

Climate Change Impact Stories: Bolivia



Background

Bolivia is in Central America. It has a population of 10 million people. One third of the people live in the countryside. It has a variety of different *eco-systems* (where animals and plants live). In the west there are Andean mountains, and in the east Amazon rainforest. There is also desert and valleys. The capital city is called La Paz (population is 0.7 million people).

It is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. 65 per cent of Bolivia's population live in *poverty* (they do not have enough money for their daily needs). It has the largest population of *indigenous* people (people who were the first to live there) in Latin America. These people are greatly affected by poverty.

Many people depend on agriculture for their *livelihoods* (how they live) in each of the different areas. The different eco-systems are very vulnerable to climate change in different ways.

The Climate in Bolivia:

The climate in Bolivia follows this pattern:

- Summer/rainy season (November to March)
- Winter (April to October)

In the high Andes there is very little rainfall, and nights are very cold (especially in winter).

The rainforest is warmer with more rainfall than the mountains. The valleys can have very different weather to each other.

Map of Bolivia

(map from wikicommons)



What people are saying about climate change in Bolivia

People have noticed that there are higher temperatures. In the northern mountains and valleys they have gone up by between 0.8 and 1.5 degrees centigrade over the past 30 years. This means that *glaciers* (ice) in the mountains are melting.

People have observed that the rainy season now often arrives later and lasts a shorter period. This means that the *growing season* (when they can grow crops) for those farmers without *irrigation* (watering) systems is shorter. It has reduced from six months to four months in some places. Recently the rainfall has been concentrated in the months from December to February and it is more difficult to *predict* (know when it will happen).

However, different areas have seen different things. For example in some lower areas farmers have seen more rain not less. There are also more times when there is very bad weather, like very bad frosts, hailstorms or floods.