



The “Multinational Andean Project – Geosciences for Andean Communities” an international project focusing on geoscience and communication

R.L. Hermanns (1), J. Villaruel Toro (2), R. Page (3), F. Muñoz Carmona (4), C. Hickson (1), M. Ellerbeck (1), M. Jaramillo (1), O. Krauth (1)

(1) Geological Survey of Canada, Vancouver, Canada, (2) INGEOMINAS, Bogota, Colombia, (3) SEGEMAR, Buenos Aires, Argentina, (4) Consultant, MAP:GAC, Chandler, USA
(rhermann@nrcan.gc.ca / Fax: +1 604-6667507 / Phone: +1 604-6664835)

Recognizing the need for an application of high quality geoscience information on landslides, earthquakes, and volcanoes in the Andean region of South America, the national geoscience agencies of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela along with Canada, created the 6 year Multinational Andean Project :Geoscience for Andean Communities. The project commenced in June, 2002. Using funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and from the geological surveys of the eight member countries the project aims to “contribute to improving the quality of life for peoples of the Andes by reducing the negative impact of natural hazards (volcanoes, earthquakes and landslides) by providing updated and integrated geosciences and geospatial information on natural hazards for: 1) land use planning and, 2) natural hazard mitigation”.

In order to ensure that geoscience be appropriated and applied by other public and private institutions as well as academic institutions and communities, it was realized that strong emphasis must be placed not only on improving scientific investigation and products but also on the communication of geoscience knowledge.

To this end the project has two main areas of focus:

1. Standardization of scientific terminology, inventories, databases, cartographic symbols, and mapping methodologies, classifications guidelines to ensure that scientists and scientific institutions are better able to communicate between each

other at a national and international level.

2. Communication of geoscience knowledge with communities, public and private institutions, and academia with the objective of facilitating the transformation of geoscience knowledge into positive action at the community, regional and/or national levels.

To date the project has almost completed development of regionally agreed upon terminology, methodologies and classifications for landslides as well as standardization for storage and interchange of geospatial data (<http://can.geosemantica.net/>). It is anticipated that these standards and products will facilitate better integration of science information and higher quality science products.

With “learning by doing” being a major philosophical underpinning of the project, a pilot study area was selected in each country where a community and in some cases an important life line (such as an highway or rail road) lies in the area of threat of natural disasters. By focussing on the inclusion of local authorities, community members and other participants in the process of identifying and studying geological hazards, possible solutions, and the implementation of those solutions it is expected that participants will learn to respond more effectively to the geoscience needs of their communities.