alternative solutions. However, a series of limitations restricts their ability to fulfil their roles.

Aims

The project is bringing together authorities and local stakeholders to reduce forest fire risks by generating the conditions for prevention and timely response. IBIF designed a process of institutional strengthening in the municipalities of Ascensión de Guarayos and Urubichá, to improve capacities for risk management focused on the prevention and reduction of forest fire risks. This process included technical assistance in participatory formulation and implementation of management tools, adaptation and establishment of regulations, promotion and facilitation of risk analysis, spaces for dialogue and articulation of local actors, and generation and access to information for reflection and action.

Actions taken

- Local community capacities have been strengthening with social cohesion promoted, favouring the implementation of actions that contribute to reducing forest fire risk.
- Municipal early warning systems have been established that include community managers, forest fire departments, and civil society.
- The municipal governments of Ascensión de Guarayos and Urubichá have approved laws on risk management with a focus on prevention and climate change adaptation.
- Social, productive and institutional actors have established a joint agenda for wildfire risk management, facilitated by municipal meetings.
- Civil society perceptions regarding risk and natural resource management have been incorporated in guidelines and actions on wildfire management.
- The municipal governments of Urubichá and Ascensión de Guarayos have assumed leadership and coordination of wildfire contingency management.

Next steps

- Strengthen municipal early warning systems, and scale to the municipalities of San Miguel de Velasco and San Ignacio de Velasco.
- Support to regulations and implementation of the Municipal Fund for Risk Reduction and Disaster Attention, as a mechanism for financing.
- Support implementation of a communication plan for wildfire prevention.
- Provide technical assistance for the prevention and reduction of wildfire risks, to be included in territorial integrated development plans, and annual operational plans.
- Facilitate meetings of agricultural and livestock producers to analyse the problems they face in relation to climate change and wildfire risks, so that their agendas better reflect environmental issues.

Promoting landscapes towards an integrated fire management in Bolivia

Strategies



A Promotion and facilitation of spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue to define policies and strategies that address the reduction of the risk of forest fires at multiple decision levels.



B Knowledge management for decision making and adoption of adaptation measures and risk reduction due to forest fires in agricultural production systems in the landscapes of Guarayos and Chiquitanía.



C Strengthening subnational and indigenous governments in the management of reducing the risk of forest fires, aimed at prevention and early warning.



D Promote financial mechanisms that encourage the adoption of sustainable production practices.



Download article:

Peña Supayabe A, Romero L, Baldiviezo JP and Ascarrunz N. 2022. Fire management in indigenous territories in Bolivia. *Tropical Forest Issues* 61.



¹Romero Laurenz (Project Manager)

²Karen Mendoza (Project Manager)

³Nataly Ascarrunz (Executive Director)

⁴Juan Pablo Baldiviezo (Program manager)

ibif@ibifbolivia.org.bo